



# MAKRAND

Understanding Śabda Tradition  
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## Of the Division of the Beautiful Arts

The formative arts, or those by which expression is found for ideas in sensible intuition (not by representations of mere imagination that are aroused by words), are either arts of sensible truth or of sensible illusion. The former is called plastic, the latter painting.

We may describe beauty in general (whether natural or artificial) as the expression of aesthetical ideas; only that in beautiful art this idea must be occasioned by a concept of the object, while in beautiful nature the mere reflection upon a given intuition, without any concept of what the object is to be, is sufficient for the awakening and communicating of the idea of which that object is regarded as the expression.

If, then, we wish to make a division of the beautiful arts, we cannot choose a more convenient principle, at least tentatively, than the analogy of art with the mode of expression of which men avail themselves in speech, in order to communicate to one another as perfectly as possible not merely their concepts but also their sensations. This is done by *word*, *deportment*, and *tone* (articulation, gesticulation, and modulation). It is only by the combination of these three kinds of expression that communication between the speaker [and his hearers] can be complete. For thus thought, intuition, and sensation are transmitted to others simultaneously and conjointly.

There are, therefore, only three kinds of beautiful arts: the arts of *speech*, the *formative arts*, and the art of the *play of sensations* (as external sensible impressions). We may also arrange a division by dichotomy: thus beautiful art may be divided into the art of expression of thoughts and of intuitions, and these further subdivided in accordance with their form or their matter (sensation). But this would appear to be too abstract, and not so accordant with ordinary concepts.

(1) The arts of speech are *rhetoric* and *poetry*. *Rhetoric* is the art of carrying on a serious business of the understanding as if it were a free play of the imagination; *poetry*, the art of conducting a free play of the imagination as if it were a serious business of the understanding.

The orator, then, promises a serious business, and in order to entertain his audience conducts it as if it were a mere play with ideas. The *poet* merely promises an entertaining play with ideas, and yet it has the same effect upon the understanding as if he had only intended to carry on its business. The combination and harmony of both cognitive faculties, sensibility and understanding, which cannot dispense with each other but which yet cannot well be united without constraint and mutual prejudice, must appear to be undesigned and so to be brought about by themselves; otherwise it is not *beautiful* art. Hence, all that is studied and anxious must be avoided in it, for beautiful art must be free art in a double sense. It is not a work like a mercenary employment, the greatness of



Diptych with the Coronation of the Virgin and the Last Judgment French, ca. 1260–70

which can be judged according to a definite standard, which can be attained or paid for; and again, though the mind is here occupied, it feels itself thus contented and aroused without looking to any other purpose (independently of reward).

The orator therefore gives something which he does not promise, viz. an entertaining play of the imagination; but he also fails to supply what he did promise, which is indeed his announced business, viz. the purposive occupation of the understanding. On the other hand, the poet promises little and announces a mere play with ideas; but he supplies something which is worth occupying ourselves with, because he provides in this play food for the understanding and, by the aid of imagination, gives life to his concepts. [Thus the orator on the whole gives less, the poet more, than he promises.]

(2) The formative arts, or those by which expression is found for ideas in *sensible intuition* (not by representations of mere imagination that are aroused by words), are either arts of *sensible truth* or of *sensible illusion*. The former is called *plastic*, the latter *painting*. Both express ideas by figures in space: the former makes figures cognizable by two senses, sight and touch (although not by the latter as far as beauty is concerned); the latter only by one, the first of these. The aesthetical idea (the archetype or original image) is fundamental for both in the imagination, but the figure

which expresses this (the ectype or copy) is either given in its bodily extension (as the object itself exists) or as it paints itself on the eye (according to its appearance when projected on a flat surface). In the first case the condition given to reflection may be either the reference to an actual purpose or only the semblance of it.

