The other chapter in the book that has strong implications for aesthetics is Nicole Ranganath's "Soundscapes of the Self: Music and Identity Assertion among Diasporic Punjabi Sikh Women in California, 1950s–2000s". In the chapter, Ranganath documents the songwriting/composition and performance by two Punjabi women in California, Mohinderjit Kaur Thiara and Harbans Kaur Panu who sing of the landscape of the Punjab and their lives in the US.

> This is the first study exploring autobiographical songs composed by the first generation of South Asian American women. The songs offer rare insights into women's interior emotional lives – into their loneliness, sorrows, desires and aspirations. Music represents a particularly powerful vehicle for understanding the continuities and disjunctures in transnational cultural flows, which I refer to as 'soundscapes' (aural cultural flows) . . . . The discovery of these songs is especially valuable given that women's lives remain largely neglected in South Asia diaspora studies. Equally important is the fact that women barely exist in the public record of early South Asian migration to North America. Moreover, elderly Punjabi women are generally relegated to the private sphere of the home, rarely garnering public attention within the community and in the border American society. The fact that *bibian* (elderly women) composed poetry will come as a surprise to many in the local Punjabi community. (81)

The songs that Ranganath foregrounds as texts, or as an oeuvre in themselves, reveal the importance of anchoring that the context of the diaspora provides to South Asian fashioning in North America. While countless scholars working in diaspora studies have been looking at fiction and other genres from various perspectives of identity and hybridity and so on, Ranganath's choice of the composition of the two women (among several others in her larger work) reveals that aesthetics has a lot to do with the everyday aspects of life, not easily accessible as texts. The songs, evocative of the folk text of Hir, show fascinating continuities and adaptational possibilities within South Asian cultural heritage as remembered by different genders.

As the above glimpses into the book hopefully have shown, *Punjabi Centuries* offers different perspectives of history and politics that can be meaningfully engaged with by postcolonial scholars researching aesthetics in South Asia, alerting them to newer questions and connections across disciplines.

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DISCOVERING INDIAN PHILOSOPHY: AN INTRODUCTION TO HINDU, JAIN AND BUDDHIST THOUGHT. By Jeffrey D. Long. London, New York and Dublin: Bloomsbury, 2024. 236 pp.

What must one look for in an introduction to Indian philosophy? Is it an accessible account of often overlapping traditions? Or is it a coherent account of contradictions within one tradition? Is it an accurate or neat rendering of different schools of thought and their leaders on a chronological scale? Or is it a narration that speaks to how the different worldviews stand in contemporary, postcolonial practices today? Is it a concern for the historical and socio-political contexts that different philosophies emerged? Or is it the focus on the timeless and the essential aspects of the various forms of thought?

It is with these questions that one approaches Jeffrey D. Long's *Discovering Indian Philosophy*. The book works brilliantly at various levels: given the complex and vast nature of the subject, it manages to touch upon main philosophies and philosophers, the network of thoughts they draw from, their principles, as well as their contestations. Organised along the lines of Hinduism, the systems that challenged it Jainism, Buddhism, and innovations within Hinduism (such as the Shastras, the epics, the Vedanta, the Tantra, and modern, colonial era interventions such as those by Ramakrishna),

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Long's book makes for an intense reading that cannot be read from start to finish. Its slimness is deceptive for every subsection within every chapter is a volume of its own that needs to be read closely in conjunction with other relevant sections in the book.

While the overviews of different aspects of Indian philosophy exist elsewhere, it is Long's approach that sets this book apart. Conventionally, such volumes are organised by tradition or by topic but Long uses the approach of storytelling and conversation to let the ideas emerge as they interact with each other. While explaining his own approach, Long writes:

> A good image for Indian philosophy as a whole is, indeed, that of a conversation that has been going on for over three thousand years . . . . I have found . . . that the most natural and effective way for me to approach Indian philosophy is as a story: to see this tradition as the millennia-old conversation that it is, with each system and tradition flowing into and affecting the others, each giving its particular insight into questions like the nature of being, knowledge and morality. Rather than presenting a list of either traditions or topics, I have endeavoured to summarize this conversation, as I understand it. I hope I have done so clearly and in a way which gives insight, with a minimum of confusion, while also conveying a sense of the complexity of the material involved. (11)

This storytelling approach comes in handy in various ways. Those approaching Indian philosophy for the first time find a lot to connect to Western philosophy. Here, he explains the connections between religion and yoga, a connection not an easy or a natural one to make for someone who does not have access to notions of religion outside the West:

> The word *yoga* itself is derived from the Sanskrit verbal root *yuj*, meaning 'yoke'. The aim of yoga is to 'yoke' the mind to its true nature or source. The practice of meditation – also strongly associated with contemporary yoga – thus comes to mind when one reflects on the meaning of this term. What, precisely, this practice refers to, though – what it means in pragmatic terms to practice yoga – is not thus illuminated. Does it refer to a system of postures, to meditation, to both of these together, or to something else?
>
> Interestingly, the root meaning of yoga as being yoked or tied back to one's true nature or source is not unlike the root meaning of *religion*. The Latin *religio* is derived from *religare*, which means something like 'to yoke' or 'to tie back' to one's source, to one's higher reality. Yoga and religion are thus closely connected in their meanings. (160)

One can find many examples of this sense-making: the juxtaposition of the Buddha and Rene Descartes is another interesting example of Long's method: he does not introduce Indian philosophy; he helps one make sense of it.

