Jnanapravaha

JNANAPRAVAHA MUMBAI
QUARTERLY

JANUARY - MARCH 2024

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Director's Note

The joyous promise of a new year brings with it not only a celebratory spirit but fresh beginnings and renewals laced with optimism, collaborative bonhomie and shared goals. We start 2024 with a bang as our 'save the dates' sent out on December 1st, 2023 testifies. Areas covered will range from prescient book launches on our Constitution, to the much-awaited *theyyams* of Malabar, and stories from Kashmir full of longing and despair of a displaced people.

What are the tales that objects tell, especially in a globalised world? How do the sacred, devotional arts of Islam explore questions of multiplicity, originality and surrogacy? Often misrepresented as an iconophobic tradition, how is the polyvalence of figural artworks unpacked? These are a few of the plethora of questions that will be asked and addressed through several seminars.

More than a hundred Buddhist monuments have been excavated in the Andhra region of Southeastern India since 1798. How do we understand them through their lives which include conservation and active reconstruction? The 18th century also witnessed The Enlightenment – what was the impact on Empire-building in British India? The varied enterprises their engineers were engaged in included cantonments, hill-stations, botanical gardens, and not to forget commissioning paintings. Col. James Tod wrote *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, which now has a companion volume to help contextualise and read it. All these treasures of our subcontinent will be decoded in our coming quarter.

Our timeless non-urban arts will be enlivened through a curatorial walkthrough of a recent exhibition, as will the world of photography. We will be launching our collaboration with renowned photographer Dayanita Singh to memorialise one of her foremost subjects, Mona Ahmed, while the legendary dancer Ram Gopal comes under the scrutiny of a German camera.

On the heels of a very well-received course, 'An Uncomfortable Tour Through The Museum', we will shift our focus to the worlds of technology and culture. The former, through 15 sessions conducted by international scholars, artists, curators and writers, analysed not only the traditional understanding of museums but also situated the exhibition, biennale, art fair, online spaces, and collective forms of creative organising. 'A Spiralling Revolution – Technology, Culture and Crisis', through 10 sessions, will also have scientists help us navigate this challenging terrain that has taken over every aspect of our lives, be it culture, finance, law or politics.

Details of all the above are in the pages that follow, as are the insightful analyses of our writers who painstakingly contribute their invaluable perspective of the lectures, seminars and events that the past quarter has witnessed.

Do join us virtually, if not physically, as we conduct all our programmes in at least a hybrid manner. Wishing you health, joy and peace in the coming year.

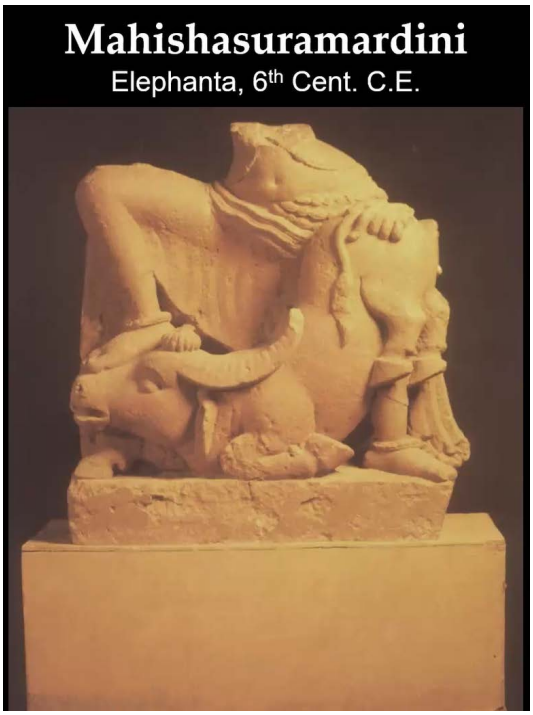
Rashmi Poddar Ph.D.
Director

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



Traversing a vast terrain between July and September 2023, the IA course used classical Indian aesthetics and *Rasa* theory to examine Indian art and sculpture, and decode its form, content and meaning. Sanskrit poetics was, as usual, an important component of the course because of its exploration of the Indic aesthetic theory of *Rasa*. Beginning with the Harappan civilisation, early Indian terracotta and numismatics, the course provided a detailed introduction to Buddhism and dipped into Jainism. A session on academic writing was also held. This session has become the bedrock on which the IA Diploma stands. It gives Diploma students, and any students who choose to attend, a reliable basis for their journey into reading and writing on subjects related to Indian aesthetics, since it is bolstered by an interactive session in which scholarly writing is analysed. Students submitted their first essays for the IA Diploma at the end of November under the careful supervision of the IA Course Director, Jaya Kanoria, who provided detailed feedback on

multiple drafts.

In the Diwali quarter which began in October, Dr. Viraj Shah continued her comprehensive exposition of Jainism. She had already held forth on Jain philosophy and art as well as her primary research on the Jain caves of the Western Deccan at the end of September, and explained the inclusion of popular Hindu deities, such as Krishna, into the Jain pantheon. In October, she elaborated on *nagas* and *yakshas*, worshipped by the mainstream, and the manner in which they, too, were drawn into Jain worship, ending with a description of the beginnings of Jainism, and the stories of the four most important *tirthankaras* who were ascetics seen in the Jain *kshatriya* conception as heroes or *vira* who had conquered the senses.

The IA module titled 'Iconography' in fact explores much more. Arvind Sethi examined Brahmanical iconography in its complex detail, providing students with multiple ways of seeing not only the icon that is worshipped in the *garbhagriha* of a temple, but also shedding light on the numerous guardian figures and other deities that surround it. He explored the symbolic iconography, as well as related stories, myths, and legends of Surya, Ganapati, the *ashtadikpalas* and the *navagrahas* as well as major deities such as Shiva and Vishnu. Myth and symbols are vital to theology as they are mobilised to explain the unexplainable aspects of the divine. Arvind Sethi's sessions dwelt on the particularities of space and place in relation to these deities.

Dr. Rashmi Poddar's session on the unitary feminine principle named Devi in Brahmanical literature explained her theological conception as a supreme power and a symbol of ultimate reality. She explained that this concept is contradictory, encompassing both the motherly and the fierce. Devi protects her devotees due to her innate emotion of motherliness or *vatsalya*, and is filled with *raudra* when she destroys evil in fierce and dangerous forms such as Durga and Kali. This dual nature is confirmed by texts that explicate the philosophy behind the concept of Devi, as well as present the hymns of praise dedicated to her. In its visual form seen in art, the countenance of Devi is always calm but her many arms and weapons show her war-like nature. Devi in her *raudra* aspects is associated with *tantric* rites and blood sacrifice, and is worshipped by warriors and *Shaktas*, who pray to the kinetic principle of *shakti* for strength and power. Devi is independent; unattached to any male god, she animates male deities, including Shiva, through her *shakti*.

Sacred spaces are marked by the architectural form of temples which also represent sacred time in their placement and proportion. Temples are not always built; in ancient times, caves served as temples, and mountains were fashioned into such structures. In the absence of perishable wooden precursors, these hallowed spaces created in living rock provide visually majestic and valuable records of what the lost spaces might have been. This became apparent from Dr. Pushkar Sohoni's masterful overview of the development and morphology of the Indian temple. 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 their decorative elements. The scholar also shared his primary research on the more recently built Maratha temples of Western and Central India, commissioned by rulers to establish their own legitimacy and for political ends, as perhaps temples have always been. The still-active Maratha

temples have mixed and sometimes awkward architectural styles.

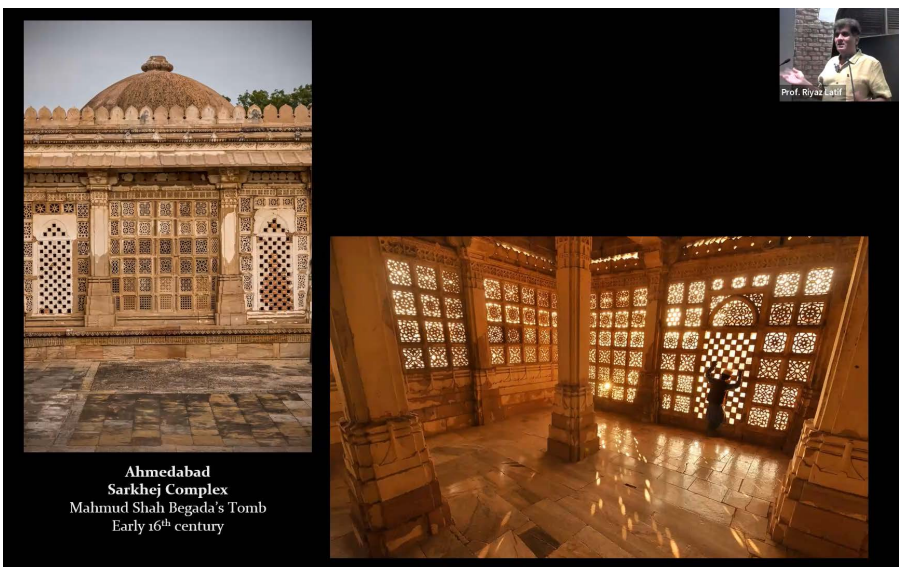
IA students were fortunate to have Dr. Crispin Branfoot speak to them about the South Indian temple, on which he has conducted valuable research. Apart from explaining the form and development of these structures, his sharing of primary research on ritual processions in the region showed how these temples, and the towns in which they are located, come to life through use. The scholar also discussed the uniquely South Indian *gopura*, the entryway to temples, in some detail.

Kamalika Bose familiarised IA students with the temples of Bengal which were constructed with terracotta and brick due to the absence of suitable stone in the region. Resembling the thatched huts that are common in the region, the structure of these temples has variations created not only through repetition and innovation, but also through the imaginative use of decoration. The scholar also discussed Jain temples in the area, including several that were lost due to the building of reservoirs and dams in the post-Independence period. Her primary research shows how socio-political and economic conditions led to the building of unusual Jain temples in Bengal, and in Ahmedabad in the 18th century. In these examples, architecture, location, and manner of worship all changed as Jain populations managed their devotional spaces to fit the times in a process called 'acculturation'.

Dr. Rashmi Poddar's foray into 'tantra', properly understood as a group of anti-ascetic, anti-speculative, and heretical philosophies and practices, revealed that they used experiential body-centric methods of a radical nature. *Tantric* practice aims at the expansion of the practitioner's consciousness through unconventional and esoteric means, including sex, in its search of ultimate bliss or *jeevan mukti* while still residing in the body. The secrecy of these cults, in which a guru holds primacy, has led to the biased present-day disinformation regarding *tantric* systems and their goals.

Dr. Riyaz Latif introduced Islamic aesthetics to our students through an exploration of Islamic funerary architecture. He began with Middle Eastern and Egyptian examples that were helpful in establishing context. This introduction made clear how examples of such architecture in the subcontinent conform to and differ from the earlier examples found in other geographies. The scholar dwelt on premodern Islamic architecture in India, such as the tombs of the Sultanate period and famed Mughal examples, finally examining regional variations in Bengal and Gujarat, including Dawoodi Bohra *rauzas*. His understanding that such analyses attempt to be cognisant of the intangible reality of a time through tangible remains provided a focal point to the engagement of students.

We have been fortunate in our choice to continue with the extremely flexible hybrid format which makes participation convenient and comfortable for all concerned. Happily, 2023 is the year in which our scholars from Pune, such as Dr. Sohoni and Dr. Latif, returned to our space after three years of being confined to the digital format due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This quarter brings home to students the breathtaking variety and complexity of India's cultural landscape and hence of the Indian Aesthetics course. We are now on the verge of entering into a deep exploration of painting in the subcontinent which will open the portals of a new world to our students. **– *J.K.***



Testimonial

A Journey Begins: Fellowship and Ph.D. enrolment

P. Ramakrishnan, IA alumnus

Dear Jaya,

I hope this email finds you well. I'm thrilled to share some wonderful news — I've been awarded the BORI-Infosys Foundation Fellowship! My research focusses on Nayaka murals from three temples in Tamil Nadu. Additionally, I've officially begun my Ph.D. journey, which centres on narrative sculptures in Chola temples.

I want to express my heartfelt appreciation for your invaluable guidance, support, and encouragement during my time at Jnanapravaha. Your feedback played a crucial role in helping me overcome my apprehensions about research papers. Presently, I'm working on two research papers, and this progress wouldn't have been possible without the strong foundation I received at Jnanapravaha. It opened numerous doors and helped me discover my area of interest.

I'm also grateful to Dr. Poddar for providing us with such a wonderful platform, and I feel truly honoured to be associated with Jnanapravaha. Please convey my regards to Dr. Poddar. I'll keep you updated on my Ph.D. journey's progress and research findings. Once again, thank you for your invaluable guidance.

Warm regards,

P. Ramakrishnan

The Indian Temple

PAST PROGRAMMES

The Kailasanatha Temple in Kanchipuram: Meaning in Material Form

August 31st, 2023, 6:30 PM IST | Prof. Padma Kaimal (Michael J. Batza Chair in Art History at Colgate University)

In the fourth lecture in the series on Indian Temples, Dr. Padma Kaimal spoke of the Kailasanatha Temple in Kanchipuram: Meaning in Material Form. Her talk revolved around the Kailasanatha temple in Kanchipuram, built by the Pallava king Rajasimha in the 8th century CE, and how to read its meaning through the iconography of its sculptures and inscriptions.

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

In the first section of her talk, Dr. Kaimal considered the sculptures on the northern and southern faces of Rajasimha's *vimana*. Drawing attention to their placement, she brought in the ideas of *mangala* and *amangala*. *Mangala* is easily translated as auspicious, but *amangala* is not simply the opposite, as in inauspicious, but is related to war, destruction and asceticism.

Dr. Kaimal pointed out that the southern face of the *vimana* has images of Shiva with Parvati, Bhikshatana, Lingodbhava, Dakshinamurthi, and Lakshmi, all depicting *mangala*. They are all auspicious forms, showing growth and continuity. In sharp contrast to this are the figures on the northern face – Kalantaka, Tripurantaka, Jalandhara Samharam, and Mahishasuramardini – all depicting victory over evil, all fierce forms. This placement is maintained, even in the *prakara*, which has numerous small shrines. Kalantaka, Tripurantaka, and the goddess with a trident are seen on the northern face, while images of Shiva with Parvati are seen on the southern face.

Dr. Kaimal also pointed out that there is a segregation of male and female figures in the north-facing figures, i.e., male figures are paired together, and female figures are paired together, for example, Shiva destroying demons has two male figures, while Mahishasuramardini rides a lioness. On the other hand, the *mangala* images on the south face have male and female figures paired with each other, such as Shiva and Parvati seen together. Once again, this highlights the possibility of interaction between the sexes and staying engaged in the world.

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

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

In the second section of her talk, Dr. Kaimal brought up the numerous images of Somaskanda seen on the eastern and western walls. Somaskanda, or Sa-Uma-Skanda, are images of Shiva and Parvati, with their son Skanda between them.

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

The Somaskanda images are of two types: four-armed and two-armed. While the figures with a four-armed Shiva are evidently Somaskanda, Dr. Kaimal speculated that the two-armed ones might be royal portraits.

Dr. Kaimal touched briefly on the process of circumambulation of the temple – *pradakshina* being the clockwise movement, and *apradakshina*, the counterclockwise movement. Dr. Kaimal suggested that the sculptural as well as inscriptional cues at the Kailasanatha temple encourage movement in both directions with equal emphasis. She believes that these paired movements correspond to the two life modes the Pallavas aspired to – warrior asceticism and royal continuity. This complementarity is a continuation of the *mangala–amangala* theme. The *amangala* sculptures, reflecting ideas of war and asceticism, act as cues for counterclockwise movement or *apradakshina*, while the *mangala* images on the southern face serve as cues for the clockwise movement or *pradakshina*.

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

Dr. Kaimal called the clockwise movement exoteric – accessible to the public, easily understandable, while the counterclockwise movement to her is esoteric – not easily understandable and thus available only to those who understood the meaning behind it. Both directions enable different kinds of activity that the king needs to be in charge of. They show the complementarity of the duties of the Pallava king, to rule in both ascetic and reproductive directions.

Dr. Kaimal concluded her lecture with the counterclockwise inscriptions of transcendence, which hint at Rajasimha as the Pallava king restoring the *Krita yuga* in the *Kali yuga*, sort of like restoring the whole universe to a utopic time. She speculated that given the inscriptions referencing Shaiva Siddhanta, and Rajasimha's greatness hinted at in them, that the king might have been inducted into the system. ***– A.S.***

Imperial Temples, Goddesses and the *Gopura* in Tamil South India'

September 6th, 2023, 6:30 PM IST | Prof. Crispin Branfoot (Reader in the History of South Asian Art & Archaeology at SOAS, University of London)

In his lecture titled 'Imperial Temples, Goddesses and the *Gopura* in Tamil South India', Dr. Crispin Branfoot focussed on looking at temples of a region rather than a particular temple; in this case, temples in the Tamil region over an extended period of time.

He addressed three broad themes – royal patronage, i.e., the place of temples in imperial state formation; the development of temples from being an individual temple to becoming a complex of multiple structures, including spaces for goddesses, and large buildings which occupy a significant space in urban landscapes which are active sites of pilgrimage and devotion; and finally, the *gopuras*, the great gateways that dominate the landscape. These are the key elements to understanding the rich architectural heritage of temples in the region.

How does landscape setting control the experience? He considered the Arunachaleswarar temple in Tiruvannamalai, built in different stages between the 9th and 17th centuries CE. The most prominent and significant element of the landscape the temple is set in is the mountain behind it. The mountain is beloved as Shiva in his form of a pillar of fire, and this form is embodied as Lingodbhava in many temples and is located at the back of the main shrine. This is one of five temples dedicated to Shiva in his elemental forms of fire, air, ether, water and earth, creating a network of temples. Thus, a temple cannot be thought of only individually, but as part of a wider, sacred landscape.

He spoke of the Chalukyas and the Pallavas, two of the most important dynasties in temple building in South India, and their temples in Pattadakal and Kanchipuram, and the interactions between the two. He divided temple building in South India into two broad categories – the Karnata-Dravida tradition in the Deccan, which starts with the early Western Chalukyas, and develops with the Rashtrakutas and the later Chalukyas, culminating with the Hoysalas and Kakatiyas; and the Tamil Dravida tradition, which starts with the Pallavas and Pandyas, and develops with the Cholas, the Vijayanagara empire and the Nayakas, leading to the modern period. However, he emphasised that while we associate temples with dynasties, they transcend dynastic formations. While history, politics and kingship are important factors, they are just one factor when it comes to temples. Temples are, above all, sacred sites, pilgrimage spaces, not necessarily built only by kings and queens. The two traditions, Karnata and Dravida, start out very similar, grow apart to become very different, and then, sometime in the 14th century, come together again. From the 15th century onwards, the Tamil tradition becomes broadly South Indian.

In the first part of his lecture, Dr. Branfoot focussed on two sites – Mamallapuram and Kanchipuram.

Mamallapuram is important architecturally, artistically and also historiographically. The site is built around a north-south rock. Caves are excavated into this rock, monoliths are carved out of this rock, and temples are built on this rock. Chronologically, the Pallava monuments are dated between c.580 and 750, starting with the monoliths, followed by the structural temples like the shore temple.

The Dharmaraja Ratha at Mamallapuram, created

around 650 CE, shows the key elements of the Tamil Dravida tradition, in the steeped pyramidal form. Dr. Branfoot also drew attention to the similar style of the temple in the Arjuna/Bhagiratha penance panel, indicating the solidification of the style of building temples in this region.

The shore temple is amongst the earliest surviving structural stone temples in the region. We can consider the temple as consisting of three shrines: two to Shiva, underneath the two towers, and one to Vishnu as Anantashayana, in the middle of the two. Originally, this temple was built over a sculpted relief of Vishnu lying over the serpent Sesha, looking out to the sea. The temple thus reflects the idea of Vishnu lying on the serpent in the ocean of milk, facing the ocean. Thus, meaning is closely connected to architecture and sculpture.

Moving on to Kanchipuram, the capital of the Pallavas, he mentioned two early Pallava temples, the Kailasanatha temple dedicated to Shiva, and the Vaikunta Perumal temple dedicated to Vishnu. It demonstrates the coexistence of Shaiva and Vaishnava temples. Furthermore, the temple city of Kanchipuram also has Jain temples, as well as the important temple to Kamakshi, the goddess of the city. Recent scholarship notes a north-south line running through the city, with temples to the east of that line facing west, and temples to the west of the line facing east. The line runs down the centre of the town, creating an east-west axis. This east-west axis may have run through a palace at the centre of the town – the location of the goddess temple might have marked this.

Thinking of imperial temples, royal status can be expressed in terms of size, the choice of site, the architectural language, the content as well as visibility of inscriptions, installation of a deity looted after a war with another kingdom, the choice of iconography used in the temple and the terminology, such as the name of the temple, such as the word *'koil'*, also used for 'a palace' in Tamil.

Coming to the *gopurams*, the grand gateways, he mentioned that they can be traced to the entrance of the shore temple in Mamallapuram, and the gateway in the Kailasanatha temple. It extends the temple from the centre outwards, and hints at the growth of the great temple cities in Tamil Nadu. It also shows the growth of the temples through time, growing in size with time, from the Pallavas to the Cholas, with the gateways growing bigger by the Vijayanagara period. The temple thus moves upwards first, and then outwards, with multiple layers.

In the second part of the talk, Dr. Branfoot moved on to the temples of the Chola period, from the 9th to 13th centuries CE, a period which saw imperial expansion across India. He spoke of the Brihadeeswara temple as the best example of imperial temples during this period. It was called the Rajarajeswara temple, the temple of Rajaraja Chola, the title of Arulmozhi Varman. The dynasty gives its name to the region, as Chola Nadu, or Chola *mandalam*, corrupted to Coromandel. The Cauvery river lies at the centre of this Chola land, which brought water for agriculture through a widespread irrigation network. This agricultural base and economic wealth laid the foundation for the temples of this period. Almost every village has a small temple dating to this period. They are built in stone, have two parts, a *mandapa* and a shrine with a *vimana* above it. They are small in size and meant for worship by the locals. He gave the example of the Brahmapureeswarar temple at Pullamangai as one such small temple.