To *plastic*, the first kind of beautiful formative art, belong *sculpture* and *architecture*. The first presents corporeally concepts of things, as they might have existed in nature (though as beautiful art it has regard to aesthetical purposiveness). The second is the art of presenting concepts of things that are possible only through art and whose form has for its determining ground, not nature, but an arbitrary purpose, with the view of presenting them with aesthetical purposiveness. In the latter the chief point is a certain *use* of the artistic object, by which condition the aesthetical ideas are limited. In the former the main design is the mere *expression* of aesthetical ideas. Thus statues of men, gods, animals, etc., are of the first kind; but temples, splendid buildings for public assemblies, even dwelling houses, triumphal arches, columns, mausoleums, and the like, erected in honorable remembrance, belong to architecture. Indeed all house

furniture (upholsterer's work and such like things which are for use) may be reckoned under this art, because the suitability of a product for a certain use is the essential thing in an *architectural work*. On the other hand, a mere *piece of sculpture*, which is simply made for show and which is to please in itself, is as a corporeal presentation a mere imitation of nature, though with a reference to aesthetical ideas; in it *sensible truth* is not to be carried so far that the product ceases to look like art and looks like a product of the elective will.

*Painting*, as the second kind of formative art, which presents a sensible illusion artificially combined with ideas, I would divide into the art of the beautiful *depicting of nature* and that of the beautiful *arrangement of its products*. The first is *painting proper*, the second is the art of *landscape gardening*. The first gives only the illusory appearance of corporeal extension; the second gives this in accordance with truth, but only the appearance of utility and availableness for other purposes than the mere play of the imagination in the contemplation of its forms. This latter is nothing else than the ornamentation of the soil with a variety of those things (grasses, flowers, shrubs, trees, even ponds, hillocks, and dells) which nature presents to an observer, only arranged differently and in conformity with certain ideas. But, again, the beautiful arrangement of corporeal things is only apparent to the eye, like painting; the sense of touch cannot supply any intuitive presentation of such a form. Under painting in the wide sense I would reckon the decoration of rooms by the aid of tapestry, bric-a-brac, and all beautiful furniture which is merely available to be *looked at*; and the same may be said of the art of tasteful dressing (with rings, snuffboxes, etc.). For a bed of various flowers, a room filled with various ornaments (including under this head even ladies' finery), make at a fete a kind of picture which, like pictures properly so called (that are not intended

to *teach* either history or natural science), has in view merely the entertainment of the imagination in free play with ideas and the occupation of the aesthetical judgment without any definite purpose. The detailed work in all this decoration may be quite distinct in the different cases and may require very different artists, but the judgment of taste upon whatever is beautiful in these various arts is always determined in the same way, viz. it only judges the forms (without any reference to a purpose) as they present themselves to the eye, either singly or in combination, according to the

Immanuel Kant

Excerpt from: *Philosophies of Art And Beauty: Selected Readings in Aesthetics from Plato to Heidegger*



### WHAT DOES ART DEPICT? ②



Black-Figure Neck Amphora (about 570–560 B.C.)

This black-figure neck-amphora depicts the Greek hero Herakles battling Kyknos, who had attacked pilgrims on their way to Apollo's sanctuary at Delphi. Herakles, wearing a lionskin, is shown delivering the final blow. Ares and an unknown goddess support Kyknos, while Athena and Hermes back Herakles. Above and below the scene are decorative bands of real and mythical creatures. The reverse shows a man and two women flanked by sphinxes—creatures with human and lion features.



Mother and Child  
Kitagawa Utamaro Japanese ca. 1800

As in a number of the prints in this exhibition, the reflection of the mother and child in this image enables us to see the figures from two sides. Here, a dog raises its paw, perhaps in imitation of the baby's elevated hand. Such mother-and-child prints by Utamaro influenced the work of Mary Cassatt.

## Society as a Work of Art

Is there a way to get from one dimension to the other: a material reality of art, which not only maintains but also, and for the first time, fulfills art as form?

thereby falsified it. The consequence: the task of art in this situation is to supplement and correct this false image – to portray the truth, but in a way that is possible for art and art alone.

Traditional art, so it is said, remained powerless and foreign with respect to real life. It was mere semblance. For this reason art remained a privilege: something for the church, the museum, or the collector.

