

## BOOK REVIEWS

A STUDENT'S HANDBOOK OF INDIAN AESTHETICS. By Neerja A. Gupta. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017. 135 p.

The book fulfils the much-needed demand of the students of Indian Aesthetics of having an introductory concise guide to the key concepts of the field in much simplified way. Neerja A. Gupta, the author of the book, clearly mentions the motive behind writing this book in the preface by saying that the book is expected to stimulate and promote research interests in the area of Indian Aesthetics. This is possible only by acquainting the UG and PG students with certain concepts such as the notions of *rasa* and *dhvani* of Indian Aesthetics, and in this, the book largely succeeds. The appendices included in the book add extra feather to its cap by providing an access to the much researched and equally interesting articles suiting to the subject of the book.

The book contains seven chapters and five appendices that essentially support the stated goal of the book. The first chapter titled as 'Concept of Indian Aesthetics' surveying the development of the term, 'aesthetics', introduces some other significant aspects of Indian Knowledge System that helped the growth of this branch of philosophy that seems to be more associated with literature due to its assimilative application in it. The author sees the followers of Vedantic principles as the first seekers of aesthetic pleasure as Vedantic philosophy seeks "pleasure in both attainment and renouncement" (1). This chapter briefly gives an account of the growth of Indian Aesthetics from Vedas, Upaniṣads, and other Indian Philosophical schools to Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra*. One of the principal texts of Indian Aesthetics, namely, *Nāṭyaśāstra*, is considered to be the fifth Veda (*Nāṭyaveda*) by Bharata Muni himself. The subsequent three chapters of the book are fully devoted to the discussion of *Nāṭyaśāstra* detailing about the origin and conceptual framework of the treatise. These three chapters give a brief but comprehensive idea of Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra* by introducing all those aspects of the treatise that are required to be understood by a student in this area. The second chapter begins with enumerating the incident and cause of conception of *Nāṭyaśāstra* as narrated in the treatise and then moves ahead detailing about the responsibility of the enactment of *Nāṭya* that was entrusted to Bharata and his hundred sons, and further the creation of *gandharvas* and *apsarās* by Brahma who is said to have conceived this *Nāṭyaveda* on the request of all the Gods. The book selectively presents the account of histrionics and briefly describes about ten significant kinds of the drama as per *Nāṭyaśāstra*. It introduces the reader with all the thirty-six chapters of *Nāṭyaśāstra*, and explicates two chapters (VI & VII) called 'Rasadhyaya' and 'Bhāvadhyaaya' comprehensively which deliberate on the postulation of eight *rasas* and eight of their *sthāyī* and *sātvikbhāvas* along with thirty-three *sancāribhāvas* (transient emotions), eight colours and eight guardian deities. The book, further, introduces

the ideas of *anubhāvas*, and *vibhāvas* illustrating the theory of *rasa* discussing the opinions and commentaries of later Indian poeticians starting from Anandavardhana to V. Raghavan.

Further, the contents in the book apparently show the wide range of reading and research of the author in the field before taking up this task of writing of this sort that presents the highly philosophical propositions in the simplest possible manner. The fifth and the sixth chapters of the book discuss another key theory of Indian Aesthetics i.e. *dhvani* theory propounded by Anandavardhana in his *Dhvanyāloka*. The book brings out the historical facts about the first known use of the word ‘dhvani’ that comes from the Atharva-Veda. It, surveying the chronicle of the term, from Veda, Upaniṣads, *guṇa* (excellence), *dosa* (defect), and *alamkāra* (embellishment) informs the reader about how Anandavardhana brought it to its current use. In this chapter, the book delineates two kinds of sounds— primary and secondary sounds, and three types of poetry, namely, *chitrakāvya*, *dhvanikāvya*, and *guṇībhūtakāvya*, and subsequently discusses about the types of *dhvani*. The author has used certain innovative techniques of explaining the further divisions of *dhvani* through a flow chart that facilitates a quicker understanding of the types. The distinctions that have been made in the book between *dhvani* and *sphoṭa*, and between *nada* and *dhvani* analysing the opinions of great grammarians of Pāṇinian School like Patanjali and Bhartṛhari add to the clearer understanding of the theory. The seventh chapter of the book summarises the outstanding contributions made by Abhinavagupta in the field of Indian Aesthetics through his seminal commentaries and texts such as *Dhvanyāloka* Locan, and *Abhinavabharati* in connection to the theories of *dhvani* and *rasa* respectively. This concluding chapter of the book further discusses about the commentaries and expositions of Bhatta Lollata, Sankuka, and Bhattanayaka on *Rasasutra*, and brings forth Naiyayikas’ and Mahimabhata’s contending remarks on Anandavardhana’s theory of *dhvani*. It, in a way, by putting forth both Abhinavagupta’s advocacy and Mahimabhata’s opposition to the theory of *dhvani*, balances the account of critical opinionson this pivotal theory. The book, further, brings certain concepts such as *hrdayasamvāda* propounded by Abhinavagupta to light to explain the concept of aesthetic psychology and its relevance to the appreciation of *rasa* in a piece of literature. In this regard, the author of the book notes, “*hrdayasamvāda* or *tanmayībhāvanā* (sympathetic identification) is an essential constituent of the appreciation of *rasa* (*rasasvāda*). This patterned structure of poetry is called *racana* or *bandha*.” (66).