What is special about the big temple is its monumentality. It required a colossal amount of stone, which had to brought all the way here, to the delta region. It hints at the economic and political resources required to transport and sculpt the stone to build this temple. The temple is royal by location. It is built in the capital of the Cholas. It is royal by identity because it's closely associated with the patronage of an individual

king. There are 11th-century paintings inside the temple which might be of the king and his guru. The name of the deity and temple are also royal in nature. It is the Rajarajeswara temple, the Lord of Rajaraja.

From the inscriptions, we know about the history, the construction and the ritual life of the temple, including donations of images as well as materials for rituals and payment for maintenance as well as conducting of the rituals. The temple was at the centre of economy, with a network that extended across southern India and Sri Lanka.

This is not just an individual temple, dedicated only to Shiva. A separate goddess shrine was added in the 13th century, a Subramanya shrine was added in the 17th century, and more shrines to Ganesha, Nataraja and Karuvur Tevar (guru of Rajaraja) were added in the 18th century.

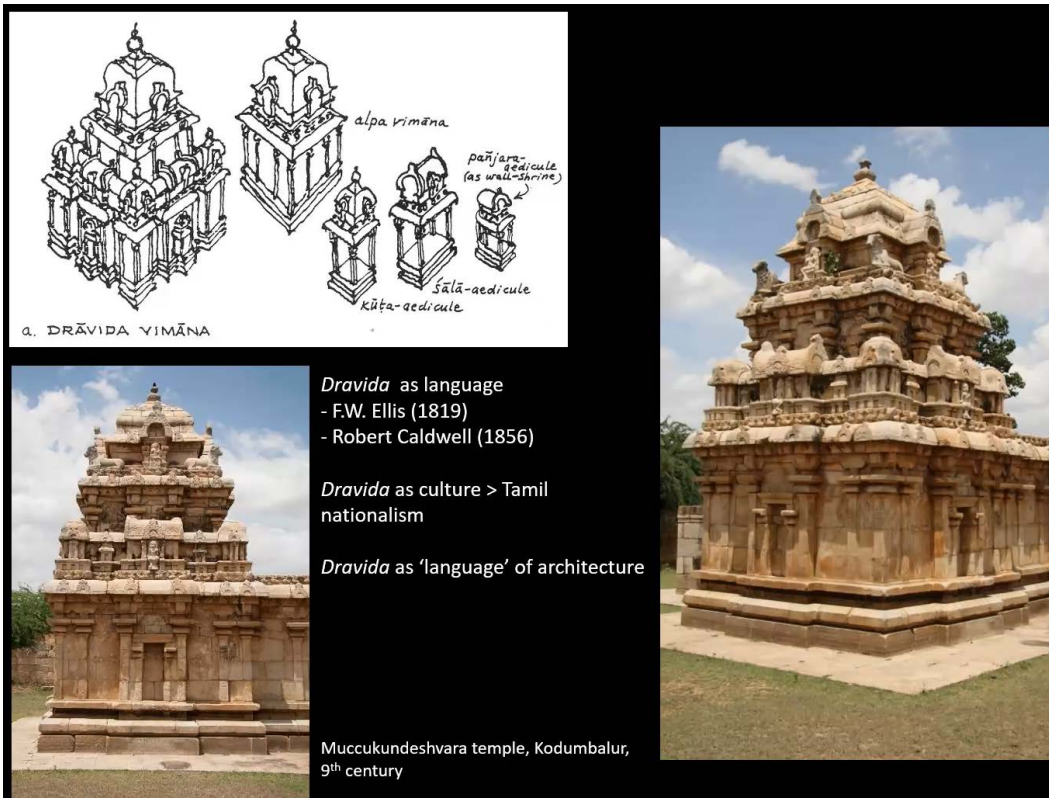
The iconographic system in the temple also hints at the royal nature of the temple. On the lower registers of the main temple are different forms of Shiva. However, the higher registers all depict Shiva as Tripura *vijaya*, the victor of the three cities. This is thought to be a reference to Rajaraja, victor of the three kingdoms of Cheras (Kerala), Pandyas (parts of Tamil Nadu), and Eelam (Sri Lanka).

He also discussed the Gangaikonda Cholapuram temple, built to commemorate the victory over the Gangetic plains, and the temple at Darasuram. However, he said that these larger temples were more of an aberration during that period, as smaller temples with small gateways were being built all over. Temples got bigger in size also horizontally, with the outside temple *gopurams* becoming larger and the inner shrines becoming smaller. The architectural scale had no connection with ritual status.

Temples developed into temple cities with multiple gateways and multiple *prakarams* or circumambulatory paths. The temple was a complex of multiple shrines, with separate shrines for the goddess as well as other deities. He gave the example of the Chidambaram temple, with its multiple shrines connected by corridors, open spaces, halls and water tanks.

He called the *gopuram* an extension of the main *vimana*. The *gopuram* was the *vimana* divided into two and expanded outwards and upwards. Thus, it was closely related to the main tower, only stretched out.

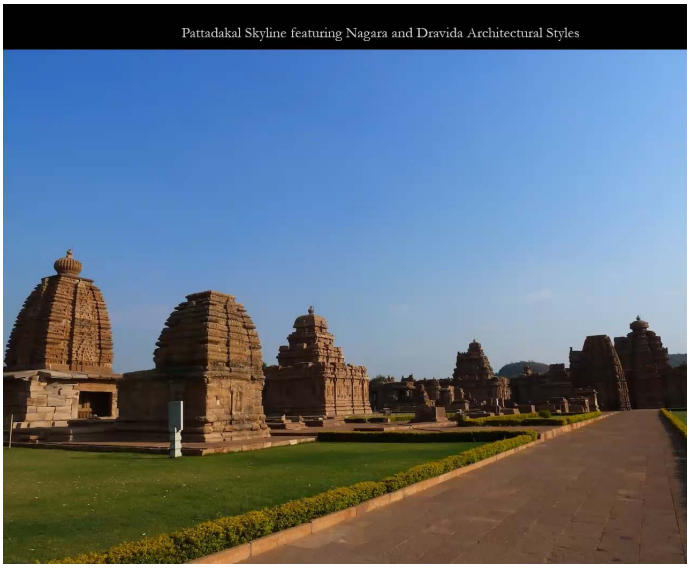
The goddess had her own shrine, separately, from the 12th/13th century. The god and goddess were no longer together in the sanctum but had their own separate shrines, though they came together during festivals, and indeed, every night.



He concluded the talk by saying that processions were an important part of understanding temples. Movement inside and outside temples are an important part of temple rituals. He gave the example of the ritual marriage of the god and goddess at Madurai, which follows a festive period of ten days and culminates in divine marriage, and is followed by a procession through the city. **– *A.S.***

Shiva's Waterfront Temples

September 13th & 14th, 2023, 6:30 PM IST | Dr. Subhashini Kaligotla (Reader in the History of South Asian Art & Archaeology at SOAS, University of London)


Pattadakal Skyline featuring Nagara and Dravida Architectural Styles

If you were a pilgrim in the 8th century, you would perhaps have decided to board a boat a few kilometers away from Vatapi, and travel downstream along the eastward flowing Malaprabha river. After about 20 kilometers, the river would have turned north at Pattadakal, and on the left bank, you would have seen an extraordinary assemblage of monuments, all facing east towards the riverfront. The first one would have been the Papanatha temple with its Dravida *prakara* and innovative Nagara *shikhara*. A couple hundred yards further would have been a ghat at which you could get off the boat and walk through rows of gay stalls and shops selling flowers, incense and other offerings for the Great God.

The avenue would have led to the magnificent and walled Lokeshvara temple which is entered through a foreboding gateway. On the gateway, you would not have failed to notice two prominent inscriptions in Sanskrit and Kannada, informing you that the temple was built by the queen Lokamahadevi to commemorate her husband, Vikramaditya II's three victories against the rulers of Kanchi, and that the temple was built by none other than the noble, urbane and well-spoken *sutradhari* Gundan, who was given the title *'Tribhuvanacharya'*.

As you made your way past the gateway, you would have encountered a very large *nandi* within a spacious *nandi mandap* facing the entrance of the temple. As you circumambulated the temple, you would have noticed the beautiful sculptures of Lord Shiva and Vishnu as warrior, yogi, king and dispenser of *dharma* on earth. Inscriptions would have informed you of the victories of the king and the famous sculptors of this monument such as Baldeva. Adjacent to this temple, you would have seen the Trilokeshwar temple, built by Lokamahadevi's sister Trailokyamahadevi, the junior queen to Vikramaditya II, who had also decided to dedicate a temple to her husband, though it was not quite as grand as the one built by her sister.

Beyond this would have laid the Vijayeshwara (Sangameshwara) temple, the Laxmi Sthambh and a few other large monuments, and lots of smaller shrines. These monuments would have been set in a delightful park, probably filled with flowers and trees, fit to serve as the coronation memorial for generations of Chalukya kings who ruled the Deccan and areas far to the northwest in Gujarat and to Vengi in the east; rulers whose writ was obeyed in the vast lands to which they had brought order and prosperity.

Although these are not the words of Shubhashini Kaligotla (SK), it is the kind of picture she painted. It is at the core of her methodology to look at the material evidence of a site and try to form an iconological view of it. How would it have been viewed by people in those times, and what were the motivations of those who funded it and those who conceptualised it and those who built these magnificent monuments?

The inscription on the eastern gateway's north pillar states, "... having given the *patta* (title, honour) ... the name *Tribhuvanacharya* to Sri Gundan ... the *sutradhari* who made the temple of the queen of Vikramaditya ..."

The inscription on the south pillar states, "... Sri Sarvasiddhi Acharya; the asylum of all virtuous qualities; the *pitamaha* of many cities and houses; he whose conversation is entirely perfect and

refined; he has for a jewelled diadem and crest jewel the houses and palaces and seats and couches (that he has constructed); the (most eminent) *sutradhari* of the Southern country." (Both translations by John Faithful Fleet.)

For most historians, the meaning of this inscription ends at concluding that the temple was sponsored by Lokamahadevi, the queen of Vikramaditya II, and that it was built by master architect Gundan. However, for SK, this was the starting point to iconological questions – the prominent placement of this (and other inscriptions) suggests that they were to be seen by elite visitors, because the script was Kannada, even though the inscriptions are part-Sanskrit and part-Kannada. Moreover, it seems to be proudly announced that Gundan was a renowned builder – a maker of cities – and of noble bearing and speech, thereby recognising him as a person with status. The inscription, however, does say one more thing, but I shall mention that at the end of this piece.

In Pattadakal, there are Dravida temples, Nagara temples and temples which have features of both temple-building traditions. The general view is that the early Chalukyas built them to impress upon their southern polity the extent of their northern domains. Another view is that because their territory was in between the north and the south of India, the building styles were somehow influenced by each other and the results were temples in a hybrid style. However, the idea of passive influences is scorned at by modern historians, and is being replaced by explanations supported by evidence of the agency of those involved. The sponsors not only funded them but wished to convey a vision and experience to their audience; the audience was knowledgeable and had ideas about what they liked; and above all, agency was given to the makers of monuments who were not passive takers of orders from the sponsor, but who were proud of their skills and their creative repertoire of buildings, sculptural and decorative forms. The central aim of SK's session on Shiva's Waterfront Temples was to make this point.

While honorifics laud Gundan, Revati Ovaja gets a mention at the Papanatha temple as a more humble *'madidor'*. Near the beautiful door-guardian, at the main entrance from the porch of the temple, the credit to its maker is written in a very matter-of-fact way – 'Baldeva *krta*' or 'made by Baldeva'.

Reading carefully into these texts, SK enriches our view of the hierarchy and aesthetics implicit in those words. To give another example, next to these temples is the distinctly northern-looking octagonal Laxmikhambha pillar which would have had an *amalaka* at the top – which has about 25 lines inscribed in the Sidhamatrika script, which is then repeated in a Telegu-Kannada script – a rare feature. The inscription traces the genealogy of the dynasty and mentions the *acharya* who moved from the Ganga the pillar was clearly there to be seen and impress the people who circulated within the complex.

The architecture of these temples is varied. The Papanatha has Dravida-style walls, but the niches have northern-style pediments and its *shikhara* was most likely a northern Gavaksha style. Unlike most other temples, it has panels of the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* on the northern and southern exteriors, with brief inscriptions identifying the episodes. Moreover, the final episode of both epics ends near the eastern

entrance, so if you wanted to read the *Ramayana* in sequence, you had to walk anticlockwise. Perhaps a clockwise circumambulation wasn't necessary in those days, but more importantly, it was an edifice rich in reliefs and demanding to be viewed at leisure.

The Virupaksha and Mallikarjuna temples, built by the two queens, are essentially Dravida, but they have huge *sukanasis* – a distinctly northern element – embedded into the eastern face. SK argues convincingly that these were not just passive hybrids, but were makers showing their skill to an informed audience. She further made the point that whether it was the temple *shikhara* designs on pediments, or the various Dravida-style reliefs made on the huge boulder near the Bhutanatha temple in Badami, these were ploys by architects to exhibit their versatility and immense knowledge of temple forms.

While grand temples were built to display kingly power, SK argues that there was a wider social and cultural agenda as well. The goals of life in those times were *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha*. Of those goals, *kama*, or pleasure, was taken just as seriously as the others. Hence the profusion of Mithuna sculptures, of a fashionably dressed lady standing under a tree with a monkey tugging at her dress, and the adornment of pediments with rich vegetal patterns. These were all part of *'alamkar'* (the decorative scheme) and *'lila'* (playfulness) to convey ideas of auspiciousness, of prosperity and fun. These were essential ingredients to achieve the aesthetic objective *'rasa'* amongst the viewers.

Temples were places people visited, where rituals were performed; they were also safe places for young couples and lovers to inhabit. They were in beautiful riverside or waterside settings, with innovative architecture and beautiful sculptures which would likely have been complemented by shops and gardens of abundance, with flowers and fruit trees. The temple, or a *prasad*, was meant to be not only a place which was fit for the Gods, but also for the elite and for common people to pray, to admire and to celebrate life.

SK's talk was rich with arguments to buttress her main thesis. I will, however, end with a comment about what else the two eastern-gateway inscriptions say, which did not get a mention by SK. The one on the north side says, "… There is no excommunication from caste of the skillful people of the world who have attained the favour (of the god), having given the *patta* (a patent, royal grant or order, fillet or turban of honour) called the *mumeperejerepu* (and) the *nake* of *Tribhuvanacharya* to Sri Gundan, whose (observance of the) established rules of conduct was unimpeded … (and there is) immunity to the others who united themselves with the guilty man …."

The pillar to the south reads, "… Let it be known that these are the names of the *acharya* who averted excommunication of the skilful people of this district, after they had given the *mumeperejerepu* to the *sutradhari* who made this temple…"


Miniature shrines on the periphery of the Shivanandishvara Temple, Kadamara Kalava, Andhra Pradesh

Cathleen Cummings, in her book, *Decoding a Hindu Temple*, suggests that there was a dispute, that artisans were going to be excommunicated, but by agreeing to build the temple under the leadership of Gundan, they saved themselves. So while Gundan gets high praise, the inscription was also to let the people know that it was an act of forgiveness from a very powerful lady, the senior queen of the three-times-conqueror of Kanchi – Lokamahadevi. **– *Ar.S.***

Innovation and Variation in Hoysala-Style Temples

September 20th, 2023, 6:30 PM IST | Dr. Katherine E. Kasdorf (Associate Curator of Arts of Asia and the Islamic World at the Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA))

"If you want proof of the sacred, it can be found on every inch of Hoysala architecture." – O.G. Saffron

The Hoysala temples, so distinctly characterised by their hyper-realistic sculptural architecture covering the entire surface of the temple, organised in multi-layered friezes, bear testimony to the exemplary development in temple building during the period. It was a happy coincidence that the lecture on Hoysala temples by Prof. Katherine Kasdorf took place just a few days after 3 Hoysala temples in Karnataka were inscribed as UNESCO world heritage sites. This was news that was long awaited and is much deserved. As one would well imagine, the news certainly added to the energy of the session.

The Hoysala empire, one of South India's most prominent empires, ruled over multiple centuries. However, the spectacular temples built by them remained, for a long time, largely marginalised within the canon of South Asian art history. Often relegated to the shadows in comparison to the Chola dynasty, distinguished for their stunning bronze sculptures and their temples. In fact, the development of the Hoysala period temple, incorporating an abundance of sculptural figures and a more extensive iconographic representation of episodes from the epics, is believed to have arisen with the intention of surpassing the Chalukyan empire in its realm of strength.

Dr. Katherine E. Kasdorf, associate curator of the arts of Asia and the Islamic world at the Detroit Institute of Arts, helped us navigate the long arc of Hoysala-style temples, tracing their history and remarkable artistry through several multi-hued lenses.

The first part of the 2-part lecture presented an overview of the Hoysala empire, the location of

its 2 capital cities and 3 principal locations where the majority of the Hoysala temples are located – Halebidu, Belur and Somanathapura. We were given the tools to conceptualise these individual temples in a larger, more dynamic and thriving context since most of the surrounding architecture has been destroyed. We were encouraged to visualise these sites not as we see them today, as stand-alone structures, but situated within a thriving urban landscape surrounded by many other temples in addition to residential and commercial buildings that no longer survive. Dr. Kasdorf delved deeper into the multiple facets that would have governed the building of these temples by putting before us relevant questions pertaining to patrons, religions, the royal family, visitors and the urban setting of these architectural marvels. With numerous stakeholders involved, how accurately does 'Hoysala style' define these temples? Would 'Hoysala period temple' provide a better interpretation?

Figure 1: The Hoysaleshwara temple at Halebidu with an abundance of scultural figures covering its walls. Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/5a/Hoysaleshwara_Shrine_Halebidu.jpg

Temples and their surroundings are intricately connected. Once this point was firmly established, we began to take a closer look at 3 principal temples that exemplify, for most people, the category of Hoysala temple – the Hoysaleshwara at Halebidu, the Chennakeshava at Belur and the Somanathapura Keshava temple. Apart from enjoying stunning photos depicting the architectural prowess of Hoysala architects and sculptors, Dr. Kasdorf also guided us through extensive and detailed inscriptions to make connections between temples, religions, patrons – including merchants, army generals, affluent citizens and royalty – and the politics of expansion within a flourishing urban environment. The latter half of the session delved deeper into the connection between innovation in temple building and its role in a larger metropolitan setting, establishing these temples as urban monuments that ensured a steady flow of visitors and devotees to their cities thus contributing to their stature and status. The architectural and sculptural mastery of these grand structures focused greatly on a holistic visitor experience of which devotional practice was only a part.

Furthermore, the question of what truly defines a Hoysala temple was explored in terms of style. Two remarkable architectural examples were discussed – the Halebidu Parshvanatha temple and the Panchalingeshwara temple at Somanathapura. The Parshvanatha, built around the same period as the Hoysaleshwara and located in proximity, occupies a pivotal place in the Hoysala capital. Built by Bhupadeva, a merchant, the rather plain exterior defies our conception of a Hoysala temple. Similarly, the Panchalingeshwara at Somanathapura also exhibits very simple and minimalist ornamentation. Moreover, the temple is built in granite and not schist, the stone of choice for most Hoysala temples. Nonetheless, both these temples and others are also well within the realm of Hoysala temples gauging from their location, patronage and from information

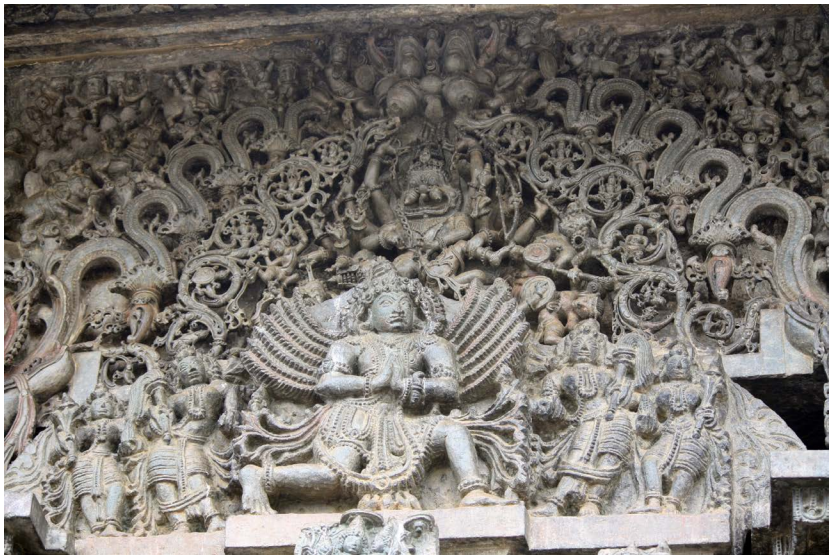


Figure 2: Door lintel detail at the Chennakesava temple, Belur. Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:KABEL_02_Lintel_Entrance_Chennakesava_Temple.jpg

available in their inscriptions.

The lattermost segment explored what came to pass at the end of the Hoysala period. The themes of 'architectural reuse' and 'adapted design' were considered, drawing upon the Andal shrine and the Kedareshwar temples as exemplars. Numerous aspects ranging from restoration, conservation, adaptative design, political power and the choice of visual experience over historical accuracy were discussed. It was fascinating to learn about how remnant bits from old and dilapidated temples were selected, transported and reused to create new versions of former structures under the helm of a new and emerging political power inhabiting a changing urban landscape.