The artificial character of this art and the truth it contains appears in the beautiful as its essential stylistic form, which transforms the object world through semblance. In so doing it does indeed represent a hidden and repressed truth, albeit a truth that retains the character of semblance.

The rebellion against traditional art succeeded, [first] because this art was *conformist*; it remained under the spell of a world shaped by domination. It succeeded, second, because this spell made and had to make the truth accessible to art into *beautiful semblance*. This dual objection raised against traditional art brings a strongly political element into art – “political” in the

broadest sense, as art's oppositional stance to the status quo. Furthermore, a new cognitive function of art is contained in this oppositional stance; art is called upon to represent the truth. I cite Franz Marc once again: “We seek the internal, the spiritual side of nature.”

Raoul Hausmann goes one step further and characterizes art with a highly significant statement, which is subsequently adopted by the formalists: “Art is a painted or molded *critique of cognition*.”

This statement contains a demand for a new optics, a new perception, a new consciousness, a new language which would bring with it the dissolution of the existing form of perception and its objects.

This is a radical break; new possibilities of representing people and things are at stake. But must not this radical function of art remain bound to a world of semblance precisely because it would be realized only in art, only as a work of art? The rebellion is acutely aware of this contradiction. Art should no longer be powerless with respect to life, but should instead

help give it shape – and nonetheless remain art, i.e. semblance.

The first way out of this contradiction was revealed by the great European revolutions of 1918; there was a demand for the subordination of art to politics. Just remember the so-called cult of the proletariat and the final disastrous manifestation of this tendency in “socialist realism.” One quickly recognized that this way out was no way out at all.

A decisive new antithesis arose in the 1920s and early 1930s with surrealism. Not the subordination of art to politics, but the subordination of politics to art, to the creative imagination. I quote from a 1943 essay by the surrealist Benjamin Péret:

The poet can no longer be recognized as such today, unless he opposes the world in which he lives with *total nonconformity*. The poet stands opposed to everything, including those movements that act only in the political arena and thus isolate art from the totality of cultural developments. These revolutionaries proclaim the subordination of culture to the social revolution.

Why is there a contrary demand for the subordination of political and social movements to the artistic imagination? Because

effect they produce upon the imagination. But that formative art may be compared (by analogy) with deportment in speech is justified by the fact that the spirit of the artist supplies by these figures a bodily expression to his thought and its mode, and makes the thing itself, as it were, speak in mimic language. This is a very common play of our fancy, which attributes to lifeless things a spirit suitable to their form by which they speak to us.

(3) The art of the beautiful play of sensations (externally stimulated), which admits at the same time of universal communication, can be concerned with nothing else than the proportion of the different degrees of the disposition (tension) of the sense to which the sensation belongs, i.e. with its tone. In this far-reaching signification of the word it may be divided into the artistic play of the sensations of hearing and sight, i.e. into *music* and the *art of color*. It is noteworthy that these two senses, beside their susceptibility for impressions so far as these are needed to gain concepts of external objects, are also capable of a peculiar sensation bound up therewith of which we cannot strictly decide whether it is based on sense or reflection. This susceptibility may sometimes be wanting, although in other respects the sense, as regards its use for the cognition of objects, is not at all deficient but is peculiarly fine. That is, we cannot say with certainty whether colors or tones (sounds) are merely pleasant sensations or whether they form in themselves a beautiful play of sensations, and as such bring with them in aesthetical judgment a satisfaction in the form [of the object]. If we think of the velocity of the vibrations of light or in the second case of the air, which probably far surpasses all our faculty of judging immediately in perception the time interval between them, we must believe that it is only the effect of these vibrations upon the elastic parts of our body that is felt, but that the *time interval* between them is not remarked or brought into judgment; and thus that only pleasantness, and not beauty of composition, is bound up with colors and tones. But on the other hand, first, we think of the mathematical [element] which enables us to pronounce on the proportion between these oscillations in music and thus to judge of them; and by analogy with which we easily may judge of the distinctions between colors. Secondly, we recall instances (although they are rare) of men who, with the best sight in the world, cannot distinguish colors and, with the sharpest hearing, cannot distinguish tones; while for those who can do this the perception of an altered quality (not merely of the degree of sensation) in the different intensities in the scale of colors and tones is definite; and further, the very number of these is fixed by *intelligible* differences. Thus we may be compelled to see that both kinds of sensations are to be regarded, not as mere sensible impressions, but as the effects of a judgment passed upon the form in the play of divers sensations. The difference in our definition, according as we adopt the one or the other opinion in judging of the grounds of music, would be just this: either, as we have done, we must explain it as the beautiful play of sensations (of hearing), or else as a play of *pleasant* sensations. According to the former mode of explanation, music is represented altogether as a *beautiful* art; according to the latter, as a *pleasant* art (at least in part).