The five appendices to the book add a lot to the research value of the text as they feature five significant and interesting articles in the field of Indian aesthetics that take the reader from textual understanding of the concepts of *rasa* and *dhvani* to the practical aspects of the theories. The article entitled, ‘Between Srinagar and Benares: Kashmir’s Contribution towards a Synthesis of Indian Culture’ by Sunthar Visuvalingam as the first appendix to the text details the importance of Kashmir in the greater corpus of Indian Culture. Despite Benares being the heart of Hinduism, significant developments took place in the peripheral Kashmir. The Kashmir śaivism along with the role of Abhinavagupta is central to understanding the role of Kashmir in the Indian cultural epistemology. Though Indian philosophy revolves around the Brahminical-Buddhism conflict but it gives rise to multiple schools of thoughts. The article chiefly deliberates on the different factors and debates around the centrality of Kashmir and the rise of Kashmir śaivism in the hands of scholars like Abhinavagupta and the Nāga dynasty. It also shows a relevance of such a project for American students who are keen on understanding the complexities of the significance of Kashmir in the Indian cultural

synthesis. The second appendix is an article by Umashankar Joshi, who talks about the need for an awareness of the seminal ideas of the Sanskrit Poetics with regard to how the ideas from the greats could be best availed for new pursuits of knowledge to be achieved. The article discusses about the terminology and the nuances in differences that exist across literary culture in relation to the terms like tragedy, metaphor, simile, *rūpaka*, *samāsokti* etc. Further, Joshi, in his article, addresses the problem of poetic creation in special reference to Eliot's "objective correlative" (*vibhāva*) and his difficulty with Hamlet. The paper tries to distinctly locate the idea of poetic emotion in the theories of Valery, Kuntaka and Bhatta Nayak. This article also takes into account Rajashekhar's *bhāvayitripratibhā* and Abhinavagupta's *sahyodaya* to talk about the appreciative genius of the reader. The paper discusses three seminal ideas in Sanskrit Poetics - *rasa sutra*, *dhvani* and *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa* and takes special consideration of the works of Acarya Abhinavagupta to whom it offers the honour of "the greatest single name in Sanskrit Poetics" (83). The author finally brings Philosopher Roman Ingarden's views on aesthetic experience and aesthetic objects and condones the point that a judgement on a work of art is only valid when it is given on "the basis of an aesthetic process" (85) and has flown from the state of 'bhava'.