Figure 3: Archtectural re-use at Kedareshwara temple, Hassan district, Halebidu. Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Molding_frieze_and_outer_wall_decoration_relief_in_Kedareshwara_temple_at_Halebidu.JPG

The end of Dr. Kasdorf's lecture felt like the end of a fulfilling journey. Having traversed the ornate landscape of Belur, Halebidu and Somanathapura, not only were the visuals a treat for the eyes, but the exercise of unravelling a whole plethora of aspects connected to these phenomenal structures certainly enabled us to come away in deep awe and reverence. – ***H.K.***

Finding drāviḍa in Kerala: Tracing The Plot in Kerala's Temple Architecture

September 27th, 2023, 6:30 PM IST | Dr. Arathi Menon (Assistant Professor of Art History at Hamilton College in Clinton, New York)

Nestled among the plentiful water and verdant greenery of Kerala are the Hindu temples with their unique character. Each, in varying degree, is an amalgamation of the Dravida style of architecture, contributions by the Chera dynasty, impact of Buddhism from neighbouring Sri Lanka, and local geography and traditions.

The temples of Kerala, unlike those in Tamil Nadu, are known for their elegance and inherent simplicity. At the centre of the temple premises, standing in the east-west direction, is the *sreekovil* or the inner sanctum in which the deity resides. The floor plan may be either rectangular, apsidal or interestingly, circular, a feature which could have been borrowed from the Buddhist stupas. In most temples, adjacent to the *sreekovil*, in the direction of the entrance, stands *a namaskar mandapam*. Unlike the big *mandapams* of the Dravida temples, where people gather in large numbers for functions and ceremonies, the ones in Kerala are small and used only to perform rituals. Most Southern temples usually have a well or a small tank on the premises. The water from here is used to cook food offered to the gods in the form of *prasadam* or to water plants around the temple. All the above stand in the inner courtyard of the temple called *nalambalam*. Surrounding the *nalambalam* is the *chuttambalam*. This covered part, usually square or rectangular in shape, in used by the devotees for circumambulation. The entrance of the temple is called the *gopuram*. One of the distinguishing features of most of Kerala's Dravidian temples is the simplicity of its *gopuram* in terms of height or dimension. These gracefully built structures are not more than three storeys in height.

Temple architecture of this region reflects its geographical conditions. Hot, humid climatic

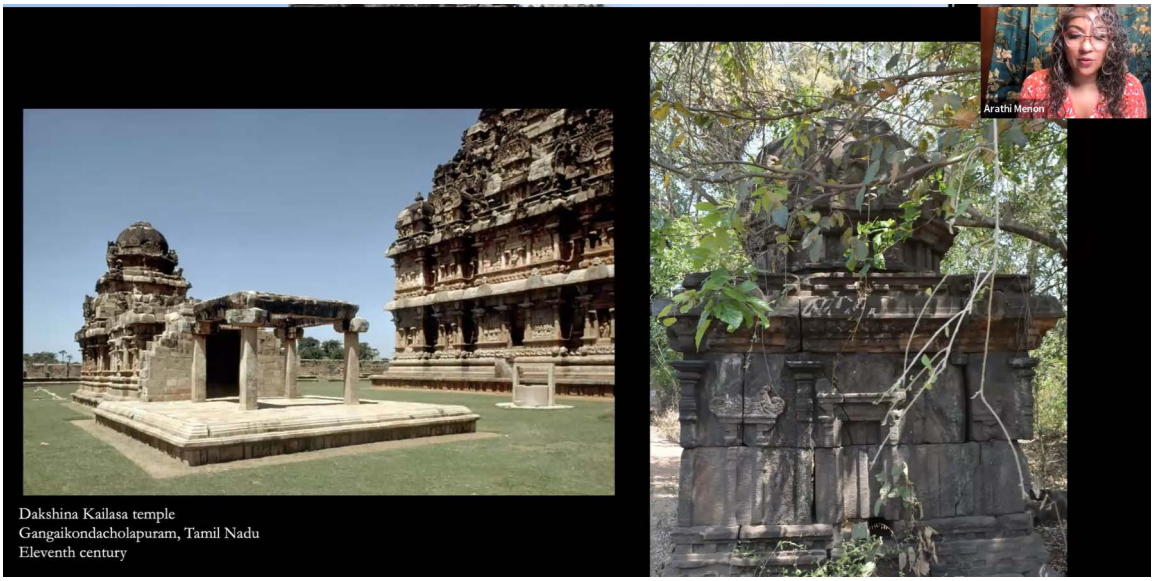
conditions and the heavy monsoons have been taken into account while building the temples. The roofs of most of these temples are sloping, thereby allowing the rain water to slide off to the ground easily. The shape of the roof is based on the floor plan. If the temple is circular, the roof is conical, while in case of a square floor plan, the roofs are pyramidal.

An interesting fact about Kerala's temples is the use of indigenous material in building them. The Cheras, an ancient dynasty known for their temple patronage, made abundant use of locally found stone and wood. A majority of the temples have granite floors, while the walls are built of wood, bricks or laterite. Roofs are built mostly of wood, and covered either with tiles, copper plates or gold, based on patronage. However, given the perishable nature of the raw material used, unlike stone-built Dravida temples, the Kerala temples have undergone multiple renovations. Hence, even if a temple was built in ancient times, none of the antiquity has survived.

Temple art in the form of murals is seen at many shrines. Beautiful depictions of scenes from daily life as well as from the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are common. Each human, animal and tree is painted or sculpted in proportion. Primarily five colours are seen. They are red, yellow, green, black and white. These colours have been made with natural dyes.

Temples of Kerala were built in three phases. The early phase was between the 9th and 11th centuries, the middle phase was between the 11th and 14th centuries, and the last phase was from the 14th through the 19th centuries. The temple layout in the early phase was only about a simple, singular shrine, the *sreekovil*. In the middle phase, along with the *sreekovil*, a *namaskar mandapam* and *chuttuambalam* were included. Also, an important feature was added in this phase: it was the building of *sarvatobhadra* temples, which means having a doorway in each cardinal direction to let in the flow of good energies. This was based on the ancient Indian science of architecture called *Vastu Shastra*. It was in the last phase that further additions were made to create temples as known today.

The architecture of temples in Kerala is different from the other areas in India. The architectural style of Kerala's temples has an inherent simplicity. Kerala's temples have a distinct style of their own by the lavish use of wood, stone and metals. Temples in Tamil Nadu are famous for their marvellous stone works. But in Kerala, wood is used for making temples because of rich forest cover. The base structure of the temple is made using granite and laterite. The roof may have one, two or even three stories. The shape of the roof depends on the plan of the sanctum below. A circular plan has a conical roof, while a square plan has a pyramidal roof. The steep and needle-like roof is made of wood and is covered with copper plates in order to protect the inner skeletal framework from the vigorous monsoons. The *sreekovil* roof of the Sabarimala Temple and Guruvayur Temple are covered with gold plates. The *sreekovil* walls are usually decorated with murals and the roof is decorated with different woodworks. – ***P.S.***



Maratha Temples: Revitalising Worship with Old and New Forms

October 4th, 2023, 6:30 PM IST | Dr. Pushkar Sohoni (Professor of Humanities and Social Sciences at The Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER) Pune)

Gondesvara, Sinnar

The northern Deccan has a continuous tradition of temple building from the Yadavas in the 12th century up to the Marathas in the 19th century. Five distinct phases from 1150 to 1850 have been identified, which show continuities in material, form, and craftsmanship. The early Yadava period up to 1200 is eclectic with borrowings from the neighbouring Chalukyas, Solankis, and Paramaras. The late Yadava period from 1200 to 1300 bears witness to the formalisation of the Deccan Bhumija style. The post-Yadava period from 1300 to 1650 is usually labelled as the period of temple destruction. Nevertheless, small temples built in derivatives of the Bhumija style can be seen. The early Maratha period from 1650 to 1720 displays sultanate architectural vocabulary. The late Maratha period from 1720 to 1850 employs revival-Bhumija, revival-Sekhari and hybrid-Maratha styles.

The Marathas are an important ethnic identity of the Deccan. They claim to have Rajput roots and came to the Deccan as part of the armies of the Delhi Sultanate. They became local rulers and adopted a temple in their vicinity as their family shrine. Older temples were modified and new temples were also built in a small scale. The 14th century saw the introduction of brick and mortar in temple building. The temples of this period have the walls of the *garbhagriha* built in stone while the *shikhara* is built of brick and mortar. The front has a tripartite façade along with borrowed elements like *jalis* and flanking kiosks. The walls are plain with raised bands running through the middle. Sultanate architectural elements like niches with curvilinear roofs and bulbous domes make their way into the aedicular ornamentation of these temples.

The Marathas are recognised as an independent polity since Chhatrapati Shivaji declared independence and had himself coronated in 1674. The creation of an independent kingdom of the Marathas resulted in a new era for temples. They re-consecrated older sites, and created new networks of worship. The earliest Maratha temples are memorial temples found in the vicinity of Pune. The architectural vocabulary is that of the Deccan sultanates. The first political Maratha temple is the Jagdishwar temple at Raigad built by Shivaji in 1674 on the auspicious occasion of his coronation. It is shaped like a cubical box with all the corners marked by a minaret. It has big blank walls and very small openings with no mouldings of any kind. A dome stands in place of a *shikhara*. It houses two rooms – the smaller one for a *garbhagriha* and the bigger one for a *mandapa*. The other important temple of this period is the Khandoba temple at Jejuri. Though initially built in the 16th century, there are parts that can be

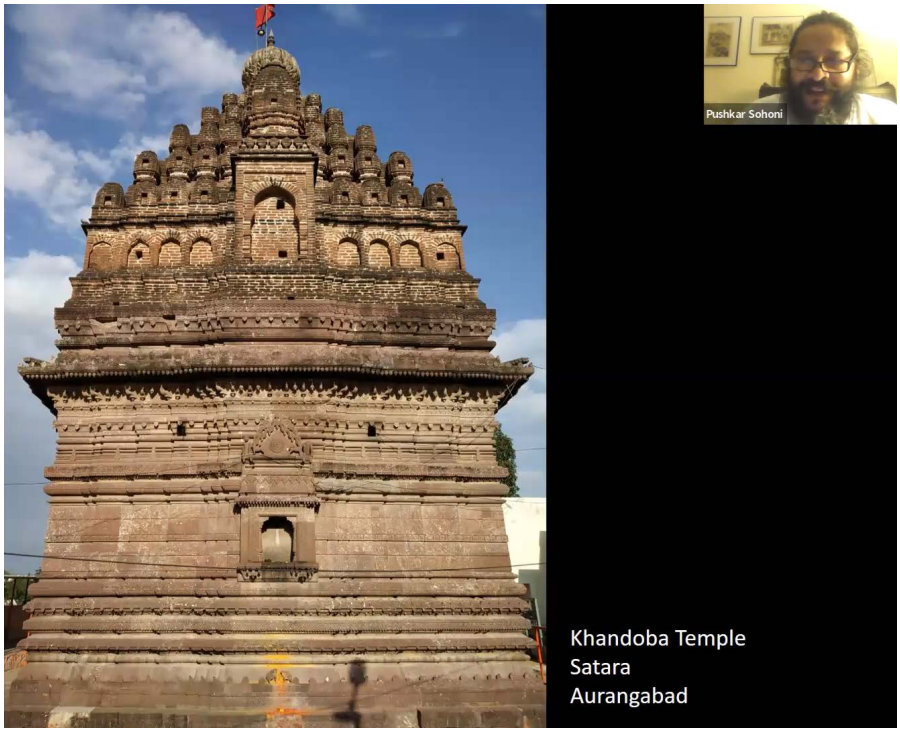
dated to the 17th century.

Maratha rule was at its greatest in the 18th century. The early Peshwa period temples (1700–1740) borrow the logic of arrangement from the earlier Bhumija style and the vibrant South Indian temple architecture; but the architectural elements are drawn from the Mughal idiom. *Mandapas* built from wood can also be seen. The *garbhagriha* continues to be built in stone and the *shikhara* out of brick and mortar. While the base of the *shikhara* is square, it is followed by a set of diminishing circular storeys ultimately capped by a dome. The aedicules of Bhumija are replaced by *chhatris*. Mughal decorative elements like Cyprus columns, ceiling patterns, and multifoil arches are employed.

In the late-Peshwa-period temples (1740–1820), the sultanate and Mughal elements come together in a more proportional and harmonious composition. While the bottom storeys of the *shikhara* are square, on top are a set of circular or octagonal or hexadecagonal tiers with empty niches. The four corners are marked by four small minarets with a dome on the top. In the 1750s, as Marathas started making inroads into the north, they started building revival-Sekhari temples inspired by the architectural style of Malwa. There is a high degree of borrowing of Mughal and post-Mughal motifs from palatial architecture and idioms from Gujarat. A typical Maratha temple of this period comprises the *garbhagriha*, long *antarala*, and front *mandapa*.

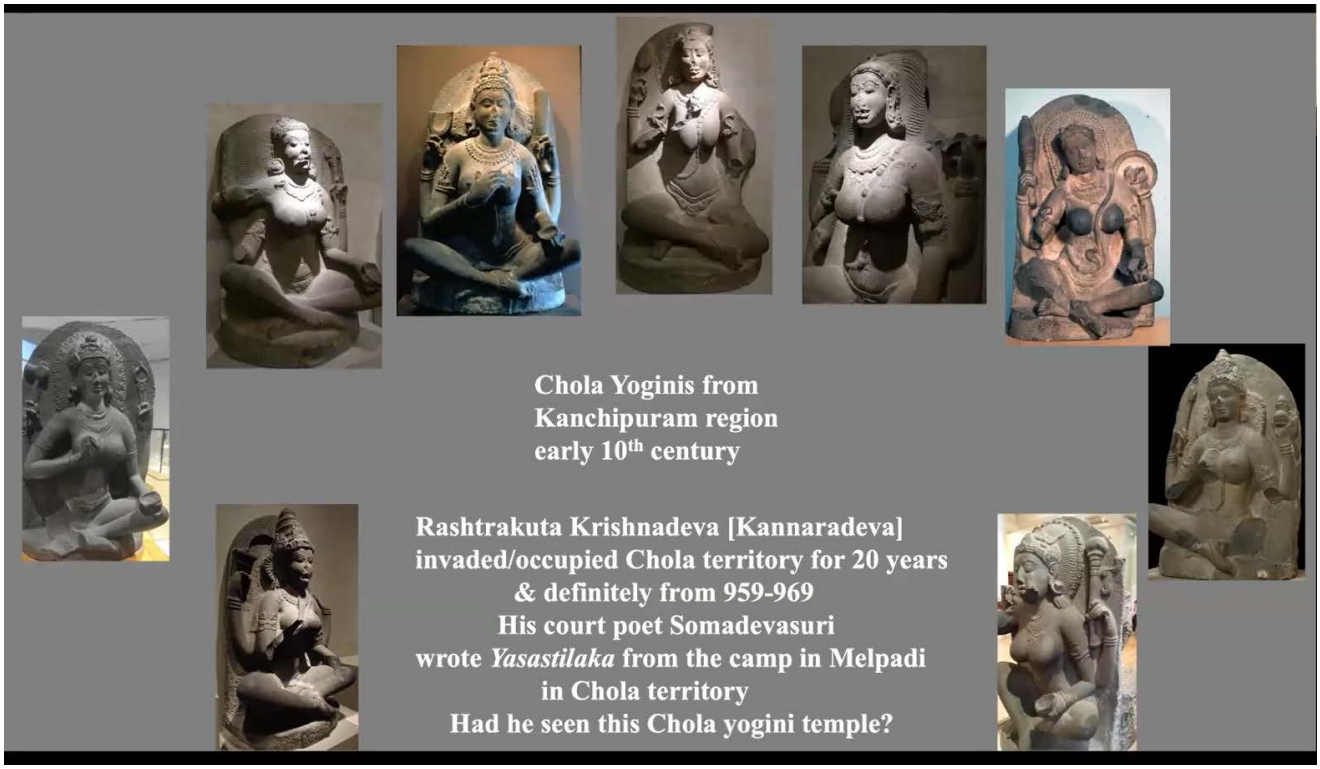
In the latter half of the 18th century, the Maratha temple, with its brick-and-mortar *shikhara*, finds resolution. In the multi-storeyed *shikhara*, the square tiers and round tiers are stacked on top of each other. Each of the tiers is a set of flattened kiosks separated by decorative columns. The culmination of the *shikhara* is a dome. Very often, the four corners of the *shikhara* are marked by minarets. There is a profusion of *deepamalas* in front of the temples. The architectural vocabulary becomes standardised. During this period, the Marathas also built several scenic ghats along with a cluster of temples in places like Nasik, Satara, and Nira Narsingpur. They exhibit engineering feats like pools inside the river bed to facilitate safe immersion. Jyotirlinga temples built during this period employ revival styles of antiquity. Revival-Bhumija is seen in the Grishneshwar temple near Ellora, and revival-Sekhari is seen in the Bhimashankar and Trimbakeshwar temples. While building temples outside Maharashtra, the Marathas followed the regionally prevalent style. A good example is the revival-Sekhari employed in Maheshwar, Madhya Pradesh.

The architectural choices of the Marathas were partially deliberate, and to some extent, informed by the availability of crafts-guilds and contemporaneous fashions. Thus, while they chose to revitalise older and important places with revival styles of central and north India, for many of the new temples, a completely new style was invented. The Maratha style is an amalgam of temple architecture with elements from the sultanates and the Mughals. – ***D.HR.***



Yogini Temples of India: A Tantric Tradition

October 11th, 2023, 6:30 PM IST | Dr. Vidya Dehejia (Barbara Stoler Miller Professor Emerita of Indian Art at Columbia University in New York)



Part 1: Images and Temples

In her lecture, 'Encountering the Yoginis', Dr. Vidya Dehejia gave a fascinating account of yoginis and yogini temples in India.

She began her talk by clarifying that she wasn't going to talk of the yoginis who are female yoga practitioners, or the female partner of the chakra puja, or the witches, sometimes called *dakinis* or *shakinis*, or even the resident deities of the internal chakras of the body. She restricted her talk to the yoginis found in sculpture in yogini temples across India.

The yogini temples defy our conventional notions of what a temple is like. There is no towering structure, but instead, a circular enclosure, open to the skies. Inside are niches along the circular wall, housing images of the yoginis. At the centre of the enclosure is usually a shrine, which houses an image of Shiva, and the idea is that of Shiva, surrounded by the yoginis. In the temple at Ranipur Jharial in Odisha, the yoginis are shown dancing, as if they are dancing around Shiva.

In the first part of her talk, Dr. Dehejia showed images of four sets of yoginis. The first set was from the temple at Hirapur in Odisha. This is one of the smallest yogini temples, measuring about 25 feet in diameter, and about 6 feet in height. The temple itself is made of sandstone, but the images of the yoginis are carved out of granite. These are delicate images which are more or less intact, with a lot of detail visible even today. The yoginis are small in size, with slender bodily proportions. They have human or animal heads, stand on *vahanas*, or sometimes a raised platform, they wear translucent skirts, low slung hip girdles and necklaces which encircle their breasts. Dr. Dehejia showed a number of images of these yoginis to highlight their ornaments, facial features, hairstyles, and forms. Among them is a huntress, holding 2 quivers of arrows, one with flames around her, a female form of Ganesha. While some are beautiful, some are fearsome, with animal faces or fangs. One of the more aggressive ones is emaciated, holding a human skull in one hand, with a sort of heraldic lion above her.

Dr. Dehejia highlighted the fact that we don't really know the names of these yoginis, since there is often no connection between the texts

and the temples. For example, she mentioned a 15th-century text from Odisha which mentions yoginis, but which doesn't seem to have any connection with this temple or with the yoginis seen in it.

The second set of yoginis was from the temple at Bhedaghat near Jabalpur. It is the largest of the yogini temples, about 125 feet in diameter. There is a temple at the centre, but it was built at a later period. While this is called the Chausath Yogini Temple, and is supposed to have 64 yoginis, there are actually 81 niches with yoginis in all of them. In this temple, the yoginis are shown seated. These are amazingly large images, not slender like at Hirapur. These are voluptuous and mature, very different from Hirapur. The images are inscribed, though most labels are gone. There is a horse-headed yogini called Erudi, which is a name not found in literature. Most names aren't found in lists of yoginis, which is quite frustrating.

Like at Hirapur, there are a variety of yoginis here. There are fearsome ones like Sarvatomukhi and Antakari, while there is also Kamada, the giver of sexual love, as evinced by the *yoni* puja shown in the image. Incidentally, Kamada is mentioned in texts like the *Kalika Purana* which says that she will remove frigidity.

The third set of yoginis Dr. Dehejia showed were from Lokhari, which today is only a small mound. There is no temple there, though some images were present at the time of her visit. Most of these are animal-headed yoginis, carved rather simply, without the finesse of Hirapur or the grandeur of Bhedaghat. However, there is a sense of power about these yoginis. Unfortunately, most of these images were lost. A couple were recovered and placed in the National Museum in Delhi, while others at the site were damaged beyond recognition.