transforms reality. Sensibility, understood both internally and externally (*die innere und äußere Sinnlichkeit*), is the element of art, of aesthetics. It is receptive rather than positive.

Is there a way to get from one dimension to the other: a material reality of art, which not only maintains but also, and for the first time, fulfills art as form? Something in society must meet art halfway, for such a realization of art to be possible. But not in a way that subordinates art to the social process; not in a way that subjects art to any interests springing from social domination; not in a way that forces art to submit to heteronomy – even of the socially necessary kind – but instead, only in a way that society creates the material and intellectual possibilities for the truth of art to be incorporated in the social process itself and for the form of art to be materialized.

Why has there been an insistence upon the beautiful (*das Schöne*) as the essential quality of art in the philosophy of art until now when it is so obvious that so much art is not beautiful at all? The philosophical definition of the beautiful is the sensuous appearance of the idea. As such, beauty seems to stand halfway between the sublimated and unsublimated instinctual spheres. The immediate sexual object does not need to be beautiful, while at the other extreme the most sublimated object can be considered beautiful only in a very abstract sense. The beautiful belongs to the sphere of nonrepressive sublimation, as the free formation of the raw material of the senses and thus the sensuous embodiment (*Versinnlichung*) of the mere idea.

Herbert Marcuse

Excerpt from: *Art and Liberation*







## MYTH IN BRIEF



Bolla (or Bullar)

A serpentine monster in the folklore of southern Albania. It has four legs, small wings, and faceted silver eyes. When it wakes from its year-long hibernation on St. George's Day (April 23), it devours the first human it sees. After 12 years, it metamorphoses into a horrific, fire-breathing flying Dragon with nine tongues called *Kulshedra*. Sometimes described as an immense hairy woman with pendulous breasts, *Kulshedra* causes drought, requiring human sacrifice in propitiation.



Baku

Called the Eater of Dreams, this chimerical creature is a benevolent being. It has the body of a tapir, the head of an elephant, the mane of a lion, the tail of an ox, and the legs and paws of a tiger. It is invoked upon first awakening by saying, "Oh Baku, eat my dreams," and it gobbles up any lingering nightmares so that the dreamer may have a peaceful day. The Baku appears in many Japanese fantasy tales, especially in anime and manga. It also plays a big part in Neil Gaiman's *The Dream Hunters*.

The mythic image of dawn is an expression of intrinsic cosmic energy that invites a deeper inquiry into the very nature of creativity and consciousness. What we find in common about the image of dawn in world mythology that it is seen as goddess/muse/inspiration.

In Rigveda, Uṣas emerges as a prominent Vedic goddess, the daughter of Dy-aus (Sky). She is depicted as a beautiful, virginal figure, driving a chariot drawn by red horses, ushering in light and dispelling darkness. Uṣas is not just a bringer of day; she is a deity who sets all things in motion and grants strength and fame to her devotees. She is praised as the bringer of knowledge, and her effulgence is invoked to rouse forth our insights. This hints towards the potency of knowledge, where her light illuminates not just the physical world but the inner state of being.