The article entitled, 'Does the Rasa Theory have Modern Relevance?' by R. B. Patankar talks about building a bridge between the West and the East and also ancient and modern India, and discusses the importance of a comparative studies involving two critical traditions in carrying forward such a task. While limiting certain elements of *rasa* theory to be of only historical interest, the author argues that other central elements in it are intelligible and reliable with the understanding of any age and space. In this regard, he discusses the idea of *sādhāraṇīkaraṇa* or universalisation especially in consideration with Abhinavagupta's triple claims about *Rasa*. Patankar talks about the balance between the universal and the particular and also the degree of the two, one expects while creating or looking at a particular work. In this context, he discusses Freudian analysis about the effect of particular on a work, its assumed limitations and also the critical side to those assumptions. Patankar, in his essay, questions and complicates Abhinavagupta's claims on *rasa* experience by talking about the aspect of pleasure, and a dependence of a *rasa* on other *rasas* and the need for universal significance in order to achieve that aspect. Patankar, finally, addresses the Sanskritists and puts forward his plea to take part in the dialogue between India and the West and to realise the need to modify the ancient theories. The other highly relevant and seminal article used as an appendix to the book is K. Krishnamoorthy's "The Relevance of Rasa Theory to Modern Literature" which delineates the significance of theory of *rasa* by showing how it is central to the study of art and literature. It explains the position of the theory of *rasa* keeping in view Bharatamuni and Abhinavagupta. The article also addresses the issues related to many translations and mistranslations of the foundational treatises of *rasa* theory that have created confusion about its perspective. Certain apposite instances have been given in the article to explain the theory of *rasa* in relation to modern literature. The fifth appendix to the book brings another insight for the reader where C. N. Patel compares and explains the simultaneity and associative fundamentals of *catharsis* and *rasa* as a nature of 'aesthetic experience' which is always pleasurable but different from ordinary experiences. The article states, "The transcendental view regards the experience of beauty as the reflection of the spiritual state on the human plane, whereas the empirical view regards it as one expression of man's emotional nature to be understood in terms of its other expressions" (114). This article further expands

the area of the book by bringing into discussion a western aesthetic concept that has been in the core of that knowledge system with the foundational aesthetic theory of India.

The book, due to its seven chapters, looks to be an authored book while its five appendices give it a touch of an edited volume containing valuable research outputs by different scholars of the area. It serves two purposes simultaneously by being an authored book and an edited volume which begins by introducing the basic concepts of the theories of *rasa* and *dhvani*, and finally, takes the reader to understand the practical aspect of the theories by showing quite interesting and far-reaching research outputs. Had the book included other theories and concepts of Indian Aesthetics such as *anumāna*, *rīti*, *guṇa*, *aucitya*, *vakrokti*, *alamkāra* etc., it would have served even a greater purpose.

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POLITICS AND AESTHETICS OF THE FEMALE FORM, 1908–1918. By Georgina Williams. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. 189 p.

Georgina Williams is an American artist, writer and independent researcher: she has been a visiting lecturer in UK, China and Singapore – at Winchester School of Art (2009, 2017 to now – Design), Suzhou Art and Design Technology Institute, part-time lecturer of Fashion and Textiles at the University of Portsmouth, and adjunct lecturer of Digital Design, Textiles for Fashion, and Cultural and Contextual Studies at LASALLE College of the Arts.

On the art field, Georgina Williams already has three solo exhibitions at Harbour Lights Picturehouse in Southampton: *Industrialia: The Patina of Urban Degradation* (a continuing photographic project, 2013), *Exposed* (paintings of the female form, 2011), and *Brave New World* (architectural photography, 2010).

Williams is also the author of the eminent research monograph *Propaganda and Hogarth's Line of Beauty in the First World War* (Palgrave, 2016), as well as of “Advertising Conflict: Propagandist Aesthetics in 1914”, a contributory chapter to the collection on the European art avant-garde 1914: *guerre et avant-gardes* (Branland, M. et al., eds., Presses Universitaires de Paris Ouest, 2016), and “Curvatures of Cloth: William Hogarth's Line of Beauty and ‘The Heart of True Eroticism’ in Serpentine Dance”, chapter in *The Erotic Cloth: Seduction and Fetishism in Textiles* (Kettle, A., Miller, L., eds., Bloomsbury, 2018).

In this rich and versatile professional context, her second book, *Politics and Aesthetics of the Female Form, 1908–1918*, appears to be a continuation and amplification of the author's research and artistic interests in William Hogarth's ‘line of beauty’ and its use as a mechanism for re-evaluating artworks. True to Hogarth's opposition to classicist aesthetic norms and banalized biblical stories, Georgina Williams follows the English sensualist in his unshakeable belief that beauty shall be objectively verified.

Not only that Hogarth was the founder of the social and critical movement in European art but he was also an ardent supporter of the English school's realistic genre and portrait painting.

Moreover, as he sought to maximally extend the circle of art connoisseurs and experts, Hogarth refused traders' mediation and created the practice of an exhibition-auction in his own atelier.