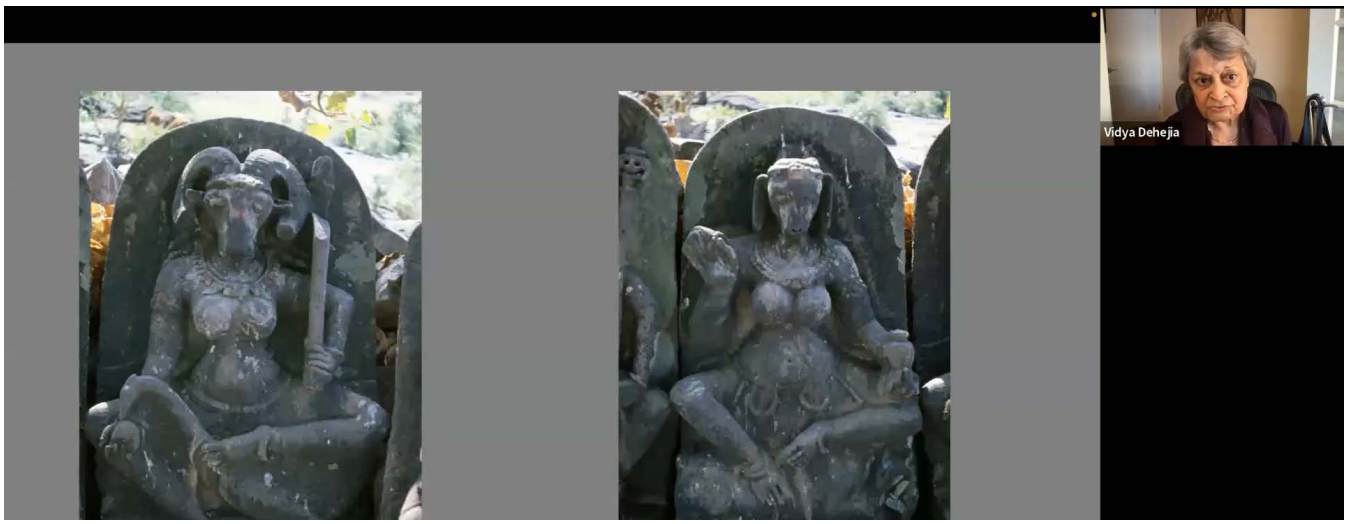
The last set of yoginis Dr. Dehejia showed were the Chola yoginis, stylistically dated to the early 10th century. They are shown seated on the ground, and their *vahanas* are incised at the bottom. These are scattered in museums across the world, but the similarities can be seen. Once again, they are of different forms, both beautiful and fierce.

Dr. Dehejia mentioned a text, a poem composed for the Rashtrakutas, during a period when they occupied the northern territory of the Cholas. The poem has a vivid description of the dance of the yoginis, which makes one wonder if it is all imagination, or inspired by a yogini temple.

Dr. Dehejia concluded the first part of her talk with the thought that there seem to be many different artistic visualisations of these yoginis. And many different sacred visualisations as well. From the delicate ones at Hirapur to the others exuding power.

In the second part of her lecture, Dr. Dehejia spoke of the worship and dating of the yogini sculptures.

She began by considering Hirapur, the earliest of the yogini temples. She compared the images to those in the Mukteswara temple in Bhubaneshwar and observed a close connection in the treatment of the form of the figures in both temples. This helps date the yoginis of Hirapur to roughly around 850 CE. This implies that yogini worship might have begun to express itself



roughly a hundred or a hundred and fifty years earlier. It might have thus emerged around 600-650 CE.

Yogini temples evoke a sense of fear as well as awe. There is fear of invoking their curse, which is also emphasised in the texts. This explains the isolation of the yogini temples, along with the fact that these are related to tantra, which is secretive in nature. It also explains why the Hirapur temple, despite its proximity to Bhubaneshwar, was not known until the 1950s.

It is clear that the yoginis are a tantric cult. Dr. Dehejia spoke of the difficulties of studying the cult, especially since most avenues involved initiation. Hence, she focussed on manuscripts.

She said she got a lot of *namavalis*, lists of names of yoginis. However, the problem was that none of the names on the list corresponded to the inscribed series of names. Thus, it appeared as if there were a number of traditions, and no specific connections between the lists and the sites.

Dr. Dehejia moved on to refer to the first manuscript she found on the yoginis, the *Mattotara Tantra*. One of the important things is that these texts talk not of *moksha* or liberation, but the *ashta maha siddhis*, the 8 special or magical abilities, which can be gained as a result of worship of the yoginis. They also speak of other *siddhis* which allow control over others. The first part of worship is the chanting of mantras, the second is offerings of wine and meat, and the third is the offering of *rundas* (headless human bodies) and *mundas* (severed heads). This highlights the location of the yogini temples, inside the forest, away from the cities, which enables access to perform such worship.

These items of worship show themselves in the texts as well as the images. Many of the names of the yoginis refer to their love for wine; they are also described as drinking blood and eating meat. There are severed human heads and human bodies seen in the imagery of the yoginis.

Stepping back to look again at the Bhedaghat temple, it appears to be a temple for royalty, as suggested by its grandeur and awe-inspiring images. This temple, as mentioned earlier, has 81 yoginis instead of 64. The *Mattotara Tantra* mentioned earlier has a section called the *Mula Chakra*, which is a chakra of 81 yoginis. The central group is of 9 *matrikas*, and they each gather 8 other *matrikas* around them to form groups of 9 yoginis. And thus, they form a group of 81 in all. This group of 9 can be worshipped individually, each for a purpose. One group for destroying enemies, one for the boon of a kingdom, one for the success of an army, one for territorial gain, one for banishing fear when attacked by enemy kings, one for those who have lost their kingdom, and so on. The entire group can also be worshipped for the *ashta siddhis*. Thus, this group of 81 yoginis was especially significant for royalty, which explains the building of this temple in such a grand style.

64 is the most common grouping, and most of these yogini temples are circular. However, the temple in Khajuraho is a square one, with 64 niches, whereas the one at Badoh has only 42 niches.

Thus, this cult of yoginis must have been around since about 600 CE, while the temples began being built around 850 CE.

Interestingly, the *Agni Purana* and the *Skanda Purana* both mention 64 yoginis, and it is curious how the yoginis were integrated into the mainstream religion by around 900 CE when the texts were composed.

This integration could have happened through two methods. The first method was to conceive of the yoginis as attendants of the goddess. They are seen in paintings, clustered around the goddess, with bird/animal heads, a parallel to the *ganas* of Shiva. The second method was to consider them as aspects of the goddess. This is also seen in later paintings, which show the goddess superimposed on the yoginis.

The latest yogini temple is the one at Mitaoli near Gwalior. This is an empty temple with not a single yogini seen in it anymore. The last inscription in this temple is from 1503, recording the donation of a lamp.

Dr. Dehejia concluded her lecture by showing images of some yogini-chakra diagrams, where the names of the yoginis appear along with numbers, dated between the 18th and 20th centuries. **– *A.S.***

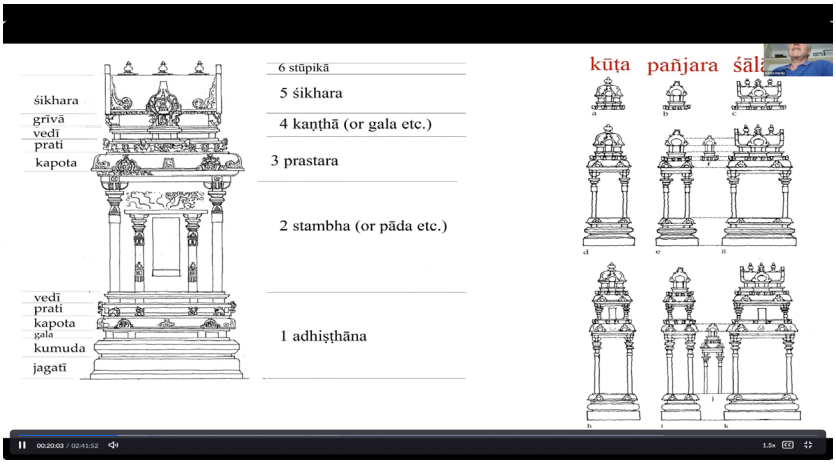
Can You Build a Temple from a Text?

October 18th, 2023, 6:30 PM IST | Dr. Adam Hardy (Emeritus Professor of Asian Architecture at Cardiff University)

'Can You Build a Temple from a Text?' was the compelling title of Dr. Adam Hardy's lecture on how the *Vastu* and *Silpa sastras* guide the construction of Indian temples. He illustrated the process by constructing drawings of South Indian Dravida and North Indian Nagara style temples based on *slokas* from the *Diptagama* and *Aparajitaprccha* respectively. Translating verses from these Sanskrit treatises into temple structures isn't a straightforward process. It requires literal translation in partnership with Sanskrit scholars, followed by adjustments and refinements based on a thorough knowledge of the architectural and cultural context of the Indian temple. Beyond merely following instructions in the texts, it involves a blend of textual guidance and creative interpretation. This allows architects the opportunity to explore within the structure of the craft, while also allowing for ideas that may not be found in the original scriptures. The texts may propose theoretical ideas that serve as inspiration and may not be implemented due to technical constraints. Conversely, the practice might produce innovations not recorded in the texts. Thus, practice and theory feed each other, evolving together. So, while it is rare to find a temple that exactly follows a text, the principles in text and practice are strongly correlated.

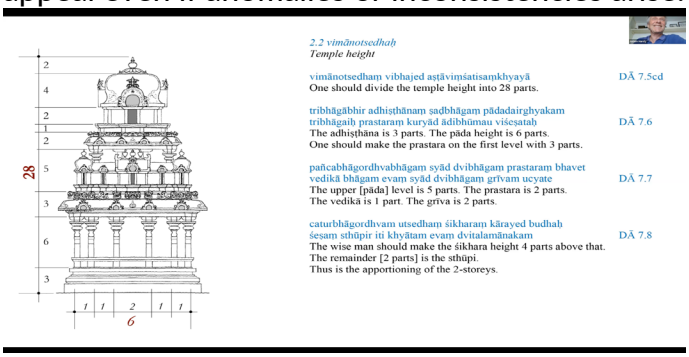
Drawing is the first step towards transforming the verses in the *Vastu* and *Silpa sastras* into monuments in stone. Interestingly, not many examples of such drawings exist. To construct such drawings and models, one needs to understand the lexicon of the architectural style. Dr. Hardy illustrated this with an example of the basic *ekatala alpa vimana* (single-storey simple structure), common in Tamil Nadu temples. He explained the construction principles for Dravida temples found in texts like *Mayamata* and *Manasara* which are *Vastu sastras*, and the *Diptagama* which is a ritual text containing portions on architecture. The variations in this form of the *ekatala* arise from different shapes for the plan like square, circular, rectangular, octagonal, apsidal, etc. in combination with a dome-like *kuta* or a rectangular *sala* on top. The *vimana* of the *ekatala* temple structure also has six vertical divisions described as *sat anga* or *sat varga*, consisting of *adisthana* (a moulded base), *stambha* (wall), *prastara* (entablature), a *kantha* or *griva* (neck with a railing), a *shikhara* (roof), and finally, the *stupika* (finial). It is interesting to note that these same elements may have different names across different texts, while they may also be referred to with different names within the same text.

This basic component of the *ekatala alpa vimana* is replicated to form complex multi-storey, multi-aedicular temple structures with each of the smaller temples containing manifestations, aspects or subordinates of the main deity. This is created with a combination of *kuta*, *sala*, and *panjara* (a *sala* rotated ninety degrees and embedded into the *vimana*). Using photogrammetric models of the temple structure, made by his colleague Kailasha Rao, Dr. Hardy showed how an elevation of a temple structure made from such a drawing of an *ekatala alpa vimana* might look in stone.

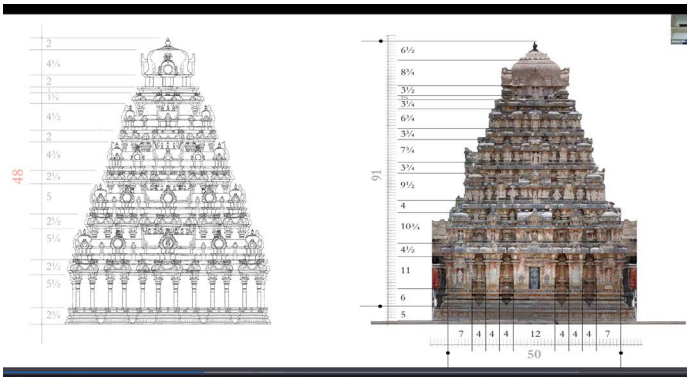


Dr. Hardy described the process of drawing the design of a specific temple type, the *Svastika*, a two-storey temple type from the *Diptagama*. Starting with a base-width of five *hastas* divided into six parts, and a height-to-width ratio of 2:1, the *sloka* proceeds to describe the placement of the *kuta*, *sala*, and *panjara* in the *vimana*. Subsequently, the height is divided into twenty-eight parts, with the various components being assigned heights that should add up to twenty-

eight, if interpreted correctly. It is here that Dr. Hardy illustrated how mathematics and artistry blend in the interpretation, ensuring aesthetic appeal even if anomalies or inconsistencies arise.

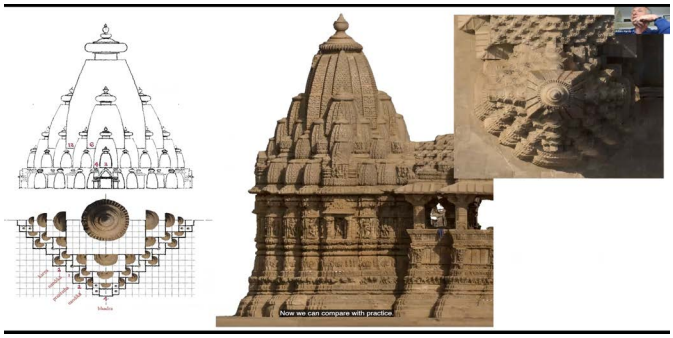


An interesting feature of these texts is that each subsequent variation is described as a modification of the base version, rather than repeating the common specifications. So, *Kailasa* is another two-storey temple type described in the next passage in the *Diptagama*, whose specifications are prescribed as variations with reference to the *Svastika* type. Dr. Hardy showed how the *Kailasa*, with its thirty-four divisions for the height, could be the basis of the Kodumbalur Moovar temple in Pudukkottai, in Tamil Nadu. To conclude the Dravida temple section, Dr. Hardy compared a drawing of a five-storey temple made from the *Mayamata* to the famous Airavateshwara temple in Darasuram.

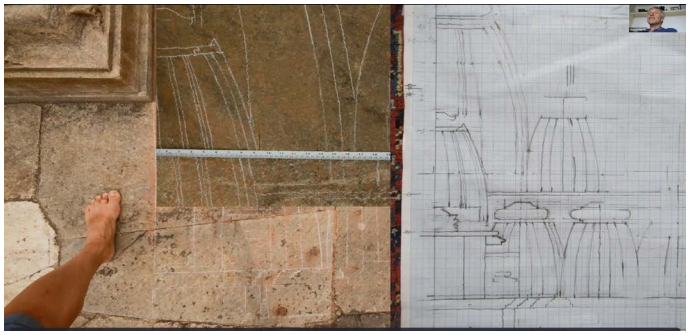


In the second half of the lecture, Dr. Hardy explored the Nagara temples built in Western India around the 10th and 11th centuries. The essential element of this style is the *aneka andaka* or the multiple composite form that evolved from the *latina* type. It is made up of multiple projections and recesses that appear to proliferate, expand downwards and outwards from the central structure, creating a sense of dynamism. Chapter 159 of the *Aparajitaprccha*, a 12th-century text on architecture from Western India, describes twenty-five types of *aneka andaka* temples starting from *kesari* which has five *andakas* all the way up to *meru* which has a hundred and one *andakas*. Each successive type has four more *andakas* than the previous, and the simpler form becomes the top of each subsequent complex type with a *shikhara* at the centre.

Dr. Hardy illustrated the construction of a drawing of a type of temple known as *Indranila* from the *Aparajitaprccha*, which has fifty-three *andakas*, and compared it with a built example of the Jasmalnathji Mahadev temple in Asoda, Gujarat.



To conclude the lecture, Dr. Hardy spoke about a drawing he found in the paving stones at the Sahasra Bahu temple in Nagda, Rajasthan. Though it doesn't exactly match either of the temples at site, it is clear that the drawing served as a point of reference for designing and constructing the temple, from which the architects and craftsmen could even take measurements.



The text and drawings reflect the same way of thinking, according to Dr. Hardy. The texts expect the design of the temples to be drawn for the architects to transmit ideas and instructions to

apprentices and craftsmen. Dr. Hardy illustrated this point by painting a beautiful verbal picture of an apprentice chanting a verse and drawing it under the guidance of a guru who helps interpret the meaning of the various architectural elements that it describes.

From verses to sketches that transform ephemeral ideas into manifested masonry, Dr. Hardy's evocative lecture brought alive the delicate dance between words, lines and shrines in the magical realm of Indian temple architecture. **– *S.R.***

Temples of Central India

October 25th, 2023, 6:30 PM IST | Dr. Tamara Sears (Associate Professor of South Asian Art History at Rutgers University, and Vice President of the American Council of Southern Asian Art (ACSAA))

Kandariya Mahadeva Temple, Khajuraho, Madhya Pradesh, Chandella Dynasty, c. 1025

Introduction

Tamara Sears, Associate Professor of South Asian Art History at Rutgers University, and the author of the much-acclaimed work, *Worldly Gurus and Spiritual Kings: Architecture and Asceticism in Medieval India*, delivered a comprehensive chronological overview of temple architecture in Central India from the 4th to the 11th centuries. She mapped the initial phases of temple construction during the Naga and Gupta periods, around the 4th–5th centuries, before moving on to the nascent stages of Nagara-style temples from the 7th–9th centuries, culminating in their mature forms at the dawn of the millennium.

Sears delved into selected temple sites to trace key developments in architectural evolution and the symbolic import of temple art. Her presentation was layered, focussing on various types of temple sites — ranging from royal temples and pilgrimage centres to local village temples and sectarian shrines — to underscore the diverse functions of temples in different early medieval contexts. Alongside these architectural explorations, she provided a historical backdrop detailing the political dynasties, sectarian influences, and geographical factors that were instrumental in shaping temple construction during this period.

The Naga and Gupta-Era Temples

One of the earliest extant Central Indian temples is located at Pawaya, near Gwalior, constructed during the Naga dynasty's rule, a pre-Gupta power. Initially built as a Shiva temple, from brick, it was later converted into a Vishnu temple during the Gupta period. The advent of the Guptas in the 4th century marked the beginning of the stone-temple era in Central India. Professor Sears provided an in-depth analysis of the Panchayatana Vishnu temple at Deogarh, established in 425 CE at the height of Gupta sovereignty. She elucidated the significance of the three sculptural panels on the temple's *jangha* section: the Gajendra-moksha narrative, Vishnu depicted as Nara-Narayana, and the Ananta-shayana portrayal of Vishnu. She then briefly covered another significant Gupta site, the Udayagiri Caves, focussing on the *ekamukhalinga* representation of Shiva as an ascetic and the grand depiction of Vishnu in his *Varaha* incarnation. These sites likely played a role in Gupta ceremonial consecrations and served as venues for various royal celebrations throughout the year.

Temple Building in the Post-Gupta Age

For a few centuries after the Gupta period, there was a noticeable decline in temple construction. However, temple building resumed with the return of political stability in Northern and Central India during the rule of Harsha (606-647), Yashovarman (720-755) and the Gurjara Pratihara (730-950). The discussion centred on two mid-7th-century Shiva temples in Mahua, which were built with local patronage and represent two different architectural styles. These two temples are known as *Mandapika* and Masonic. The *Mandapika* is a stone-pillared hall that creates the impression of an open-air shrine, while the Masonic temple uses stone extensively to mimic a mountain cave, reflecting the Nagara style. There was also a brief discussion on the Mohaj Mata temple as a cremation ground temple that has an image of Chamunda, underscoring its *tantric* character.

Other significant temples mentioned include the Naresar and the Bateshwar group of temples, constructed between the 8th and 12th centuries, and the Teli Ka Mandir, a Shiva temple from the 8th century, featuring a rectangular structure with a roof that extends into a vaulted chamber, known as the *Valabhi* style. Under the imperial patronage of the Gurjara-Pratiharas, particularly with the construction of the Chaturbhuj temple around 875-876 CE, there was a significant increase in the complexity and proliferation of the iconographic programme. This development would later reach its zenith under their successor dynasties.

Temples at the Turn of the Millennia

At the millennium's turn, the Pratihara-Gurjara empire gave way to several smaller dynasties: the Kachchhapaghatas, the Paramaras, the Chandelas, and the Kalachuris. It was during this era that Nagara-style temples achieved their mature form, reaching unprecedented monumentality. Among the earliest monumental Nagara-style temples, Professor Sears highlighted the Kakanmath temple at Sihoniya and the Sas-Bahu temple at Gwalior, both erected by the Kachchhapaghata dynasty.

Yet, it was the Chandela dynasty's construction of the Khajuraho temple complex that epitomised the era's architectural grandeur and intensity. The addition of multiple *mandapas* and the *Urushringa* design exemplified the concept of the temple as both a towering mountain peak and a cosmic representation. To illustrate how Hindu beliefs were intertwined with architecture and sculpture, she pointed out the strategic placement of *mithuna* figures — symbolising the union of male and female energies — at the temple junctions. Furthermore, she noted the positioning of the seven *matrika* figures within the *jangha* section of a temple, the female energy serving as a protective layer.

Professor Sears then turned to the now-dilapidated yogini temples adjacent to the Khajuraho temple complex and the 10th-century yogini temple at Bhedaghat in Jabalpur, constructed by the Kalachuris. While these temples typically remained hidden due to their association with esoteric rituals, the Bhedaghat temple stood out for its monumental scale and royal patronage. The ruling elite frequented this temple to invoke the yoginis' power for kingdom protection, military victory, and territorial defence.