Long is also intelligent about weaving in contemporary critical scholarship on a subject, thus bringing the reader up to date with current appraisals of the tradition. Here, for instance, is how he presents an account of the *Bhagavad Gita*. Notice that it defines the text while also making a point about a contemporary take on the text:

> The *Bhagavad Gita*, or *Song of the Blessed Lord*, is an eighteen-chapter dialogue in which Krsna, an incarnation of Isvara, the Supreme Lord, instructs Arjuna on how to attain moksa. It is, in effect, a summary of early Vedanta. As a portion of a highly popular epic tale, the *Mahabharata*, the *Bhagavad Gita* provides a summary of the *Upanisads* for the common person. As one might recall, until the modern era, it was relatively rare for non-Brahmins to have direct access to Vedic texts, including the Upanisads. Smrti texts such as the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, though, were available to all. As Bronkhorst has recently argued in a book titled *How the Brahmins Won*, the incorporation of Vedic themes into ancient Indian popular culture – in appealing stories such as the epics – aided the Brahmins in advancing their ideals at a time when non-Vedic philosophies like Buddhism and Jainism were predominant. The *Bhagavad Gita* is an important component of this popular presentation of Vedic thought. (189)

Because of such incorporations of scholarly perspectives within the introduction to the subject, the book is far more than an introductory volume on Indian philosophy. Indeed, the questions it leaves the reader with are not the ones that this review began with: those were about what one should look

for. The question that the process of reading Long's work foregrounds is: how should one write an introduction, especially to Indian philosophy? Because writing about the subject requires one to be heavily invested in thinking about the person that one aspires to be, such a book cannot be written from the standpoint of knowledge alone. It demands a certain dedication toward curiosity about self and reality, existence and non-existence of divinity, and so on while also eliciting a sense of wonder about the answers and perspectives various schools of thought put forth. In the process of uncovering these perspectives, one may or may not see the big picture of Indian philosophy. But one will definitely emerge riveted by the little insights into questions one faces everyday. Long's discussion of judging an action not by its consequences but by its intention is a case in point. While Jainism can be hard on someone for the consequences unleashed by their action, Buddhism can be quite forgiving if one's intention was not to harm. Seeing such everyday dilemmas in the light of larger scholasticism and worldviews is likely to make one feel light as well as help one relate to the labyrinthine ways of Indian philosophy.

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FAKE NEWS IN CONTEMPORARY SCIENCE AND POLITICS: A REQUIEM FOR THE REAL? By Keith Moser. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2024. 218 pp.

Could the postmodern subject, within the confines of the "hyperreal," find an effective perspective that helps her/him enter freely into the inner workings of the "death" described by Saint Augustine, other than a will as narrated in *Aghwee the Sky Monster* by Kenzaburo Oe or in *The Last Day of a Condemned Man* by Victor Hugo?

In *Fake News in Contemporary Science and Politics: A Requiem for the Real?*, Keith Moser sheds light on the real-life consequences of the *infodemic* "threatening the stability of democratic institutions and the existence of all organisms on this biosphere, including *Homo sapiens*" (33), and offers us four enlightening revelations on the ubiquity of fake news and conspiracy theories (cf. QAnon and ANTIFA) in the larger context of the scientific and political realm. In a series of seamlessly connected musings from a plethora of philosophical and "evidenced-based" sources, Moser offers an overwhelmingly demonstrative discourse against "a requiem for the real on the horizon" (2). Specifically, Moser delves into postmodern or "Alt-Right politicians with autocratic tendencies" (100) all over the world (Donald Trump, Ron DeSantis, Jair Bolsonaro, Paul Kagame, Vladimir Putin, Boris Johnson, etc.) who take advantage of pro-administration messages on social media to suppress dissent and to consolidate even more power. Moser also outlines the fatal repercussions of living in an age of (dis-) information, as illustrated by the January 6th *coup d'état* attempt in the United States. Moreover, Moser's reflections about the deleterious effects of "alternative facts" in the scientific arena decry climate change skepticism-denial resulting in "no escape, or path for deviating from our *ecocidal* trajectory" (40). Moser also investigates the anti-vaccination movement, deconstructing the anti-science rhetoric promulgated by Big Carbon that has "whitewashed evidenced-based perspectives and replaced them with unfounded conspiracy theories" (68). Throughout the book, Moser underscores how Christian fundamentalists are trapped within a parallel universe of simulation, owing to the omnipresent influence of Rupert Murdoch's one-dimensional media empire that includes Fox News.

The fact that the book is more an assemblage of "science-based" perspectives than a rehashing of chimerical fantasies on social media, and that it at times presents more criticism than praise for great wealth without an altruism reconnecting to a deep knowledge of the cosmos, draws us to a matter of

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