Just the same approach of presenting the complex and rich, colorful and dynamic world of art to the general public and to the broad circle of current curious readers and – why not – future art connoisseurs, lies in Georgina Williams' latest book, examining the common 'line of beauty' in the aesthetics of pictorial women representation in Great Britain related to suffrage, the First World War, advertising and art movements during the 1908–1918 decade. Thus, Williams manages to build a bridge back to the genealogy of recurring aesthetic and artistic motifs and techniques, the 'line of beauty' amongst the most important ones, to contemporary visual culture of the Western world.

The period of research comprises the years before and during the First World War, and, in concrete, the visual image of the female form represented by suffrage campaigns, advertisements, recruiting soldiers and support staff related to the war, as well as Modernist art movements like *art nouveau*, cubism, vorticism and symbolism – including the ways in which women pictorially represented themselves during that period. The years of Williams' investigation follow immediately after the period of the so-called *first wave* of feminism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially tangible in Great Britain after the example of the young emancipated European and American women with an independent career who were living their freedom and youth traveling, making art – drawing, singing, sewing, writing novels, travel notes, short stories and poetry, establishing women's clubs (and even woman's club movement).

For the first time in Western culture, a full expression of the female personality was given. Many women writers of the end of the 19th century (like Olive Schreiner, Sarah Grand, Victoria Cross, Mona Caird, Ella D'Arcy, Ella Hepworth Dixon, George Egerton) have described the pursuit of self-determination of the 'New Woman', the feminist ideal but also real social role seeking professional and social freedom, educated, confident, open, adventurous, who has become the exemplary cosmopolitan heroine of the *fin de siècle* story – as opposed to the image of the Victorian woman as legally, financially and morally dependent on her husband, male relatives, social and charity institutions and, ultimately, as shaped by man John Ruskin's *form on the basis of an imaginary figure*. Simone de Beauvoir (*The Second Sex*, 1949) went even further into her contemplation of woman in the Victorian ideal as a perfectly ahistorical, non-subjective, a purely negative essence: like a mirror, like the Otherness itself. It is precisely in the dynamic *fin de siècle*, or the "evening of the century" in Virginia Woolf's expression that the strict boundaries between the poles of the 'second sex' such as the 'angel at home' or 'the fallen woman' have been undermined as well.

After the historian Ruth Bordin's words on Henry James' characters (*Alice Freeman Palmer: The Evolution of a New Woman*, 1993), the term 'New Woman' expressed "American expatriates living in Europe: women of affluence and sensitivity, who despite or perhaps because of their wealth exhibited an independent spirit and were accustomed to acting on their own. The term New Woman always referred to women who exercised control over their own lives be it personal, social, or economic".

This portrait of the modern educated and free woman was sealed in the thematic painting by the end of the 19th century, when the number of women's artistic associations had grown considerably. On the other hand, publishers of women's magazines got used to hire women for the illustrations that reflected their own perspective (here are the names of female illustrators

like Rose O'Neill, Elizabeth Shippen Green, Violet Oakley, etc.). Besides the realistic artistic techniques, these generalized female images were often fulfilled by the spirit of secession, impressionism and prerafaelism: the accent was placed on the very colors, lines, contours, shapes, textures, the air and the light spraying in colors – just like inner emotions and perceptions, living out in the world outside the mind. In response to the “male perspective” in painting representing women as flowers in passive and ornamental compositions, a series of images of women drawing women in all the dynamics and inner inflorescences of their “florality” appeared (Anna Lea Merritt, Emma Lampert Cooper – cf. Stott, A., *Floral Femininity: A Pictorial Definition*, American Art No. 6, 1992).

In her illustrated monograph, Georgina Williams uses a vivid language and clear logical lines to describe not only the feminine image of that period as a whole, but also different tropes and semiotic objects like the aforementioned in order to reconstruct that first-wave “blossoming” of the female personality in full color. In Williams’s opinion, the decade of 1908–1918 appeared to be a significant ideological foundation for all the following phases of Western woman’s self-perception and self-determination.

Williams’ persistent research and artistic interest in the Western politics and aesthetics of the female form contributes not only to contemporary debates on women’s role throughout history, art and literature but also makes the ideological and political practices of visual use of stereotypes on gender roles more explicit.

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**A PHILOSOPHY OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY: BODY & TEXT.** By Aakash Singh Rathore. New Delhi: Routledge (Taylor & Francis), 2018. 164 p.