Concluding Remarks

Concluding her presentation, she shifted focus from grand, royal-sponsored temples to those with localised patronage, which represent the majority of surviving temples in Central India. Despite their smaller scale, these temples share the same architectural language and symbolic meanings as their more monumental counterparts. She noted that some of these smaller temples were strategically built at village boundaries, serving as markers and contributing to placemaking. She also discussed the phenomenon of temples falling into disuse before being reconsecrated for worship again. As a case in point, she mentioned the 11th-century Toteshwara Mahadeva temple in Kadwaha, which was revived for worship after a significant period of inactivity, as confirmed by inscriptions. The lecture concluded with a lively question-and-answer session that shed further light on the Central Indian temples. **– *M.M.***

Kingship, Authority, and Legitimacy: The Jagdish and Amba Mata Temples in Udaipur

November 1st, 2023, 6:30 PM IST | Dr. Jennifer Joffee (Art History faculty at Inver Hills Community College in St. Paul, Minnesota)

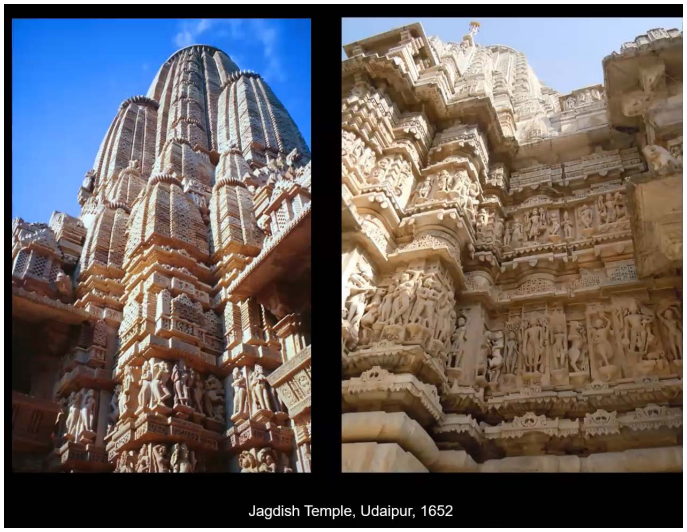
Dr. Jennifer Joffee is a scholar of Mewar art and architecture from the 17th and early 18th centuries, focussing on how they reflect and reinforce political and cultural identities. This presentation by her focussed on the temple-building activities of the Sisodia rulers of Mewar, who used them as a way of expressing their political and religious identity in relation to the Mughal empire. She explained how temples served various purposes, such as earning religious merit, creating sacred spaces, and showcasing patronage. The Sisodias were contrasted with the Kachhwahas of Amber, who were more willing to adopt the Mughal style and accept their sovereignty, while the Sisodias resisted and negotiated their power through art and architecture.

In the 17th century, this was expressed in Udaipur, Rajasthan, through two temples. The city centre hosts the magnificent Jagdish Temple, commissioned by Jagat Singh (r. 1628-1652). This temple is a few minutes' walk from the royal City Palace, whereas the humble Amba Mata Temple, erected by his son and heir, Raj Singh (r. 1652-1680), is secluded outside the city walls, away from public gaze.

Another temple important to the discussion was the Eklingji temple. Though the Sisodias claimed to be descendants of Lord Rama, a Hindu god, they worshipped Shiva Eklingji and considered him as supreme and the true ruler of Mewar, while considering themselves just as *diwans*. This was written in the *Eklinga Mahatmya*, an important literary work in Mewar.

Dr. Joffee also discussed the significance of Chittor, a hilltop fortress in Rajasthan, from the point of view of the Mughal-Mewar relation. Chittor was the capital of the Sisodia clan, a powerful Rajput dynasty, until Akbar conquered it in 1567. Chittor was so important that two pages from the *Akbarnama* were dedicated to the Battle of Chittor. After the battle, the Sisodia rulers had to move to Udaipur and rule from the City Palace, a grand complex in Udaipur that Amar Singh built after having signed a treaty with the Mughals in 1615, in the reign of Jahangir, that forbade them from restoring Chittor.

The treaty marked a turning point in Mewar's art and architecture. The most significant architectural developments in Udaipur took place under the rule of Jagat Singh, who ruled during the reign of Shah Jahan. Jagat Singh built many lake palaces and the Jagdish temple to show his power and claim.



Jagdish Temple, Udaipur, 1652

THE JAGDISH TEMPLE

This temple functioned as a device for political propaganda in the context of 17th-century Mewar.

About the Temple: In the heart of the old city, near the City Palace, a majestic temple of Vishnu rises above the street level. The temple is built on a 25-foot-high platform that is approached by 32 steps. It has a *shikhara*, or tower, that reaches 80 feet in height and is surrounded by four smaller shrines. The temple is devoted to Vishnu, the Hindu god of preservation, and features a statue of his mount Garuda at the entrance. Being a Panchayatana-style temple, it also has four other subsidiary shrines which are dedicated to Surya, Durga, Ganesh and Shiva. The temple is a focal point in the city, where many roads meet, and attracts many devotees.

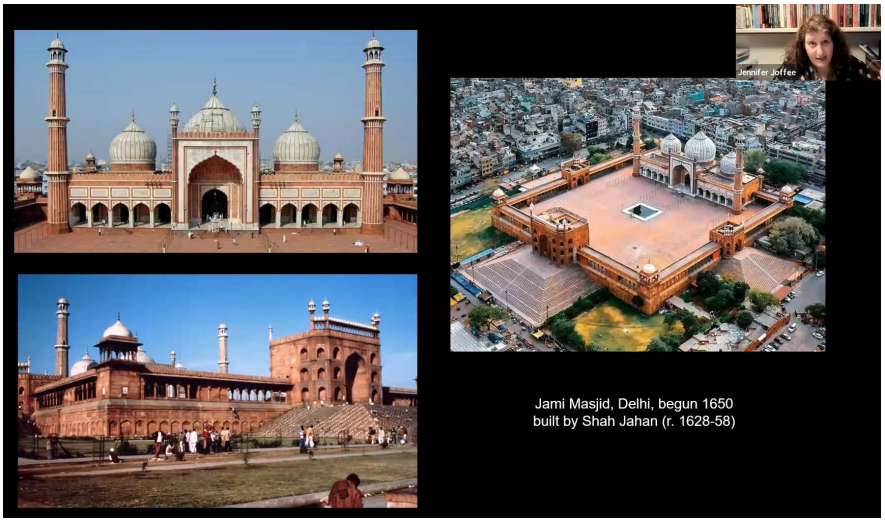
Inscription Panels: Visitors to the temple are greeted at the entrance by four slate panels that display the lineage of the Sisodia claim to be the

descendants of Lord Rama. The panels also boast of their military achievements and victories over their enemies. The sculptural programme is high relief in most parts and is profusely decorated with figures of *mithuna*, *nagas*, as well as musicians and dancers.

Connections Drawn to Other Structures in Mewar: Dr. Joffee reveals the connection between three historical structures in the region: the Jagdish temple, the Vishnu temple at Eklingji built by Rana Kumbha, and the Vijay Sthambh at Chittor Fort. According to her, these structures have three things in common: they are dedicated to Vishnu, they have high-relief sculptural decorations, and they have been modelled from a similar architectural style. The Vijay Sthambh and the Jagdish temple are monumental, and have inscriptions that celebrate military victories. The Jagdish temple even holds an inscription that proclaims Mewar's victory in the Battle of Haldighati, contrary to the popular understanding that sources from the Mughal court records. These temple inscriptions commemorate victory landmarks – real or imagined – that serve as symbols of triumph, power and pride.

Sasodias Negotiating Mughal Supremacy: Certain facets of the Jagdish temple resemble some Mughal monuments of the same period. The temple's huge façade approached by a monumental staircase was likened by Dr. Joffee to that at the Jami mosque in Delhi and the Buland Darwaza at Fatehpur Sikri. Apart from mentioning the artists and calligraphers, the Jagdish temple and the Jami mosque have inscriptions that praise their respective rulers as meritorious and benevolent, and celebrate their own dynasty's military victories, thus functioning as a marker of victory. Inscriptions on the Jagdish temple claim Jagat Singh as Jagannath or Jagdish or the king of the world, much like the title 'Shah Jahan' that is inscribed in the panels of the Jami mosque. These function as a way of asserting imperial legitimacy. It was also suggested that the Jagdish temple would have been Jagat Singh's counter-statement to Shah jahan building the Jami mosque.

A Royal Chronicle: The Mewar *Ramayana* consists of over 450 paintings depicting the *Ramayana*, commissioned by Jagat Singh. Apart from being a visual depiction of the *Ramayana*, it also displays the Sisodia history and culture. Many paintings contain the sun with a smiling face against the blue skies that is a part of the Sisodia coat of arms. The Sisodia monarchs are depicted as Rama's descendants in the Mewar *Ramayana*, seen through the contemporary clothing of the Sisodias of Mewar being utilised for Lord Rama's army. Meanwhile, Ravana and his clan were depicted as the Mughals would be. This reflects the power struggle between Mewar and the Mughal emperors. The work contains texts about the Chittor Tower and the reigns of Jagat Singh and his son Raj Singh at Chittor. It also implies that, despite the treaty, Chittor was under constant restoration. The Mewar *Ramayana* is a historical literature that commemorates the genealogy of Mewar's monarchs. It is likened to the Mughal chronicles such as the *Badshahnama*, *Baburnama* and the *Akbarnama*, which also record the deeds and achievements of their ancestors.



In the second section, Dr. Joffee presented the Amba Mata temple built in 1664, which functions under the royal Eklingji Trust, showing its imperial links and authority. Though this temple was not a medium of propaganda, it was a political apparatus employed towards the general populous of Mewar.

AMBA MATA TEMPLE

This is a humble temple surrounded by high walls, with an entry door flanked by painted tigers and stately guardians. It is the place where the goddess is said to have first visited the city.

About the Temple and its Origin: The Amba Mata

temple in Udaipur, Rajasthan, was built to honour the grace of the goddess who healed Maharaja Raj Singh's severe eye problem. The king had dug out her stone idol where the goddess revealed herself, and there is a shrine, located under a neem tree, where the goddess is believed to have taken her first step upon arrival in Udaipur.

The Artistic Programme: Unlike older, more ornate temples, this little edifice is unadorned from the exterior. The interior contrastingly features coloured glass windows, fresco paintings, glass mosaics, and illustrations depicting diverse themes and symbols.

During the presentation, some red and black frescos were shown. They contained actual and imaginary creatures, and scenarios associated with the temple's royal patrons framed by black, floral borders. One of them had two composite characters, one with the body of a tiger and the head of an elephant facing another with the body of a lion, bird heads instead of paws and tail, and a woman's face. Another fresco showed a big vulture surrounded by little elephants. It reminds one of Roc from *Arabian Nights*, a massive mythological bird believed to lift elephants as food for its young. The next fresco depicted two men on elephant back. The elephant carries a lotus in his trunk, while one of the two men is holding the Sisodia flag with the smiling sun insignia.

One of the frescos is of cow herders and five red-spotted cows that alludes to Bappa Rawal, the founder of the Sisodia dynasty. He was a cowherder who rose to the position of king with the blessings of Shiva and the goddess. The goddess appeared to him and handed him a sword to build his empire. After that, he conquered Chittor and made it their capital. He also constructed the Eklingji temple to honour Shiva. Another painting portrayed a twenty-armed image of the goddess in the domed pavilion, with Ganesha identified by his *vahana*, Surya identified by the lotuses he holds, and Indra in his vehicle with the seven-headed horse, as well as others. There are two central figures. One is a man worshipping, while the other could be Ardhanarishwara, who is half man and half woman, implying the feminine-masculine synergy of the goddess and Shiva, in the establishment of the empire, which is also related to the Bappa Rawal legend.

The door guardians, one blue and another white, are done in mirrorwork. They each hold a sword and a trident. The multicoloured glass above the sanctum's doorway depicts the goddess, flanked by Beru figures representing protection and power. The panels with paintings at the doorway portray the Sisodia kings and their dynastic lineage. Some portraits have their names engraved beneath them. These represent the monarchs in a variety of attitudes and occupations, such as standing, riding horses, and worshipping at sacred sites such as Eklingji and Nathdwara.

Amba Mata, The Divine Protector: The primary idol of Amba Mata in the sanctum has four arms and holds a sword and a trident in her upper hands, and a wheel and a *panpatra* in her lower hands. There is an additional sword beside her, which is supposed to have emanated from the goddess and was bestowed upon Bappa Rawal, as previously mentioned, and later upon Rana Hamir Singh. These two rulers conquered Chittor between the 8th and 14th centuries. The sword represents the dynastic legitimacy gained from the goddess' blessings.

Sisodia Legacy in Rajsamand: Amba Mata is considered as the *Kuldevi* of the Sisodia rulers. She is known by various local names, such as *Vindhyavasini* or Goddess of the Vindhya Mountains, *Ban Mata* and *Rashtrasena* or Army of the State; but Amba Mata is her universal name. She is the foremost guardian of the empire. The Amba Mata temple is visited by locals to seek blessings and success in digging wells. One of the notable works of Raj Singh is the Rajsamand,

a large artificial lake that served as a relief for famine and drought. The lake has stone pavilions that appear to be floating on the water, and wall panels with many scenes depicting Vishnu, the churning of the ocean, scenes from the *Ramayana* and Mewar's military victories. It also mentions the meritorious deeds of Raj Singh who constructed numerous other temples in the region. This religious patronage was a strategic way of cultivating the region into a political and religious capital. It was Raj Singh's device for glorifying himself and once again, communicating the Sisodia greatness.

Temples: Power and Identity

Dr. Joffee's presentation shows how building temples was not only a religious act for patrons and rulers, but also a way of expressing their identity and aspirations. She further suggests that the Sisodias used temple architecture to create a sense of historical continuity and legitimacy in the face of Mughal presence and supremacy.

Each of these architectural endeavors were a part of the Sisodia rulers' carefully planned imperial programme that was intended to support social legitimacy in response to the changing political landscape, and was also a manifestation of their religious cosmology.

According to Dr. Joffee, the Eklingji temple, the Jagdish temple, and the Amba Mata temple are tangible embodiments of their respective deities, Shiva, Vishnu, and the Goddess. The temples reflect a tripartite cosmology: Shiva as the highest deity worshipped by the Sisodias, Vishnu's incarnation Lord Rama whose descendants the Sisodia rulers claim to be, and the goddess as Kuldevi who supports the Sisodia monarchs in acquiring and sustaining their realm.

Through this presentation, the Amba Mata temple was shown to play a vital role in the sustenance of the Sisodia monarchy, the Eklingji temple was represented as a symbol of devotion to Shiva as the supreme ruler of the empire, and the Jagdish temple was considered to be built as a victory marker and as a monumental tribute to the rulers themselves.**– *P.P.***

Temples Between Empires: Architectural Encounters in Banaras, c. 1750-1850

November 8th, 2023, 6:30 PM IST | Dr. Heeryoon Shin (Assistant Professor of Art History and Visual Culture at Bard College)

"The three worlds form one city of mine, and Kashi is my royal palace therein."
– Skanda Purana

Banaras, the throbbing centre of India's sacred landscape is truly a city like no other. "It is a city as rich as all India" says Diana L. Eck in her book, *Banaras: City of Light*. Varanasi, Banaras, Kashi – city of light – the city has many names as a beloved should and a multitude of facets. It stands to reason that as the Indian Temples course neared its culmination, an exploration of the fascinating city of Banaras along the ethereal Ganges was indispensable.

Manikarnika Ghat in Banaras from 'Benares, the sacred city' book by E. B. Havell, 1905
Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Manikarnika_Ghat_in_Banaras_(Varanasi)_1905.png

Professor Heeryoon Shin, assistant professor of Art History and Visual Culture at Bard College, New York, specialises in South and East Asian Art. At present Banaras is her muse as her current project focusses on architectural revival, mobility and cross-cultural exchange in early colonial India through the lens of temple architecture in the sacred pilgrimage city of Banaras.

"Banaras is older than history, older than tradition, older even than legend and looks twice as old as all of them put together."
- Mark Twain

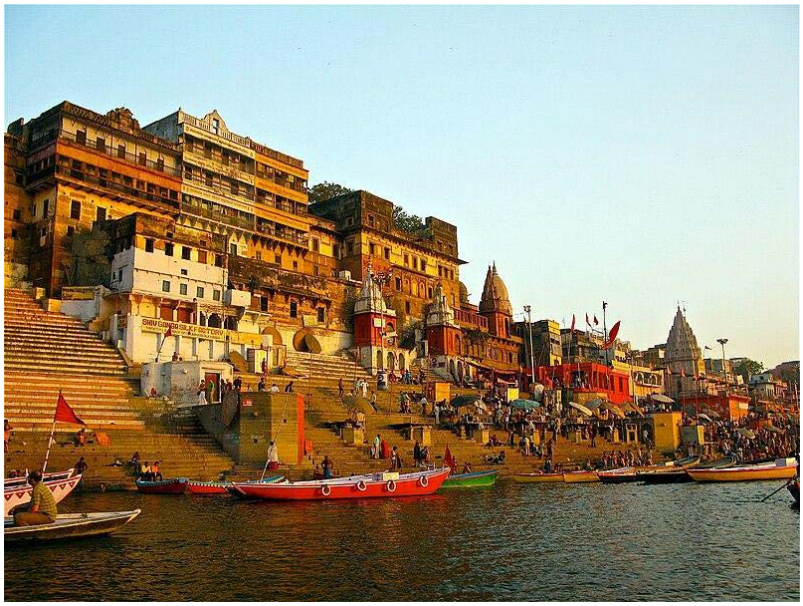
Professor Shin's lecture commenced by encouraging us to examine the contradiction between how old the city of Banaras is in comparison to varying ages and styles of its myriad temples and other architectural structures. The premise of the session was, therefore, to challenge the belief that Banaras had an uninterrupted and monolithic Hindu past and to determine the impact of multiple layers of history and dynamic cultural exchange.

The first part of the lecture focussed on developments in temple building in Banaras during the 16th and 17th centuries. This was a vital step to understanding what followed in the time frame that was the focus of session – the 18th-century building boom in Banaras.

Sixteenth-century Banaras was under the patronage of the Kachhwaha Rajput rulers who carried out abundant temple and ghat repairs and built Sanskrit schools and palaces. We took a close look at the Man Mandir Ghat, delving into its history, patronage and intricacies of style. This period was also witness to a large influx of Brahmin scholars from the Deccan region and the south of India. They composed eulogies and wrote pilgrimage texts. These then came to define the sacred landscape of Banaras.

We then moved on to 17th-century Banaras and Professor Shin unpacked the details of the extensive temple destruction that took place under Aurangzeb's rule. We were also given the tools to understand how this was essentially political rather than religiously motivated. As Maratha power grew and expanded northward, the Mughal emperor wanted to send out an aggressive warning to Brahmin patrons who supported Shivaji.

The 18th and 19th centuries were an important transitional period in the history and remodelling of Banaras. It was a time of extensive and dynamic shifts as the city and the country were caught between two empires - the Mughal and the British. In the midst of it all, Banaras was being extensively rebuilt and transformed. As a result of this dynamic renewal, Banaras ascended to new heights as a significant nucleus for trade, banking and connectivity whilst also retaining its position of an illustrious pilgrimage centre. The paramount role of Queen Ahilyabai Holkar of Indore was presented as a case study. Of particular consequence was the restoration of the Kashi Vishwanath temple and this was discussed in some depth. This enhanced our understanding of how the role of patronage in Banaras presented a vital political edge. It also established how patrons defined their worldview by the mix of architectural styles they chose – revival of pre-Mughal architecture to show their connection to their roots, while also including more contemporary features exhibiting their readiness to embrace modernity. Professor Shin put it lucidly when she said, "R*ather than seeing these as debased forms that do not follow the rules of earlier traditions, this new style of temple architecture should be understood as an expression of the aspiration to appear rooted in an ancient Hindu tradition and yet remain as an active participant in*



Ahilya Ghat
Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ahilya_Ghat_by_the_Ganges,_Varanasi.jpg

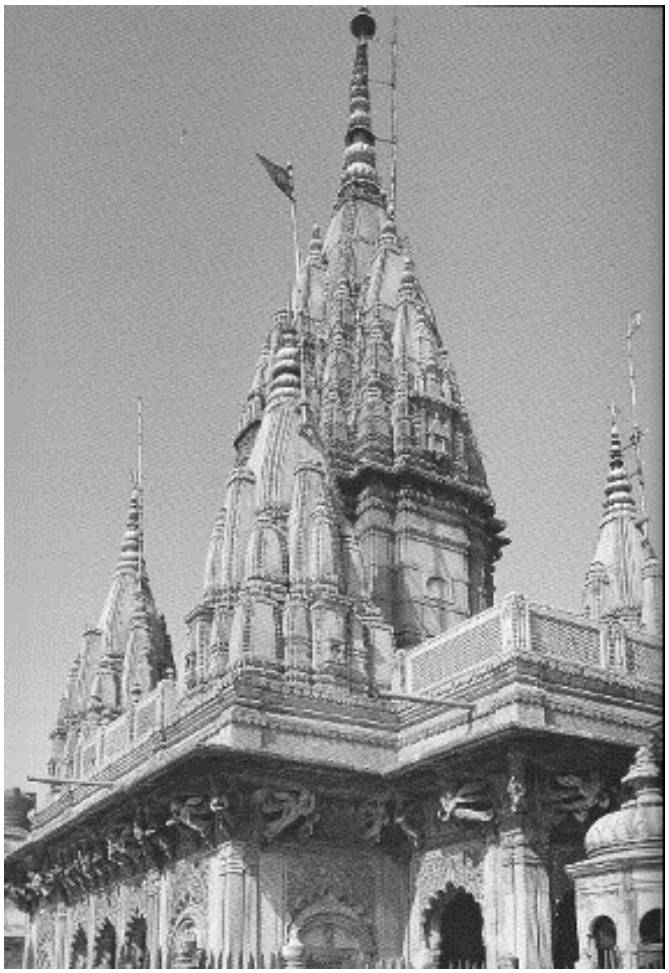
the wider contemporary courtly world."

The second part of the lecture took a deep dive into one single temple in Banaras that would enable us to inquire into the dynamic architectural lexicon and ornamentation developing in 19th -century Banaras. The Amethi temple dedicated to goddess Balatripurasundari but named after its patron Madhu Singh - ruler of Amethi, was built at another important historical moment, the end of Mughal rule and the beginning of the British regime. Therefore, the patronage of the Amethi temple at this crucial moment would have established Madhu Singh as an eminent patron and a person of significance.

Occupying a distinctive spot along the riverfront, the Amethi temple is amply visible from the river. Professor Shin delved into the role of the temple in Banaras' contemporary history by exploring three major aspects of developing visual iconography and political affinities that were affirmed within Amethi's architectural choices: the judicious choice of revivalist architectural style and motifs as visible in the superstructure, the connection to courtly culture and the application of a renewed visual language to the forms of deities.