The Greek "Eos" is a personification of the dawn, a radiant figure whose cosmic function is to rise each morning from the edge of the river Oceanus to herald and deliver light to the world. While sometimes depicted with a lusty or seductive nature she represents the continuous return of light, a force that dispels away the night.

Roman goddess "Aurora" is equivalent to Eos. Her name derived directly from Latin, literally translates to "dawn". Aurora is depicted as a radiant, ethereal goddess with flowing golden or rosy hair, often winged. She rides a chariot drawn by white or winged horses, scattering flowers and light as she progresses across the sky.

"Aušrinė" is revered as a goddess of dawn in Baltic mythology. She is closely associated with the morning star, which is the planet, Venus. Her imagery is associated with Baltic wedding folklore, customs, and textile traditions, particularly the symbolic acts of hair combing and braiding. These are interpreted as codifications of wedding, transformation and matchmaking.

Similarly, Buddhist mythology offers "Marici", a goddess of dawn invoked at sunrise, depicted with multiple heads (one of them a wild boar) and riding a chariot. She is a protective in nature, safeguarding her worshipers from thieves and enemies, symbolizing the protective clarity that knowledge brings against the confusions of darkness.

"Ame-no-Uzume" is a significant Japanese goddess associated with dawn, mirth, revelry, and the arts. Her myth involves her pivotal role in coaxing the sun goddess 'Amaterasu Omikami' out of the Heavenly Rock Cave, where she had secluded herself. This act is interpreted as the restoration of light and balance to the world.

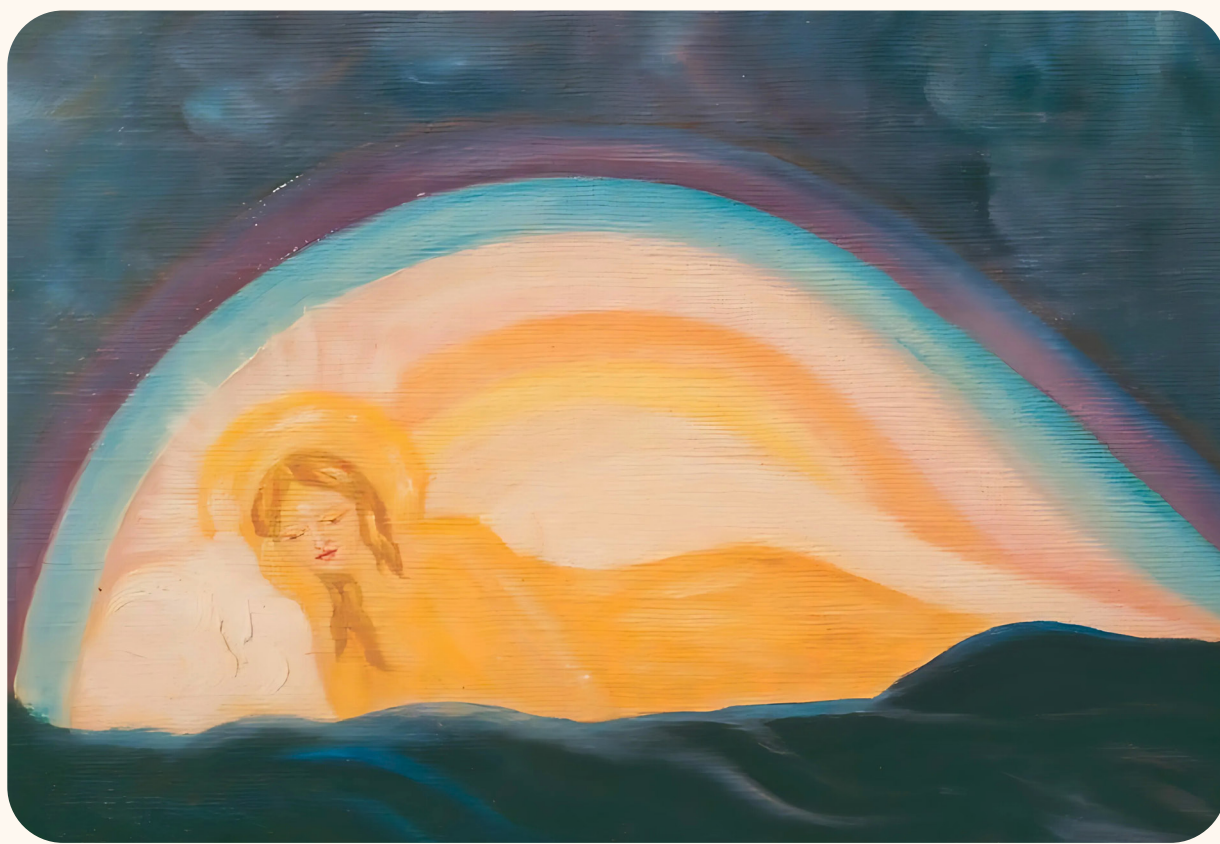
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We can see from these myths that how different cultures attach universal archetypal attribute of feminine to the image of dawn. How to engage with these images? Are these fully understandable on the level of symbolic representation or allegorical interpretation? The persistent challenge around the mythic image is to critically confront its domanian forms and reconfigure its meaning for fresh possibilities.