This slim volume does not bristle with quotations. It is only the words of the autobiographers themselves that Aakash Singh Rathore engages with. When an outside voice does intrude, it is brief: opening or closing the chapters. Instead there is only Rathore’s prose, interwoven with that of his interlocutors and weaving them together into new constellations. Though these exchanges are signaled already in the introduction (and made most explicit in the epilogue), there are constant appeals to the reader to hear the autobiographers in conversation among themselves. What emerges is the book’s most explicit theme: that of the body. In some chapters, it is simply the corporeality, the often-ignored bodily mass that comes forward. In others the body is explicitly treated as a parallel path developed alongside the mind. Rathore finds in the genre of the autobiography all of the scant evidence of the importance of the body in the forging of the spirit. The chapter on Yukio Mishima, a figure clearly dear to the author, is the most overt treatment of how “Body and mind are synergized in spirit.” (93)

With the introduction of ‘spirit’ we are tempted to fall back into one of those easy binaries Rathore warns against. The spirit—as abstract as the mind, and to which the body is as often

contrasted to as the mind—is here the site of unity. If there is any danger that spirit merely replaces mind as a category above the body, it is not unacknowledged. Rathore takes for granted the unity but challenges the denigration of the body. He contends that it is precisely this oversight that leads to the paucity of ‘great spirits.’ And while we are certainly welcome to venerate the greatness of the selected figures- and perhaps it is because of this veneration we are willing to listen to their lessons- what is of greater importance is that they present embodied, imitable practices towards which we can orient ourselves in our search for moral guidelines.

While the goal is the discovery of archetypes, those Aristotelean megalopsychia (97), other themes emerge in the chapters and across chapters. It is as response to that appeal posited above and in with the purposes of highlighting some of these themes that the perhaps willful cobblings-together to come will be excused.

Rathore is by no means unaware of the extreme to which this process of self-creation can go. The chapters on Kamala Das, Ernest Hemingway, Andy Warhol and Friedrich Nietzsche all deal implicitly or explicitly with the invention of selves are themselves, at best, remote goals, or at worst, delusions and fabrications. What is at stake is not the factual veracity of the claims of the autobiographies. They are all, in the end; narratives, selections, framings. Nietzsche prophesies the man that will embody the values of the coming time of dethroned truths. His critique of the super-sensuous was never a call for a return to the sensuous, a move that retains the system and its hierarchies. But his self-presentation is always as practice on the way and never as an embodiment. Warhol lies to be true to his art. The maker of genuine fakes would have been more dishonest had he presented unvarnished, unpretentious fact. What singles Das out among the others is that her autobiography is riddled with claims that are never substantiated, false stances and broken promises, the worst of which is the promise of *My Story* itself. Taken as the substantiation of an exemplary life, *My Story* fails to substantiate even its instances.

Why does Das then remain when so many other autobiographies that Rathore’s voracious consumption has encountered have been excluded? Perhaps because she nonetheless testifies to the body as a trap. Maya Angelou, Elie Wiesel, B. R. Ambedkar and Daya Pawar all feel the weight of the their bodies differently from Hemingway, who so often delights in it. Wiesel is robbed of the luxury of ignoring his body then of the luxury of thinking of himself apart from his body and finally of even seeing the body as a whole. And finally, he survives as a body, and then must survive his survival. With the chapters on Ambedkar and Pawar Rathore shows that in addition to a mind, the body might have abstractions of its own, invisible yet bodily marks. These marks go so far as to pose the question “...how can the feet, dirtier than the dirt below it, live the life of the mind?” (79) And while Maya Angelou’s body is more visibly marked it is just as far outside the centre as Pawar’s and Ambedkar’s. And yet, the flesh is neither sloughed off for the security of the mind, nor perversely delighted in. Rathore identifies an exemplary moment of the thick weave of word body and text when he writes: “Nigger: this is the flesh made word. A cage of a word to cage the dignity of the bird. But Maya- is this why she seems unrivaled in her beauty? - makes the caged bird sing.” (53) Other hints of reorientations towards the body are Wiesel’s reclaimed faith and Warhol’s recalibration after recovering from being shot.