The establishment of the Amethi temple represents the interconnectedness of Hindu temple architecture within a more expansive local, regional and global dynamic that the 19th century represented. It demonstrates that the Hindu temple and Banaras's changing dynamic was entrenched not only in local and regional idiom but espoused links to global networks of objects, artisans and patrons.

Renowned as the oldest, most ancient Hindu pilgrimage centre, the temples of Banaras recount a significantly different tale. Banaras is certainly ancient, however, its temples not always so. Kashi has been central to a multiplicity of political hierarchies, extensive temple patronage and diverse cultural and artistic traditions. Banaras has metamorphosed multiple times and still somehow retains its aura of perpetuity. Banaras remains eternal. **– *H.K.***



Amethi temple
Source: https://culturalheritageofvaranasi.com/notable_temples/shiva-durga-temple-of-amethy/

Mud, Stone, and Brick: Western Himalayan and Tibetan Buddhist Architecture

November 16th, 2023, 6:30 PM IST | Dr. Melissa R. Kerin (Associate Professor of Art History at Washington and Lee University in Virginia)

Detailed reportage will be carried in the next JPM Quarterly (Apr - Jun '24)

CRITICISM & THEORY

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

An Uncomfortable Tour Through The Museum

Musée d'Orsay | Photo: Adira Thekkuveettil

The museum is under attack. So began my concept note for the recently concluded lecture series under the Aesthetics, Criticism & Theory rubric at Jnanapravaha Mumbai. But what really constitutes an attack against an institution like the museum? The title of the series extended an invitation to explore this very question – by offering an *uncomfortable* tour through the history, present as well as future of the museum.

Discomfort is never aspired to, but to understand, to listen, to see and to then, (perhaps) learn, discomfort is essential. Over a fourteen-session series spanning debates on the colonial museum to more transient forms of contemporary exhibitions like biennales, art fairs and private mega museums, we took a particularly productive, albeit uncomfortable tour through the very idea of the museum. The roster of scholars for this series were all without exception at the cutting edge of critical engagement with the museum – whether as academics, curators, artists, writers, activists or thinkers.

This issue of the quarterly carries reports of four of the talks as part of this series, including those by Arjun Appadurai, Tapati Guha-Thakurta, Dan Hicks, and Anthony Gardner, which are written by the participants of the series. These reports provide an expanded sense of the debates, questions, concepts, ideas and possible interventions that were offered by each scholar in the series. To read through them is to take another tour through the universe of the museum, from grasping prevailing debates over the last half century, leading through the challenges of upgrading a large legacy museum like the Indian Museum into a modern institution, and considering what it means to be an institution attempting to 'decolonise' its complex legacy to address more diverse audiences. The traditional museum was not the only site of scrutiny as scholars took the series through debates around the art fair, the biennale, the archive, the intangible forms of memorialising, as well the emergence of privately funded mega galleries and museums across the globe.

Each talk in this series has been both rigorous and revealing, throwing up challenges to our understanding while also proposing new strategies and approaches to engage with this dynamic field of study, activism and engagement. To be considering these questions as students among a community of scholars, as well as fellow participants, including artists, curators, writers, scholars, lawyers, and museum workers in various capacities working within the institutions under scrutiny, has been an especially illuminating experience. Through this two-month-long tour, the museum has come alive for many of us in ways that we could not have previously imagined, it has challenged us in ways that we had not thought it could, and it has revealed the centrality of its place within the culture, society and the political transformations of our time in ways that previously were not easily evident. In that way, this journey has reassuringly felt akin to the ancient Greek understanding of the museum as a site of contemplation and debate. **– *A.T.***

Aesthetics, Criticism & Theory

PAST PROGRAMMES

The Museum as an Object Lesson

October 26th, 2023, 6:30 - 8:30 PM IST | Dr. Arjun Appadurai (Emeritus Professor in Media, Culture and Communication at New York University, and Max Weber Global Professor at The Bard Graduate Center in New York)

In his keynote lecture for the recently concluded Aesthetics, Criticism & Theory course on the museum, delivered through a sometimes-faulty internet connection to a global cohort of participants, Professor Arjun Appadurai laid the foundation for the entire series in a wonderfully expansive, and yet surprisingly succinct manner. Over the course of an hour, we were led through over four decades of debate around the place of the museum as an institution of culture and soft power, the shifts in its relevance in the global north and south, and its current place within India – one that is both precarious and seeing an unprecedented resurgence depending on the perspective from which it is considered.

The Exhibitionary Complex

Professor Appadurai began by re-examining a 1988 text by the renowned cultural studies scholar, Tony Bennett. Titled *The Exhibitionary Complex*, Bennett's analysis charts the arenas of crises in the modern museum, tracing its history as an institution to reveal how its very foundation, administration, and roles across the centuries, particularly in the anglophone world, have been tied to ideas of order and control. Taking off from Michel Foucault's groundbreaking thesis connecting institutions of surveillance and discipline with power, Bennett proposed that the exhibitionary complex too was a site of discipline and surveillance, but through culture. In an interesting inversion of Foucault's proposition that power is exerted and maintained by the surveillance and ordering of minds and bodies within institutions, Bennett proposed that the museum reverses the orientations of the disciplinary, subjecting objects rather than subjects to classification and control, and through the public display of ordered worlds, allows its viewers to observe, survey and ultimately participate in their own ordering. Thus, the construction of the citizen from the viewer takes shape in a fascinating formation through the museum – through the display of the neat, ordered and classified objects and ideas proposed by the museum, the world is made legible, mappable and therefore controllable.

In considering this within the context of Southasian museums, however, an interesting contrast emerges, as Professor Appadurai pointed out. In much of the postcolonial world, particularly India, the museum – particularly large state-run museums – have long found themselves to be dusty institutions far removed from the beating hearts of Indian society, like markets, festivals, and religious sites, and fail particularly spectacularly as an exhibitionary complex when compared to the cinema or cricket. And yet, the resurgence of the museum as an exhibitionary complex in contemporary India could very well be considered within Bennett's analysis. To lead us into thinking about this interesting juxtaposition more precisely, Professor Appadurai introduced a more recent text from 2015 – Jasan Farago's essay *Why Museums are the New Churches.*

The Museum as a Church (Or Temple)

Within contemporary consciousness, an interesting shift has been in progress from thinking of the museum as hulking encyclopaedic complexes filled with the objects of our collective past, into the more recent gleaming temples to art, designed by celebrity architects, heavily invested in contemporary art, employing cutting-edge technology and squarely positioned as the leaders of the socio-cultural landscape. Farago proposes that the place of this new generation of museums, often funded by massive private donations from billionaires and corporations, is more akin to that once held by churches and temples as the centres of the social and cultural lives of their societies. This holds true in the Indian context as well, where in the last decade alone, more new, private and state-funded museums have opened than in the entire period since the British Raj. To think of these new museums as temples in the Indian context is fascinating especially when considering them through the lens of Bennett's exhibitionary complex. What would it mean to consider the ways disciplinary motives play out within these new spaces, and how new imaginations of culture and society are being ordered for public consumption?

Professor Appadurai further complicated the place of the museum, its holdings as well as its influence by asking an important question on the people whose cultures and objects are within these institutions. Particularly within the western world, the museum's legacy as a colonial institution holding the objects and art of the societies they once colonised has rightly been challenged, with calls for restitution and return growing louder and more defined every day. Yet although museums are beginning to awkwardly address some of these demands, the nation states within which they function continue to actively police and violently repress the people whose cultural artefacts they hold with such pride. To consider this in the context of the escalating refugee crisis in Europe is particularly disturbing. As Professor Appadurai eloquently put it, it seems that the West does not want to repatriate the objects in its museums, but would very much like for the people seeking refuge in their countries to go back where they came from.

Professor Appadurai urged us to consider if perhaps the objects held within museums could themselves be considered refugees. These are artefacts that have been irrevocably divorced from their original contexts, homes and purposes, and made to stand in as stationary signifiers of cultures deemed to be unchanging, even though the history and meaning of each such object is fundamentally altered with each act of showing, storing, selling, archiving or even in its restitution.

The New Exhibitionary Complex

In the concluding section of his keynote, Professor Appadurai connected the idea of the exhibitionary complex with that of the museum as the new church to examine the rapidly transforming landscape of museums and cultural institutions in contemporary India. Under the current government, both the transformation of older museums as well as the rapid propagation of new museum-like spaces more closely resemble Bennett's exhibitionary complex, while also adapting the spectacular and sublime nature of the temple or religious institution. Fascinatingly, in mainstream Indian society, the boundaries between the temple, the market, the fair, the cinema and the museum all seem to be collapsing into each other, expertly curated by the state to offer up a cohesive spectacle that is at the same time participatory, yet passive. Here, visitors are encouraged to participate in the spectacle – through the act of taking photographs and videos, and sharing their experiences over social media, but their participation is seen to be valid only if it doesn't question the spectacle or its message (both underlying and evident). How may we then critically understand this new exhibitionary complex of power, surveillance, control, and order that is taking shape in India and elsewhere, and how may we challenge it?

In his concluding remarks, Professor Appadurai indicated that a return to focussing on the material rather than the spectacular was one path where a challenge to the totality of the spectacle of the new exhibitionary complex was perhaps possible. To return to the object, the artefact, the art and the human, as a way to demystify and make visible the forces of control and order. It is a proposition that does not promise an easy solution, but instead, a viable path that may build itself into a challenge. ***– A.T.***

'A Uncomfortable Tour': Through the Indian Museum, Kolkata

November 2nd, 2023, 6:30 - 8:30 PM IST | Dr. Tapati Guha-Thakurta (Honorary Professor in History and the former Director of the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta (CSSSC))

The subject of my essay: "The Museum in the Colony: Collecting, Conserving, Classifying", from, Tapati Guha-Thakurta, *Monuments, Objects, Histories: Institutions of Art in Colonial and Postcolonial India*

The lecture by Prof. Tapati Guha-Thakurta was the second session of the 'An Uncomfortable Tour Through the Museum' course. Prof. Thakurta borrowed a part of the course title for her talk, calling it 'The Uncomfortable Tour of the Indian Museum, Kolkata'. She dedicated her talk to the late Indian art historian and scholar Kavita Singh, who worked closely with her on the bicentenary celebrations of the Indian Museum and contributed significantly to the field of museum studies.

The speaker introduced the Indian Museum as a 19th-century 'encyclopaedic' museum, and the first museum of the British empire, which would influence the other museums that appeared in and around its inception. She referred to Prof. Arjun Appadurai's introductory talk to the series, in which he had discussed the relevance of a museum set within a colony of the British empire and how they became "microcosms of the empire", and the kinds of knowledge required for governing and administering the colonies. Housed within well-defined prominent institutions such as the Royal Asiatic Society, the Geological Survey of India, the Zoological Survey of India, and the Botanical Survey of India, the museum became a part of the knowledge complex of the empire. Tracing its origins to 1813, a year in which Dr. Nathaniel Wallich, a botanist, started working on the museum in the Asiatic Society of Bengal with a mandate of collecting "all articles that may tend to illustrate oriental manners and history and elucidate the peculiar features of art and nature in the East".

The Indian Museum, née the Imperial Museum, initially consisted of botanical, geological, archaeological and zoological specimens, and was followed by 'industrial' or decorative arts and crafts. Many of the specimens still lay in the same position they were in during the museum building's opening in 1872, pointing to the static display and lack of imagination of the curators and the administration. In a way, it adamantly carries its former unfazed 19th-century image into the 21st century, avoiding any prominent changes undergone by many of its counterparts worldwide.

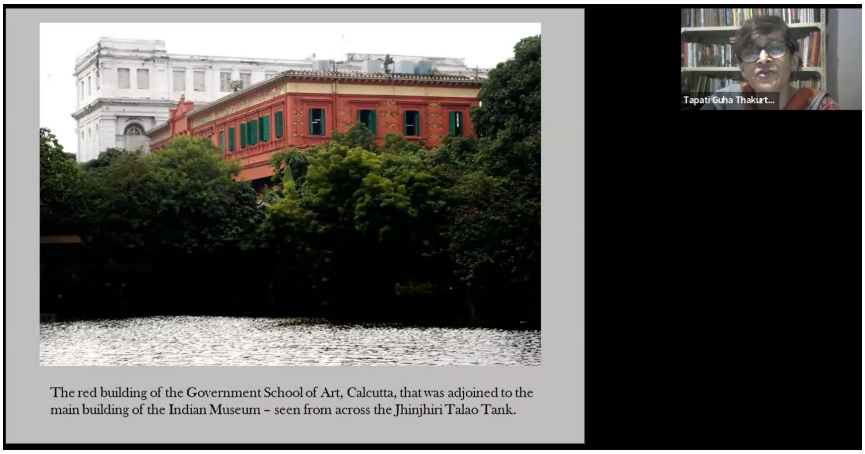
Prof. Thakurta showed some prominent objects from the museum collection that continue to be displayed from the time of its opening, including a wooden carved house-front from Kathiawar, displayed at the Calcutta Exhibition of 1883-84. The then-curators would have acquired such objects to build the museum's collection. It was also with this exhibition that the arts and crafts objects became a part of the museum collection. International and national exhibitions played a vital role in the development of museums in the late 19th – early 20th centuries. The speaker also points out the importance of art schools, drawing a parallel with the Dr. Bhau Daji Lad Museum in Mumbai, then known as the Victoria & Albert Museum, Bombay, and the Bombay School of Art, now known as the Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy School of Art. Art schools were set up by the empire based on the South Kensington model with the aim of playing a part in the training of industrial arts and crafts and, in turn, producing objects for

the museum.

Prof. Thakurta also spoke of the role of archaeology in Indian museums. The colonisers not only documented and excavated archaeological sites of importance, but in many cases, completely cleared the objects from the sites and moved and assembled them in museums. The ones that could not be shipped to Britain found their way into Indian museums, such as the Madras Museum or the Imperial Museum. On many occasions, these objects were damaged due to being moved, and found themselves housed in an institution without the original context. She provided an example of the Bharhut sculptures that Alexander Cunningham excavated in the 1870s-80s and moved to a location and position in which they have remained for the past century. In addition, the Indian Museum, Kolkata, has one of the country's most extensive collections of Gandharan-period sculptures and many other objects of national importance, including the Rampurva lion capital – the objects date from the early common era until the 12th–13th centuries. Many sculptures were also received from private collectors, such as A.M. Broadley, which were displayed and continue to be in the surroundings of the museum courtyard. Prof. Thakurta described this shift of the sculpture from its site into a museum as its transition into an 'object of art' housed in the institution.

Moving from the Indian Museum's colonial past, the museum collection, and display, the speaker discussed present-day museology-related concerns of storage, documentation, and care. She highlighted the need for digitisation and documentation of the museum's objects and archive, drawing a direct comparison with the National Museum in Delhi, which still faces an uncertain future and may need to make way for the new Parliament complex. Like the Indian Museum, the National Museum lacks a complete inventory or documentation of its objects. The speaker felt that tracing all objects would be difficult without knowing what existed in the museum. She feared for the objects' safety. Returning to the Indian Museum, Prof. Thakurta also highlighted some other issues, such as the dependency on the staff's memory for the library rather than a formal documentation system or process, the lack of awareness regarding preventive care of objects, which she illustrated giving an example of the railing pillar displayed in the sculpture gallery. In her experience as a committee member who celebrated the bicentenary years of the museum, she further shed light on the work with a government institution, which appears stuck in bureaucratic problems that overshadow the museum's priorities. She also pointed out that the Rampurva lion capital was damaged during internal movement a few years ago. The missing conservator position at the Indian Museum is of grave concern. However, a couple of galleries spark hope with the modernising vision of a museum curator.

In conclusion, the lecture indeed presented a not-so-comfortable tour, walking through the museum's multitude of facets, beginning with its colonial past, the idea of collecting and the collection, the life of objects and their stories, museological aspects of documentation, storage, display, care, and lastly, the lack of leadership, infrastructure, and vision to modernise the institution to bring it to contemporary times. It also got many humane angles and drew equivalents with its much younger sibling, the National Museum, New Delhi. Although the talk was based on many findings from the speaker's paper from 2014, it appeared to set an apt background for discussing the concerns in the wider museum sector today. One wonders whether the museums, be they governmental or non-governmental, are investing enough in their primary infrastructure, staff training, and resources to archive, care for, and maintain objects in their collections or whether they are in a rush to popularise and are compromising on the necessities of a museum. – ***M.W.***



The Brutish Museum

November 3rd, 2023, 6:30 - 8:30 PM IST | Dr. Dan Hicks (Professor of Contemporary Archaeology at the University of Oxford, Curator of World Archaeology at Pitt Rivers Museum, and a Fellow of St. Cross College, Oxford)

'Museums are repositories of the past' is one of those statements that one encounters while working in the field. The statement implies that the past happened, the museum recorded it, and one can go to the museum to encounter this singular past. In the introduction to his remarkable lecture, Prof. Hicks explored how the museum, both a tool and a product of colonialism, continues to be a living site where imperialism is performed in various forms in the present day.

Museums as Sites of Enduring Colonialism

Prof. Hicks challenged the idea of the museum as a frozen relic. Comparing it to durational art, he characterised the museum very much as a living institution that is masquerading as an unchanging object – an illusion carefully maintained by the caretakers of the artefacts, stories, and truths that the museum displays. Referring to the colonial museum in the metropole, Prof. Hicks observed that it is, remarkably, one of the last in the long list of institutions that were employed in the colonial project of establishing cultural supremacy to wake up to the idea that it is peddling fictions of the empire. This is a realisation that the museum is struggling with, often resisting calls for decolonisation and restitution by insisting that they are holding artefacts of historic significance for 'all of humanity', and in the process, refusing to acknowledge how those objects got there in the first place, and ignoring the claims of those to whom those objects originally belonged.

Safehouse for Looted Artefacts

This claim of 'safeguarding' objects is not a recent phenomenon – it was one of the original pretexts for the looting of objects in the colonies. While reflecting on the relationship between the museum and different types of colonialism, Prof. Hicks drew focus on 'extractive colonialism'. Extractive colonialism refers to instances where regions witnessed violent expeditions by parties with corporate interests. The trigger for the coloniser's violence towards indigenous communities was often a minor incident which was used as justification for the atrocities unleashed on them by colonialists, under the guise of punishing and civilising the "brute". This often included the looting of material culture under the pretext of 'protecting' them – these looted objects would make their way to the protective arms of the museum in the metropole. Who were these objects being protected from? The museum – originally cabinets of wonder for second sons of gentry – was weaponised in the late 19th century for imperial ambitions fuelled by notions of racism and white supremacy.

Prof. Hicks pointed out that contemporary cases of restitution are almost directly influenced by the nature of colonialism undergone by the party reclaiming their cultural heritage. Claims for restitution are often successful in the case of settler colonies – where land was colonised, as opposed to claims from regions that experienced extractive colonialism, such as West Africa and the Caribbean, where racism was a prominent feature of colonialism.

Decolonising the Museum

In shifting to decolonisation in the context of the museum, Prof. Hicks posed a profound question: As a weapon of the empire, is it even possible to decolonise the museum? Referring to Frantz Fanon's work on racism and culture[1], Prof. Hicks outlined how museums are intrinsically tied to the racism inherent in the colonial project of defining

1 A Discussion of Racism and Culture in Frantz Fanon's Perspective | CustomEssayMeister.com

and justifying the brutalising of the 'other'. First, the museum was put to work to support and institutionalise 'vulgar racism' – a hatred of the other based on the body, through the showcase of pseudoscience such as phrenology and eugenics which established white supremacy. Then, the museum was used to cement the idea of the other as barbaric, through the display of the 'primitive' cultures and even the bodies of the other.

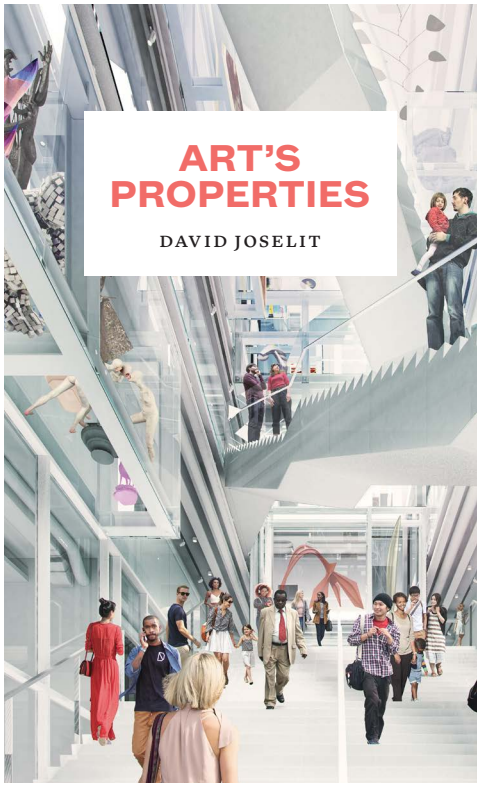
These are the museums that we have inherited. Prof. Hicks asks – can we, in the present, learn how to inherit well? Can we be discerning descendants, who take only what is good and reject things that are toxic? Perhaps. A tool is a weapon depending on who is wielding it.

Prof. Hicks suggests that a starting point to decolonising the museum is thinking about ways of restitution, which need not always be about returning objects. It can be about being transparent about the collections in our museums and tackling misinformation (or the complete lack thereof) through open databases that can build data on objects, through collective effort with those who have a stake in the histories of the object. It could also be about revisiting displays that are directly related to colonial violence and brutality – such as human remains, racist dioramas and reinterpreting and displaying them in ways which acknowledge their dark pasts, or even consider destroying them completely.