Gandhi and Mishima fall into conversation in Rathore’s presentation of their somatization. While he explicitly characterizes Gandhi’s pursuit of political autonomy for his nation as beginning with his pursuit of self-control for himself there is certainly an embodied political

performance in Mishima's death. Similarly, Marjane Satrapi's political commentary grapples with live bodies covered up and dead bodies displayed, culminating in Rathore's characterization of *Persepolis* as positioning the body between the micro and macrocosm. What he says of Gandhi could easily apply to many of the others: "The body is metric, the measure of what has or has not been achieved on the road to truth" (34) The body's endurance of its truth is encountered in Hemingway's description of faces, bloodied by boxing and limbs, mutilated by war. And there is certainly something to be said for Art Spiegelman's father Vladek bathing in freezing rivers to make the day's toil comparatively easy.

While Art's own labors over the drawing board to embody his characters are not the focus of his chapter Rathore is attentive and sometimes critical of the visual elements of Satrapi's *Persepolis*. The comments here do not privilege the visual, but treat it with the same importance as, for example, Daya Pawar's use of pronouns to modulate the distance between himself and his reader.

But to simply leave *A Philosophy of Autobiography* with its thematic is to fail to heed its promptings. While Rathore says "All the details fall away to a chorus of revealing" (141); If there is a falling away, it is not as snakeskin shed but as—to return to an image from Hemingway—the oyster shells after the meat had been savored. Rathore always lingers on instances from the works he deals with. Whether it is Art Spiegelman toiling away atop a mountain of corpses, Maya Angelou being turned away by the dentist, Yukio Mishima's *seppuku* or Gandhi's experiments; it is always the lived, embodied detail that traces the path to the revealing.

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Aakash Singh Rathore through *A Philosophy of Autobiography: Body & Text* makes a strong case for unity of flesh and spirit as an essential element of human existence. This work becomes more powerful as the author is committed to explore the intersections of physicality and philosophy. As a practitioner of somatic possibilities and a student of psychoanalysis, he attempts to investigate into 'how ought we to understand the life of the mind with relation to the body, or vice versa' (13). This book, he affirms, is a result of his curious personal goals, which offers to us a significant juncture for the fundamental concerns of existential, philosophical quests.

*A Philosophy of Autobiography* touches upon enormous fields of enquiry—from Cartesian dualism, Christian theological positions, neuroscientific discoveries, to feminist phenomenology—and finds the relevance of 'bodily lived experience' as a crucial and promising aspect in answering the mind-body relativism. This review reflects upon certain elements of bodily lived experience, as discussed beautifully in the 12 autobiographies selected in the book, seeking a coherent unity of body and mind for an exemplary existence. I would discuss the elements of dualisms like 'fact verses fiction', 'fact verses fake', 'fake verses fiction'; explicate how the 'body' is seen as fundamental to human existence; and finally argue that a unified self – body, mind, spirit, soul altogether – not only can serve as an exemplar but it is necessary for us to thrive in all these dimensions in order to live fully a human existence.

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**Fact, Fiction and the Fake:** One dominant dualism has been challenged by the author (fact vs. fiction), which he deals with explicitly in chapters on Ernest Hemingway and Art Spiegelman. Hemingway advocates that a great work of fiction can be created by writing just 'what is true'. Rathore cites from his autobiography *A Moveable Feast*, 'If the reader prefers, this book may be regarded as fiction'. (...) 'But there is always a chance that such a book of fiction may throw some light on what has been written as fact' (57-58).

Author-artist Spiegelman's autobiography '*MAUS* forces us to consider how fictive form can serve as the vehicle for truth content'. The author criticises the manner in which students are 'forced to read *MAUS*', with questions like 'Is this book a fiction? If not, explain how mice can talk in the real world' (117). This is an important insight. The dualisms of this kind limit the possibility of creative engagement with texts that actually transgresses such boundaries, which otherwise can contribute enormously to the knowledge construction.

A similar phenomenon is about an author's being fake and the consequent disgust among her critics. Rathore brings forth an amazing reflection about Andy Warhol's autobiographies *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol* and *POPism*. Warhol 'used to like to give different information to different magazines'. Highlighting this, he suggests, 'aren't these partly the essence of his art?' (107). Rathore's insight is intriguing, that is, why do we presume that an author cannot deploy an essential part of her creativity into her writing? She, very well, can and evidently, Warhol did. The author begins to admire him as a 'genuine fake' — 'an authentic 'something' that nevertheless poses as 'something' else!'

This admiration for the 'genuine fake' does not grant the author's leniency towards the 'fake', as we witness in the chapter on Kamala Das' *My Story*. Das' autobiography, he declares, 'is not an honest one'. An admirer of her poetry and a careful reader interrogates the incoherence in *her Story*, 'is she trying to fool us or herself?' (88). There can be harsh criticism of Rathore's position, but he cites her Obituary wherein 'Das later admitted that there was plenty of fiction in *My Story*. Perhaps "biomythography" [rather than autobiography] would have been a fairer description of the book' (91)!

Thus, a significant issue concerning literary works has been discussed keenly in the book. We find, there is no absolute divide between fact and fiction or even fake. Interesting issues are raised in the book around the questions of authenticity, appropriation and ethics on the authors' part. Rathore contemplates upon Y. S. Alone's 'Does your work lend itself over to an enabling process for the oppressed?', and cautions against 'paternalistic work', encourages for facilitating 'self-agency' (43), using intriguing phrases like 'surrogate insult' (116), 'dubious underbelly' (119), and Daya Pawar's own metaphor of 'Dalit-Brahmin' (75).

**Body as Existence:** As the survival literature predominantly shows and our experiences of abuse, mainly sexual abuse, make us see 'body' as 'burden' (126). In personal narratives of rape survivors, we find that they often hate their bodies and attempt to mutilate themselves as they find a distinction between their own and the culprit's body. The chapter on Marjane Satrapi's autobiography *Persepolis* elaborates on 'body as vulnerability' portraying bodily pain with 'gaping wide mouth screams... whip lashed back of a tortured body' (126-27), same as the corpses of people died in holocaust (118). As the chapter on Dr. Ambedkar's autobiography *Waiting for a Visa* exhibits, 'untouchability, is carried in the body but not on it' (42); even the 'spiritual rebirth' through conversion does not emancipate an untouchable body from this status.

Body exhibits the nature of one's living, '[D]elicate hands' represent 'higher class', 'business man rather than labourer' (119). A crucial scene in famous Hollywood sci-fi film *They Live*

(1988) portrayed same. The chapter on Daya Pawar's autobiography *Baluta* mentions 'a labouring Dalit girl, who has rough workers' hands like iron rods'; and '[f]or Ashoka the King, [they] need someone fair'; also a heartbreak is evident by losing 'weight', 'sagged cheek', 'sunken eyes', 'dark circles' and heartmending begins with 'exercise' (78). We see that skin-colour, muscle-texture, or body-mass is deterministic in knowing one's social identity.

Body affects one's belief in herself. In Das' words, 'I hated to see myself as I really was in mirrors', 'I was plain, very brown', which later turns into 'my proud Dravidian skin' (88). In the chapter on Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, 'My skin looked dirty like mud... one day I woke out of my black ugly dream... I was really white... [my] cruel fairy stepmother, ... had turned me into a too-big Negro girl' (50). Because the bodily appearance disgusted them about themselves, both Angelou and Das created an alternative belief about their same bodies, accommodating their realities in a positive fortifying manner to flee from their inferiorities.

We talk about 'survival of the fittest'; don't we really know what is that which is 'fittest' herein? Rathore finds that 'being a survivor is being a body' (69). It is discussed extensively in the chapter on *MAUS* which is about surviving the survivor – Spiegelman's father Vladek (120). In the chapter on holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel's autobiography *Night*, he writes, 'it was the body... that survived, that makes [one] a survivor' (72). Primo Levi was another survivor of holocaust who later committed suicide, but Wiesel didn't! Precisely this makes him a 'survivor'; he survived being a holocaust survivor. Isn't it a common sense, I wonder, it is the physical body which denotes death, birth, or existence of a living being! One's physical body makes one exist.

Thus, the body is what makes our lives 'burdensome', 'vulnerable', 'toiling', 'inferior', 'esteemed', or 'emancipatory'. We encounter the world with our physical existence and the world interacts with us considering our bodily existence. Rathore concludes, 'the body is always there at the centre, the substance of the subject' (136). Yes, indeed! But what is at the periphery, if body is at the centre?

**Spirited Body as Exemplarity:** What follows next is the body with something more. The evil oppressors around the world attempt to re-name, number and negate our human existence. Wiesel writes, 'I became A-7713. After that I had no other name' (71). Spiegelman's 'father was reduced to a number' and he 'didn't survive' (121, 120). Angelou 'broke to pieces' a white woman's most coveted dish 'seeking revenge for being renamed' (53). It is not mere body, but a name, an acknowledgment of our human living, what makes us exist.