It is critical that museums do not continue to echo the claims of the colonialists, who ascribed the violence they unleashed to the actions of the brutalised. Returning to his introductory remarks, Prof. Hicks reiterates that the museum, and the past that it shows, are not frozen relics. They are very much mouldable; they can be changed. And in doing so, we are not 'destroying history' – we are using the very tool of the empire to acknowledge and right the injustices of the past, which continue to haunt the present. ***– S.M.***

Museum Montage: Inclusion as Dispossession

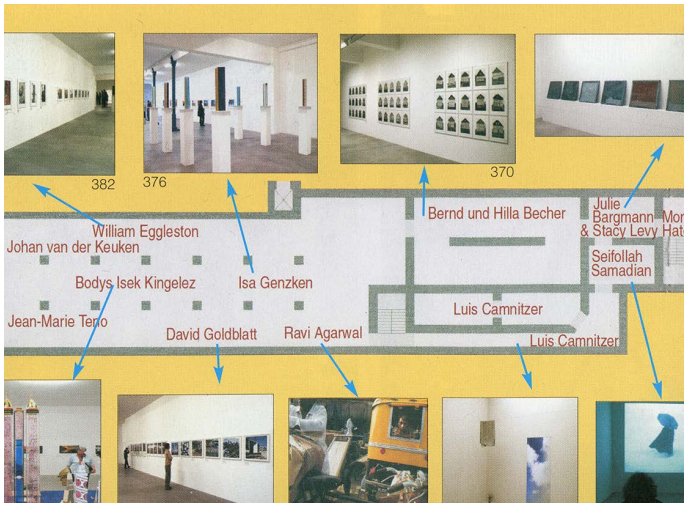
November 7th, 2023, 6:30 PM IST | Dr. David Joselit (Arthur Kingsley Porter Professor and Chair of Art, Film, and Visual Studies at Harvard)



Detailed reportage will be carried in the next JPM Quarterly (Apr - Jun '24)

The Rise and (Fall?) of the Post-Colonial Documenta

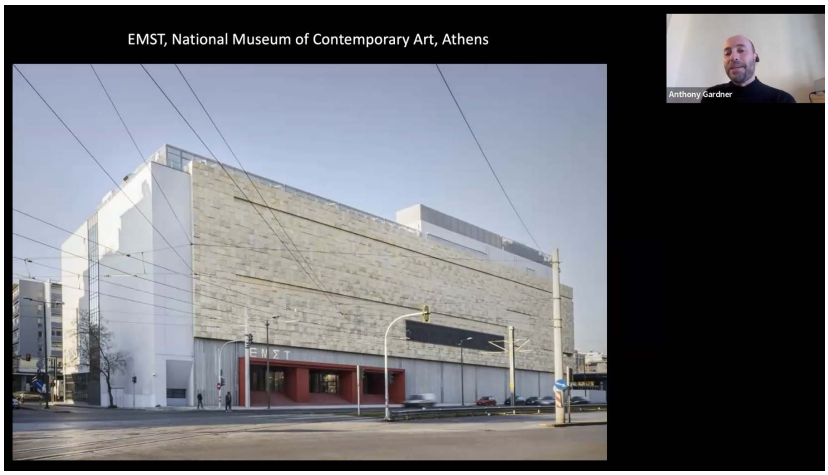
November 14th, 2023, 6:30 PM IST | Mr. Sunil Shah (Artist and Writer)



Detailed reportage will be carried in the next JPM Quarterly (Apr - Jun '24)

Biennales: Between the Extractive and the Sustainable

November 17th, 2023, 6:30 PM IST | Prof. Anthony Gardner (Professor of Contemporary Art History at the University of Oxford)



In 'Biennales: Between the Extractive and the Sustainable', Anthony Gardner, Professor of Contemporary Art History at the University of Oxford, and co-author of *Biennials, Triennials, and Documenta: The Exhibitions that Created Contemporary Art* (2016), spoke of biennales and their poor record of sustainability, while exploring alternative models of such events. He argued that biennales, though short-term events, consume enormous resources of money, time and energy and are detrimental to the environment due to the carbon footprint created both by the travel of artists, curators and audiences, as well as by the power consumption at the exhibitions themselves. While all biennales do not necessarily fit this negative model, it is important to explore alternatives which are part of much larger platforms that work through varying models of sustainability.

Despite the spread of the biennale culture since the mid-1990s, changing circumstances in the 21st century have put them under pressure from stakeholders to undergo continuous transformations in order to prevent their postponement and closure. There is an urgent need to reimagine biennales so as to incorporate new approaches to audiences and temporalities that focus on the local community as opposed to the global audiences that have been pandered to in the past. In order to ensure greater sustainability and longevity for the biennale model, Professor Gardner suggests that such thinking should not be limited to it being a short-term event but should also consider its longer-term impact on local artists, curators and audiences. The reductive quantifications of commercial concerns like ticket sales must not be the only focus, as has been the case, leaving behind qualitative, humanist ones such as the interests of the local community, and the custodianship of our environment.

Presenting recent instances of biennales such as 'Documenta 14', which was held in 2017, Professor Gardner raised concerns relating to the inability of such events in meeting their original objectives of engaging local and international communities in an economically and ecologically sustainable manner. The modern-day versions of these exhibitions are relegating local events in the host countries to the background, to create an "extractive economy of biennales" which misuse local cultural, political and economic capital for the organiser's own gain. Their benefit to the local community needs to be questioned, especially in terms of whether these events are creating new audiences and imparting new learning as they were intended to. By not promoting local art practices, they are often redirecting private and public funding away from indigenous artists, leaving them in a more precarious position than they would have been in had the international event not occurred.

Of course, all biennales are not extractive, nor do all of them threaten the sustainability of the host location. Professor Gardner suggested that several exhibitions, mostly from the past, went beyond commercial interests to focus on developing the artistic, cultural and social histories of the local community. In the 21st century, we should see a biennale not simply as a curatorial display of artworks but as an event with a bigger purpose that works towards building a framework of "learning, making, and building relationships with one another". Newer biennales like the Saigon

Biennale have worked towards such alternate models to create spaces and cultural venues that would result in longer-term benefits by improving exhibition infrastructure as well as promoting Pan-Asian artistic collaboration. Biennales need to work beyond the temporal constraints of the event itself, and shift from being an exhibition to being an institution that is responsible for providing a framework that enables the creation of a new art world that is common to all nations, built through intercultural collaboration and solidarity, while ensuring ecological and economic sustainability.

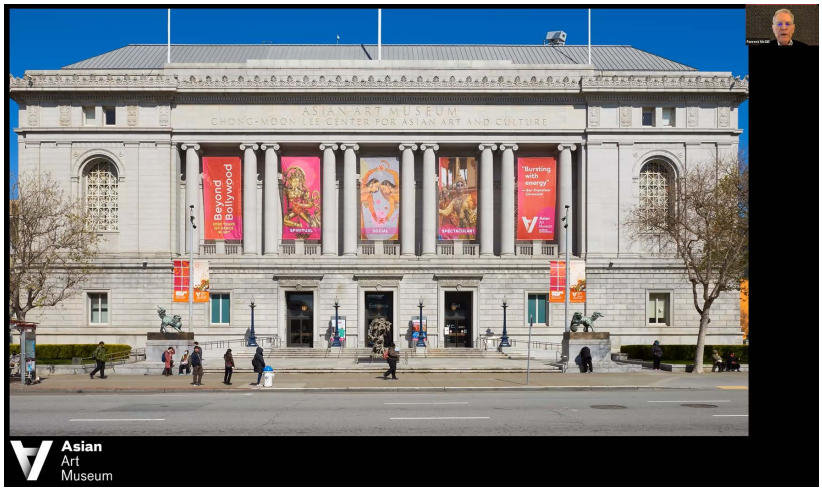
This reimagining of biennales should focus on inventiveness that is grounded in both locality and history, with the artistic community rethinking what these events do and for whom. Professor Garner concluded his session by urging us to look back at the pedagogical spirit and the curatorial history of biennales in the Global South – so as to look forward to the future of curating, and speculate as to the future of biennales themselves. This would ensure that we shift away from the extractive economy of the past by thinking of biennales as a more continuous process that builds longer-term trust, curiosity, collaboration and infrastructure as the "engine of curatorial practice", while considering the diverse needs of both local and global audiences. ***– A.K.S.***

Curatorial Processes

PAST PROGRAMMES

Curating the exhibition "Beyond Bollywood: 2000 Years of Dance in Art"

October 27th, 2023, 6:30 - 8:30 PM IST | Forrest McGill (Wattis Senior Curator of South and Southeast Asian Art)



Dr. Forrest McGill, the co-curator of the Asian Museum of Art in San Francisco, California, presented a comprehensive exploration of the function and significance of dance in art, spanning an extensive 2,000-year period. This exhibition features carefully selected artefacts sourced from Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent, and the Himalayan region. Dr. McGill's presentation is part of the Curatorial Processes series initiated by Jnanapravaha Mumbai, offering audiences a unique opportunity to not only appreciate the exhibited space, layout and artwork, but also gain insights into the meticulous process behind organising such an exhibition.

The session provided a detailed walkthrough of the exhibition, illustrating the intricate process of conceptualisation, strategic planning, and the challenges encountered during this journey. Inspired by Laura Weinstein, the curator of South Asian and Islamic Art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, the initial planning involved collaboration with this museum, which later shifted due to the pandemic. Subsequently, the Cincinnati Art Museum became a collaborator, leading to the realisation of this ambitious project in 2023, after meticulous planning that commenced in 2017, including a yearlong deliberation to finalise the exhibition's title.

A decision was made to pursue the National Endowment Grant for Humanities, prompting Professor Forrest McGill and his team members to collaborate with Ainsley Cameron, the curator of South Asian Art, Islamic Art, and Antiquities at the Cincinnati Art Museum, along with a group of scholars. Together, they meticulously documented the exhibition for the grant application, which was successfully awarded to the Asian Museum of Art in 2020. The ideation process for the grant application played a pivotal role in defining the exhibition's subject and scope, focussing on the functional value of dance within art. While the exhibition, titled 'Dancing to the Flute: Music and Dance in Indian Art' curated by Pratapaditya Pal, served as an inspiration, Professor Forrest McGill and his team aimed to give the exhibition a distinct identity by concentrating solely on the functional aspect of dance in art, rather than on regional stylistic variations or artistic traditions. The emphasis was directed towards showcasing the transformative nature of dance.

Throughout the brainstorming process, a comprehensive series of themes and sub-themes were developed, forming the exhibition's conceptual framework. Exhibition designer Marko Centin integrated five key themes — destruction and creation, devotion, subjugation, celebration, and glorification — to craft evocative spaces leading to the gallery where artworks were displayed. The artifacts were strategically grouped to emphasise sub-themes like power, gender and sexuality. In fact, the utilisation of evocative space was implemented for the first

time in this exhibition. The initial evocative space focussed on the theme of destruction and creation, featuring a recognisable Chola Nataraja statue against authentic NASA images of solar flares as the backdrop. These solar flares symbolised the cosmic and earthly presence of Lord Shiva as Nataraja. Additionally, sound elements like temple bells and the *dumroo* were incorporated to depict Lord Shiva's rhythmic influence over the cosmos. The statues of Lord Shiva, depicted with an erect penis, and Vajravarahi, with a chopper and skull bowl, symbolised creative power and the destruction of negativity, respectively. Paintings such as of the skeletal mother and father, renowned in the Tibetan tradition, were included, representing cosmic and psychological destruction leading to creation. This section featured a blend of artworks from *tantric* Buddhist, Hindu, Nepalese, and Tibetan cultures, although the artefacts were not grouped solely based on religion or ethnicity.

The evocative space designated for the theme of devotion provided visitors with an immersive experience of walking through a forest. The dimly lit room evoked a spiritual ambiance. The gallery showcased a *pichwai* from Nathdwara depicting Lord Krishna dancing with the cowherd girls in a *rasamandala*. This theme was revisited in the glorification section, presenting a painting of Maharana Jagat Singh II observing a dance resembling Lord Krishna's *rasleela*. This dance holds devotional, emotional, and spiritual value while also spotlighting the financial might of the king in orchestrating such a grand spectacle. Additionally, paintings portraying dance used in combat highlighted physical prowess.

Explaining the *tantric* Buddhist goddess Hevajra dancing with the eight yoginis posed a challenge for visitors, as the Hevajra cult was part of an ancient Cambodian tradition no longer practiced. Consequently, many Cambodian American visitors were intrigued by this artwork. Another remarkable artefacts from the Pala dynasty in Bihar was the eight-petalled lotus, featuring eight yoginis etched on the inside and eight crematoriums on the outer side of the petals. Cremation grounds, prominent in *tantric* Buddhism, and the worship of Lord Shiva, became a recurring theme. The significance of dance in the Islamic world was portrayed in a painting depicting celebrations during the circumcision ceremony of Emperor Akbar's sons. This painting from *Akbarnama* shed light on the high infant mortality rate in the 17th century. The survival of Emperor Akbar's sons through infancy into boyhood was a cause for celebration, also glorifying the king's wealth.

In contemporary times, the collection of paintings by Singaporean artist Sarah Choo Jing, entitled *'Art of Rehearsal'* at the outset was seamlessly complemented by a video installation depicting their preparations for performances in their respective neighbourhoods at the conclusion. The presentation of the Royal Ballet of Cambodia through a large-scale video installation offered a modern interpretation of the theme of glorification of kings. Some artworks included video clippings to aid audience connection with the subject matter. For instance, the portrayal of how Lord Vishnu's dance defeated Bhasmasura disguised as Mohini was a particularly noteworthy exhibit. The exhibition's lobby, adorned with Bollywood film posters and accented by red velvet curtains, set the exhibition's tone, delving into the exploration of dance throughout various historical periods. The exhibition successfully bridged the gap between knowledgeable and less-informed audiences through an immersive mix of media. Its success was attributed to the seamless integration of serious and light-hearted subjects and its excellent dissemination of information. **– *S.C.***

Announcements

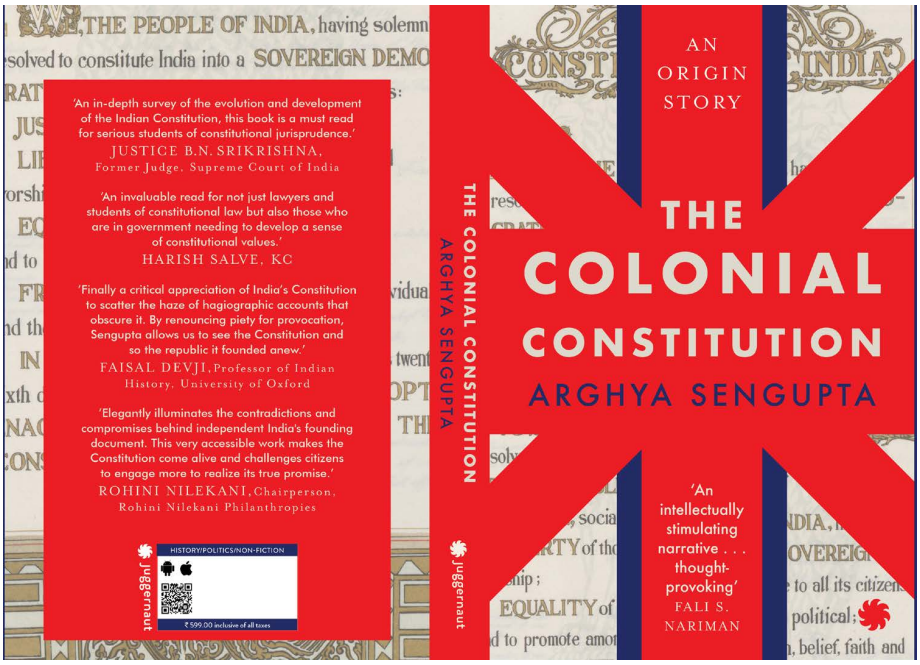
Jnanapravaha

BOOK DISCUSSION

THE COLONIAL CONSTITUTION

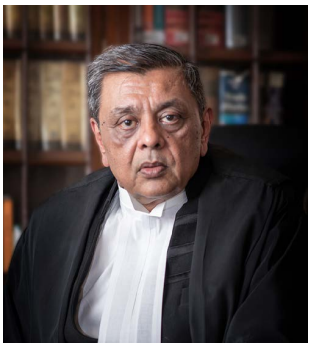
ARGHYA SENGUPTA (AUTHOR & PANELIST)
JUSTICE GAUTAM PATEL & PROF. FAISAL DEVJI (PANELISTS)
RAJDEEP SARDESAI (MODERATOR)

Free In-Person Public Lecture | January 5th, 2024 | Tea: 6:00 PM | Discussion: 6:30 - 8:30 PM IST

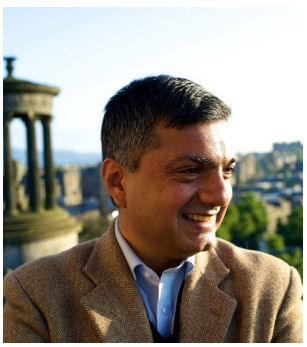


The Colonial Constitution, published by Juggernaut Books, is a story of the origins of the Constitution of India. It is neither a celebration of the constitution, nor a critique. Instead, it is an honest narration of the colonial foundations of the Constitution, a fact that has been glossed over in most scholarship on the subject. It features Ambedkar, Savarkar and Gandhi in leading roles ably supported by Rajendra Prasad, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel and Shyama Prasad Mookherjee.

ARGHYA SENGUPTA
Research Director
Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy



JUSTICE GAUTAM PATEL
High Court Judge
Bombay High Court



FAISAL DEVJI
Professor of Indian History & Director of the Asian Studies Centre at the University of Oxford

RAJDEEP SARDESAI
Anchor, Reporter, Journalist and Author

Jnanapravaha

ISLAMIC AESTHETICS

SACRALITY AND SURROGACY IN THE DEVOTIONAL ARTS OF ISLAM

FINBARR BARRY FLOOD

January 8th, 9th & 10th, 2024 | Tea: 5:45 PM | Lecture: 6:15 - 8:45 PM IST | Registration Fee: Rs. 3,000

In-Person with Live Streaming on ZOOM | Register: www.jp-india.org

Sankoré Mosque and madrasa, Timbuktu, 1582 CE, © Elizabeth Whiting & Associates / Alamy Stock Photo

Friday Mosque of Mandu, 1454 CE, © Finbarr Barry Flood

In the era of Artificial Intelligence, 3D printing, and Virtual Reality, questions about copies, replicas and surrogates are once again current. Yet, from the mimesis of sacred architecture to the copying of texts, through the embodied repetition of rituals, or the serial production of pilgrimage souvenirs, replication, reproduction and surrogacy have long been integral to many practices of devotion. Centuries before the modern era of technological reproduction, these made use of techniques of mass production such as engraving, moulding and stamping. Despite being produced in multiples, many such devotional materials also had an intimate relationship to the human body. This series explores the resulting tensions between multiplicity and singularity, originality and surrogacy in the devotional arts of Islam.

Finbarr Barry Flood is director of *Silsila*: Center for Material Histories, and William R. Kenan, Jr., Professor of the Humanities at the Institute of Fine Arts and Department of Art History, New York University. His work engages the potential of material culture to nuance histories of transcultural or transregional connectivity in ways that challenge their instrumentalisation in essentialist politics of the present. Recent publications include *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval "Hindu-Muslim" Encounter* (Princeton University Press, 2009), awarded the 2011 Ananda K. Coomaraswamy Prize of the Association for Asian Studies, *Technologies de dévotion dans les arts de l'Islam: pèlerins, reliques, copies* (Musée du Louvre/Hazan, 2019) and *Tales Things Tell – Material Histories of Early Globalisms*, co-written with Beate Fricke.

Jnanapravaha

BOOK DISCUSSION

IN GOD'S MIRROR: THE THEYYAMS OF MALABAR

PEPITA SETH

Free In-Person Public Lecture | January 16th, 2024 | Tea: 6:00 PM | Discussion: 6:30 - 8:00 PM IST

This talk will focus on northern Kerala's unique and powerful ritual of Theyyam, a form of worship in which entitled men manifest as deities, their divine status being indicated by elaborate costumes and intricate makeup. The project was initiated with the active collaboration of Theyyam's practitioners with whom the writer/photographer spent 20 years photographing and learning about Theyyam. Details of their lives are woven in with her personal interactions with the deities.

Photo Courtesy : Pepita Seth

Pepita Seth has spent nearly 50 years immersed in Kerala's Hindu rituals. Though academically untrained, her deep respect and admiration for Kerala's traditional culture has inspired her to write about, and photograph, this powerful universe. She has also given talks and held several exhibitions of her photographs in India, the UK, the US and Europe. Among her published books are '*Heaven on Earth: The Universe of Kerala's Guruvayur Temple*' (2008: Niyogi Books), '*In God's Mirror: The Theyyams of Malabar*' (2023 Scala). She was awarded a Padma Shri by the Government of India in 2012 and the Burton Medal by the Royal Asiatic Society in 2022.

Jnanapravaha

BUDDHIST AESTHETICS

EXCAVATIONS, CONSERVATION, AND ACTIVE RECONSTRUCTION: LIVES OF BUDDHIST MATERIALS REMAINS IN ANDHRA

AKIRA SHIMADA

January 20th, 2024 | Tea: 6:00 PM | Lecture: 6:30 - 8:30 PM IST | In-Person with Live Streaming on ZOOM

Registration Fee: Rs. 1,000 | Students: Rs. 500 | Register: www.jp-india.org

Since the discovery of the great stupa at Amaravati in 1798, archaeological excavations revealed more than a hundred Buddhist monastic remains from the Andhra region in southeastern India. As represented by the destruction of the Amaravati stupa and sculptures after the excavations, such surveys at times entailed some unintended results. By exploring the fates of Buddhist remains in Andhra after the modern discovery, this session examines the achievements and ramifications of archaeological surveys of Buddhism.