More than a name, a spirit, is what a body needs to survive. Wiesel writes, at the Auschwitz 'I was nothing but a body', and while escaping the gas chambers 'there was two of us; my body and I' (71, 72). There were 'strange looking creatures', which were bodies of human, but void of human spirit, empty of emotions, hollowed out of feelings (70). Rathore intriguingly puts it 'pre-dead corpses' – those imprisoned, exploited and subjected to brutal death, and 'post-dead corpses' – those vacuous of any signs of humane values subjecting them to death. The former is dead with the death of their flesh (whose spirits are already murdered by their entry into the death camps), and the latter is dead with the death of their spirit.

The body and the spirit survive with an active mind that keeps the two intact. The prisoners at Nazi camps 'bathed and did gymnastics', 'prayed', and 'played chess'. 'Body, mind and spirit', Rathore emphasises, 'individually must survive' (120). It is the mind of the teenager Satrapi which reflects, '[m]y mental transformation was followed by my physical metamorphosis'

(129); and who ‘intuited a decade of the late Foucault’s teaching (on biopolitics and governmentality) and sketched it into a few little squares of a book of cartoons!’ (131).

Angelou contemplates, it is ‘terribly unfair to have a toothache and a headache and have to bear at the same time the heavy burden of Blackness’ (52). The 11 years old clearly states her opinion about ‘name-calling’, ‘the humourless puzzle of inequality and hate’, ‘Black pride’ and the brutal implications of losing in a boxing match (53). Both Satrapi and Angelou are perfect models of intelligence, beyond the conservatism of race, gender, class, religion, culture or even age.

Yukio Mishima, we find in his autobiography *Sun and Steel*, sought for an ‘intelligence matched by pure physical existence’ (100). That is precisely what is disallowed at the death camps: ‘[w]holeness – mind, body, spirit, and soul altogether’ (72). Why? Well, at Auschwitz humans were prepared to become ‘pre-dead and post-dead corpses’. But otherwise, even in a democratic society, aren’t we discouraged to have our mind, body, spirit unified? Why are there conventions? Why are we to conform to the norms? What is that we are kept from? What happens with this ‘wholeness’? The conservative powers, the status-quo, fear the radical energy which an individual can produce when she explores all her possibilities to flourish in multiple dimensions. The wholeness is precisely what is required to be, and expected of, an exemplar.

Exemplarity is achieved by the rare few who could manage to keep their body, mind, soul and spirit thriving altogether. Aristotle’s virtue ethics regards it as *megalopsychia* – the ‘great of soul’ (97). Rathore regards Hemingway as ‘a true inspiration’ for ‘[n]ot just the body of his work, but also for his work on his body’ (65). Determining for ‘the harmony of the pen and the sword’, Mishima beautifully argues, ‘to combine action and art is to combine the flower that wilts and the flower that lasts forever’ (96, 97). There we find a vivid and powerful critique of the predominant orthodox superiority of mind over the body. Our resistance to keep away from the physical bodily endeavours has ‘steadily perverted and altered reality’ which connects us only to ‘shadows’ and not the real part of our beings (100). Finding our true selves demands working together on both – mind and body. That would render a ‘spirited body’.

All these authors together join chorus in revealing that we all bear the potential *megalopsychia*, to be an exemplar. Inspired from their bodily lived experiences, and benefitted from the philosophical engagement of the author, I argue that as part of our being humans we can equally flourish physically, mentally, and spiritually. In order to actualise our true selves, those of us engaged with the life of mind need to explore the life of body and vice versa. Because we cannot excel in one field if we ignore another dimension of our existence.

To conclude three sections: Dualisms like ‘fact versus fiction’, ‘fact versus fake’, ‘fake versus fiction’ do not hold true in all cases; although these genres have differences they can always overlap one another. We have seen in different ways, how ‘body’ plays a central role to our human existence. Unity of mind, body, soul, spirit is a necessary factor for our thriving, for actualising our potentials, for being an exemplar, for living a truly human life. Rathore’s book is an amazing read which walks us through the lives of great spirited bodies of the world which we admire as exemplars.

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