Amaravati stupa (June 2022)

Session 1: Early Excavations in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries

Session 2: More Recent Excavations and Transformations of the Sites

Akira Shimada (Ph.D. in South Asian History, University of London, 2006) is a Professor of the History Department at the State University of New York at New Paltz. His publications includes *Early Buddhist Architecture in Context: The Great Stupa at Amaravati (ca. 300 BCE–300 CE)*, Leiden, 2013, *Buddhist Stūpas in South Asia: Recent Archaeological, Art-Historical and Historical Perspectives*, New Delhi, 2009; *Amaravati: The Art of Early Buddhist Monument in Context*, London, 2016. He is developing a new book entitled *From Amaravati to Nagarjunakonda and Beyond: History of South Indian Buddhism after the Sātavāhanas.*

The 2024 Mona Ahmed Lecture

Vikramaditya Sahai

February 8th & 9th, 2024 | 6:30 - 8:00 PM IST | Physical Programme at Jnanapravaha Mumbai with Live-Streaming on ZOOM

The Mona Ahmed Lecture is an annual public lecture series, envisioned as a space to celebrate and learn from the legacy of the late Mona Ahmed, a singular individual who lived her life with radical honesty, courage, and vulnerability. Taking as its point of departure the seminal 2001 book, *Myself Mona Ahmed* by the artist Dayanita Singh, the series is premised on a critical engagement with the image. For Mona, the image was a field of play, where visibility, presence, assertion and the joy of being wholly oneself (Myself) intermingled with a refusal to be merely witnessed, or be casually observed. We cannot simply wander in and take – an image, understanding, knowledge or certainty – from Mona, and imagine ourselves to have seen.

Pay attention, demands the image, even when presented to us as a seemingly opaque surface. In the more than twenty years since its publication, *Myself Mona Ahmed* has variously been read as a book depicting a life lived in the margins, as an intriguing relationship between a photographer and her protagonist, as a chronicle of love and loss, resistance and joy, and as a rare book on a trans person that did not fixate on their gender. Yet if we stay longer, read again, look again, and most importantly listen to Mona, we learn (and learn again) that images are always insufficient, that they fall short of imagination, that they conceal; and also that without the image – the record, the trace, the archive – the world is a mere abstraction. Pay attention, the image urges. Return, look again, listen, ask, speak, and stay.

In its inaugural year, the 2024 Mona Ahmed Lecture invites a scholar to deliver a two-lecture series that draws from Mona's legacy while bringing a conceptual rigour to thinking about images and our relationship to them as viewers, makers, keepers, and even destroyers. Through this series, generously supported by Dayanita Singh, Jnanapravaha Mumbai hopes to aid in building a platform that engages with scholars at the forefront of thinking, at a particularly critical juncture in South Asia's storied relationship to images.

Vikramaditya Sahai/vqueeram is currently Visiting Faculty at School of Culture and Creative Expressions, Ambedkar University, Delhi. They have previously taught at the Department of Gender Studies at Ambedkar University and courses on intersectionality and abolition at NLSUI, Bengaluru, NUJS, Kolkata and other law schools across the country. Vikramaditya/vqueeram has written about law, sexuality, culture, and abolition in diverse media like essays, editorials, film and poetry in forums such as *Frieze*, *The Wire*, *post-MOMA*, *The Shoreline Review* and *The White Review*. They recently wrote the entry on *'Gender'* for The Art Institute of Chicago Field Guide to Photography and Media (2022) and their film with Vishal Jugdeo, *Does Your House Have Lions* (2021) has been screened at Commonwealth and Council and MOCA among a host of other venues and festivals . They live and love in Delhi.

Jnanapravaha

CRITICISM AND THEORY

A SPIRALLING REVOLUTION – TECHNOLOGY, CULTURE AND CRISIS

February 13th – April 16th, 2024 | Mainly Tuesdays | Lecture: 6:30 – 8:30 pm IST

FEE: Rs. 10,000 | Online Platform: Zoom | Register: www.jp-india.org

Technology has taken over every aspect of our lives. Such has been the sentiment of recent headlines on everything from culture to finance to law and politics. On closer examination, however, it becomes evident that often the term technology functions as a floating signifier – indicating specificity while being capacious enough to encompass multiple possible meanings. And if the term technology itself is fluid, then what does it mean for us to believe that it holds the ability to transform not merely our individual lives but the societies we live in, the systems under which we work and ultimately take over our most fundamentally human ability – our capacity for creative expression.

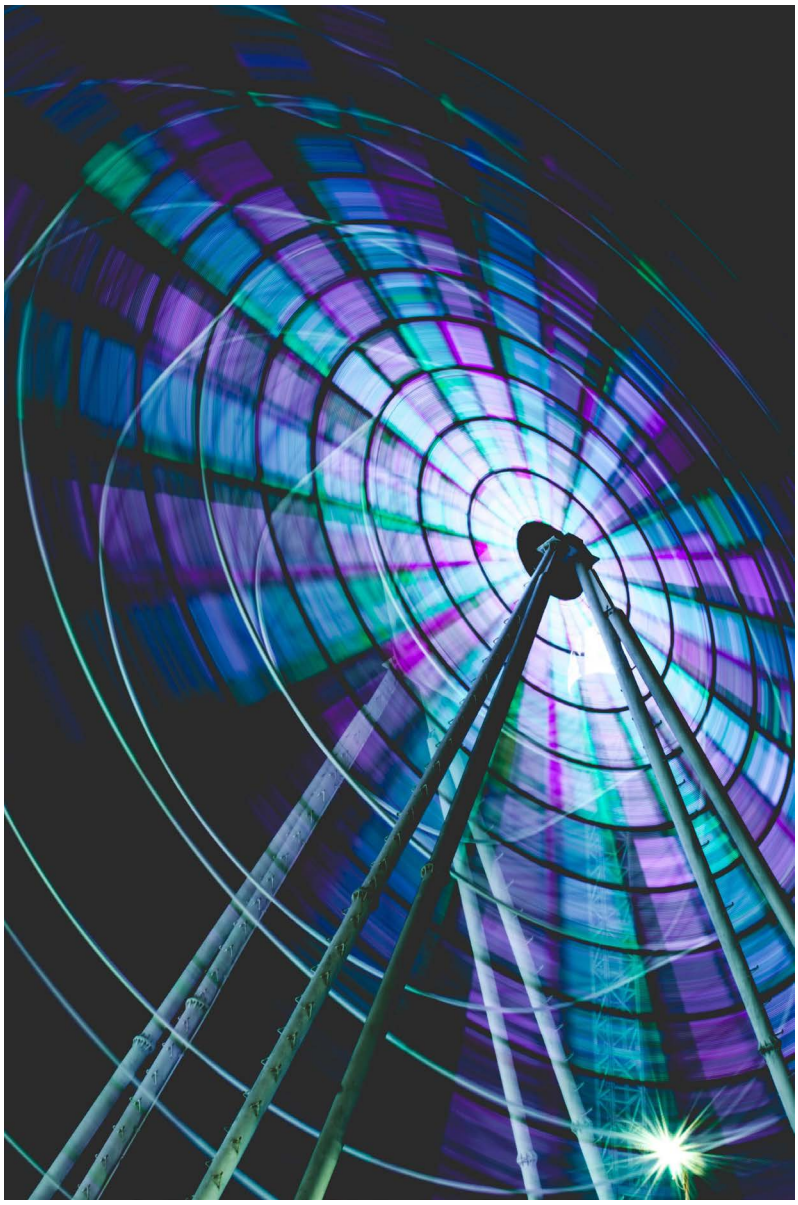


Photo by Unsplash from Freerange Stock

Over a ten-session series, this online edition of *Aesthetics, Criticism & Theory* brings together scholars, scientists, artists, curators and writers at the cutting edge of research, innovation and critical engagement with technology. The series aims to illuminate the complexities surrounding this dynamic field while engaging in an open conversation on the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

FACULTY SCHOLARS:

Keynote Address: Arjun Appadurai

Alexander R. Galloway
Computational Mama
Geoff Cox
Joanna Zylinska
Jussi Parikka
Matteo Pasquinelli
Maya Indira Ganesh
Pragni Kapadia
Winnie Soon

BOOK DISCUSSION

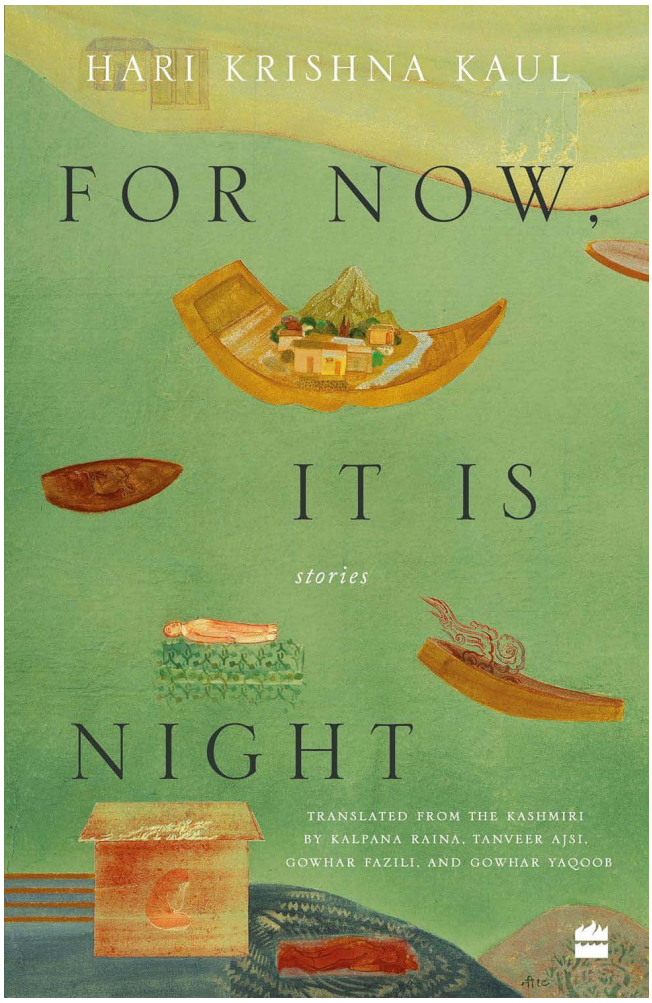
Jnanapravaha

literature live! Evenings

FOR NOW, IT IS NIGHT

KALPANA RAINA | TANVEER AJSI | GOWHAR FAZILI

Free In-Person Public Book Discussion | February 15th, 2024 | Tea: 6:00 PM | Discussion: 6:30 - 8:00 PM IST



Brilliantly translated in a unique collaborative project, *For Now, It Is Night* brings a comprehensive selection of Kaul's stories to English readers for the very first time.

Hari Krishna Kaul, one of the very best modern Kashmiri writers, published most of his work between 1972 and 2000. His short stories, shaped by the social crisis and political instability in Kashmir, explore – with an impressive eye for detail, biting wit, and deep empathy – themes of isolation, individual and collective alienation, corruption, and the social mores of a community that experienced a loss of homeland, culture, and language.

In these pages, we will find: friends stuck forever in the same class at school while the world changes around them; travellers forced to seek shelter in a battered, windy hostel after a landslide; parents struggling to deal with displacement as they move away from Kashmir with their children, or loneliness as their children leave in search of better prospects; the cabin fever of living through a curfew.

GOWHAR FAZILI

KALPANA RAINA

TANVEER AJSI

Jnanapravaha

BOOK DISCUSSION

THE CONSTRUCTION OF BRITISH INDIA 1690-1860

ROSIE LLEWELLYN-JONES

February 29th, 2024 | Lecture: 6:30 - 8:45 PM IST | Registration Fee: Rs. 1,000 | Online | Platform: ZOOM

The semaphore tower at Barrackpore House, c. 1816 by Colonel Robert Smith

Little has been written about the military engineers employed by the East India Company. Their work ranged from map-making, land surveying, fortifications, building silk factories, manufacturing gunpowder and minting coinage, to establishing communications by semaphore, telegraph, steamships and railways. They developed cantonments and hill-stations, both previously unknown in the subcontinent. This seminar examines how these men, many of them untrained, substantially changed the face of India and brought with them Enlightenment values.

Session 1: The Company's engineers

Session 2: How India was changed

Dr. Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, MBE, studied Urdu and Hindi at SOAS, London. She completed a Ph.D. in 1980, subsequently published as *A Fatal Friendship: the Nawabs, the British and the City of Lucknow*. Author of numerous articles and books on colonial India including a trilogy on Major General Claude Martin. Her new book *Empire Building: The Construction of British India 1690-1860* is an unbiased look at the physical changes wrought by the East India Company. Rosie lectures extensively in Britain and abroad and was awarded an MBE in 2015 for services to the British Association for Cemeteries in South Asia (BACSA) and British Indian Studies.

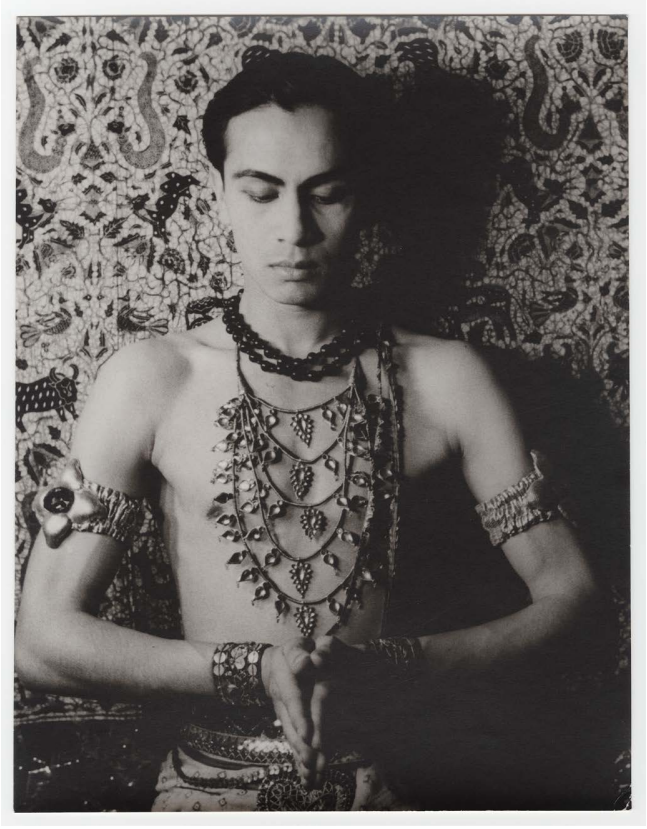
Jnanapravaha

BOOK DISCUSSION

BETWEEN THE VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

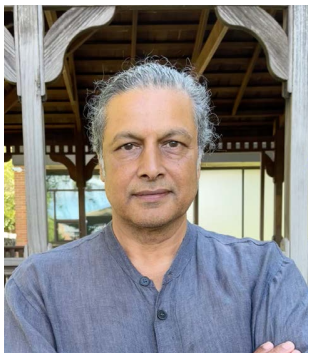
AJAY SINHA

Free Online Public Book Discussion | March 22nd, 2024 | Discussion: 7:00 - 8:30 PM IST | Platform: ZOOM



Carl Van Vechten, _Ram Gopal,_ Copyright Van Vechten Trust

The illustrated talk presents a rare, undocumented exchange between the arts and cultures of India and the U.S.A. found in a set of over one hundred unpublished black and white photographs of the Indian classical dancer Ram Gopal. Taken in New York City in 1938 by an American photographer named Carl Van Vechten, the large-format images show Ram Gopal assuming a variety of dance poses wearing fantastical costumes, while the photographer changes the studio lighting and fabric backgrounds for full views, mid-shots and close-ups. The images not only show the photographer's view of the gorgeous dancer, but also the dancer's manipulation of the camera. Interpersonal desires and cultural fantasies of the two men spark a surprising conversation between photography and choreography. Drawing on his recent book, *Photo-Attractions: An Indian Dancer, an American Photographer, and a German Camera* (Newark, NJ, Rutgers University Press, 2023), art historian Ajay Sinha explores the stunning visual record of the photoshoot, and builds a story of layered interactions.



Ajay Sinha is the Julie '73 and Helene '49 Herzig Professor in the Art History and Architectural Studies Department at Mount Holyoke College, USA. He teaches wide-ranging courses on the visual histories of global modernity and the arts of Asia, including architecture, material objects, painting, photography and film in South Asia. His book-length publications include *Photo-Attractions: An Indian Dancer, an American Photographer, and a German Camera; Imagining Architecture: Creativity in the Religious Monuments of India*; and the co-edited collection *Bollyworld: Popular Indian Cinema through a Transnational Lens*.

Environment, Health & the Body in Traditional Paintings from Contemporary India

Chandreyi Basu

March 27th, 2024 | 6:30 - 8:00 PM IST | Online on ZOOM

More details will be made available soon on our website.

Jnanapravaha

ISLAMIC AESTHETICS

EMBODYING DEVOTION IN INDO-MUSLIM PAINTING, 1500-1800

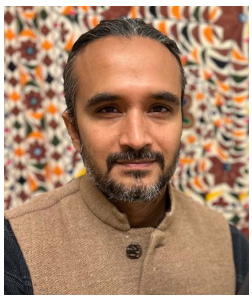
MURAD KHAN MUMTAZ

April 17th, 18th & 19th, 2024 | Lecture: 6:30 - 8:45 PM IST | Registration Fee: Rs. 3,000/-, Students*: Rs. 1,500/-

Online on ZOOM | Register: www.jp-india.org

Islamic art is often misrepresented as an iconophobic tradition. As a result of this assumption, the polyvalence of figural artworks made for Hindustan's Muslim audiences has remained hidden in plain view. By combining an art historical survey with an analysis of primary Indo-Persian literature, this series of seminars shows how figurative painting was intimately linked to a unique Indo-Muslim religious expression that had a wide circulation across South Asia.

Squirrels in a Plane Tree : ,attributed to Abu'l Hasan, ca. 1608.Ink, opaque watercolor and gold on paper. 36.2 Â~ 22.5 cm. British Library,London (J.1.30)



Murad Khan Mumtaz is an assistant professor of Art History at Williams College. He examines historical intersections of art, literature and religious expression in South Asia, with a primary focus on Indo-Muslim patronage. By combining art history with textual analysis, his recent book, *Faces of God: Images of Devotion in Indo-Muslim Painting* (Brill, 2023),examines the cultural contexts within which these Islamicate images of devotion were made and viewed. Murad is also an artist trained in traditional Hindustani painting techniques, and continues to exhibit his work internationally.

Jnanapravaha

CREATIVE PROCESSES

SCENE UNSEEN: ART AS CONTEMPLATIONS ON BECOMING AND DISSOLVING

SUMAKSHI SINGH

April 20th, 2024 | Lecture: 5:30 - 8:00 PM IST | Free Online Public Lecture on ZOOM | Register: www.jp-india.org

Afterlife, 2022
Asia Pacific Triennial, Queensland Art Gallery & Gallery of Modern Art (QAGOMA), Australia

Singh's immersive installations are invitations into worlds of shifting perceptions, fracturing illusions, slower rhythms of time and fluid figure-ground relationships, to explore the bases of how we assign attention, construct meaning and perceive our realities within and without. Our everyday 'givens' are questioned as her work dissolves familiar forms and intimate memories into insubstantial mirages using perspective, eroding surfaces or using gossamer, web-like skins of thread and lace. Join us, as Singh walks us through 22 years of her interdisciplinary, creative practice - discussing the roles of accidents, inspiration, site, history, personal memory and metaphysics in making visual art.

Sumakshi Singh is an artist and an educator who has taught for five years at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago and lectured at Oxford University, Columbia University and The Chicago Humanities Festival, among other museums and colleges. She has mentored residencies for the Victoria and Albert Museum, TheWhyNotPlace 2010 and 2011, and was a visiting artist advisor at KHOJ Delhi. Singh received her Bachelor of Fine Arts in Painting, Drawing and Art History from MSU (Maharaja Sayajirao University), Baroda, India, in 2001 and her BFA in Painting and Drawing from The School of The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL in 2003. She is the recipient of several awards, including the Asia Arts Future Game Changer award by the Asia Society in 2022 (to honour artists for their significant contributions to contemporary art), the YFLO award (from the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry) for achievement in the arts in 2019, and many more.

Jnanapravaha

CREATIVE PROCESSES

CAPUT MORTUUM

VARUNIKA SARAF

April 27th, 2024 | Lecture: 5:30 - 8:00 PM IST | Free Online Public Lecture on ZOOM | Register: www.jp-india.org

Dr. Varunika Saraf is interested in the complex histories of South Asia, specifically how they shape our current socio-political reality. In this illustrated lecture, she will share her experience of working with Caput Mortuum, a synthetic iron oxide pigment that resembles dried blood. In alchemy, this pigment is classified as 'worthless remains'– the residue left on the bottom of the heating flask once the nobler elements sublimate. She will discuss what drew her to this particular pigment and how she uses this metaphor of decay and decline to address marginalised histories and the role of the past in the making of the present.

Those Who Dream | Watercolour on Wasli backed with cotton textile 6.5 x 5 in

Dr. Varunika Saraf is an artist and art historian based in Hyderabad. Saraf has participated in several group shows such as *Sangam/Confluence*, Heidelberger Kunstverein (2020), *Critical Constellations*, Foundation for Indian Contemporary Art, New Delhi (2019), *Days Without a Night*, Max Mueller Bhavan, New Delhi (2018), and *Phantoms of Asia*, Asian Art Museum, San Francisco (2012). She is the recipient of Asia Society's Asia Arts Future Award (2023). In 2016, Saraf received the Amol Vadehra Art Grant. She was a Summer Research Fellow at the Getty Research Institute, Visiting Fellow at the Max-Planck Institute, Florence, NTICVA Visiting Fellow at the V&A Museum and the CWIT fellow at the Centre for South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge. Saraf holds a Ph.D. and an M.Phil. (Visual Studies) from JNU and an MFA (Painting) from the University of Hyderabad. In 2023, she participated in the Sharjah Biennial 15, where she received an honourable mention for her embroidered series, *We, The People*. Saraf is represented by Chemould Prescott Road, Mumbai.

Ecologies of Emotion and Politics of Pleasure from Mughal to Colonial India

Dipti Khera

April 25th & 26th, 2024 | 6:30 - 8:00 PM IST | Physical Programme at Jnanapravaha Mumbai with Live-Streaming on ZOOM

More details will be made available soon on our website.

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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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