Sri Aurobindo in his essay *The Sources of Poetry* highlights the phrase "swiftness of the muse". In this essay he considers that higher source of poetry is a revelation (often suggested in feminine attribute). Similarly, when we look into the structure

# Mythic Image of Dawn

For art the presentation of content in the feminine image is the precondition of the expression, and for that, goddess becomes the objective whole, energised with forceful elements.



Painting by Huta

and images of this essay, we find that, he takes help from the expression of mythic image of deity to show manifestation of poetic inspiration. He uses the attributes of feminine image (invaded by heart, turbid stream, imperturbable flatness, luminous inspiration) while defining the questions of inspiration. It hints towards the role of rhythmic sound image of feminine principle for the interpretation of the phenomenon. The idea of presentation of this rhythmic sound image is an attempt to direct pre-knowledge with new atmosphere of suggestion and sound. It leads towards the new engagements to the myth.

In this context, the symbolic image of goddess is the way of comprehending the dynamic and divergent energy of phenomenon and understanding it as charged by overmind touch so it can participate to divinisation the nescient flux of life. To reach out its lucid vision creative imagination charged with overmind touch experience Devi as primary mode of association with flow of life. But the challenge for creativity is that the lower mental inspirations conceptualise the overmind touch on the basis of stagnant means, or in other way consciousness is unable to discover authentic self-critique that leads towards

the difficulty to create new language and signification of the symbol.

So, Image, should be taken as state of being not only as intellectual concept. It means that images are not the tools or devices of and for certain expression but actual living organism. Perhaps that is the reason of its dimensions of feltness, revelation, paradox of veiling/unveiling and not mere rhetorical construction. Dawn manifests as a living symbol and the energy of the spirit. Overmind art is the field of its universal dynamism. For overmind, things, concepts and phenomenon are energies and states of being. This art aims to concretise volatile stirrings of light, effulgence, and delight (elements of force) to

drive consciousness towards the mega vision of the phenomenon. It is not a creative intelligence visioned on elevated thought power and mental sight but a touch of Truth vividness. Everything "resolves itself into force, into movement of energy" (Sri Aurobindo, *The Life Divine*). It is difficult to fully convey its form of energy for lower mental modes but overmind with its logic of undifferentiability visualise it through the vast dynamic and synthesizing power. In the hierarchy of consciousness, overmind is one step behind the Supermind or a del-

egate of it. The overmind inspiration can be found by an "intonation and a rhythm", "suggestion", and "force of an image".

In most of the artistic works, the third aspect is more facilitating and utilised by the literary and artistic world. But the image stays fragile if other two are not received in the right compatibility. The plane of Overmind is the plane of "There". To breach/unbreach (because it is a two-way process) the "Truth vividness" and plane of "There" overmind helps to symbolically impregnate the inconscient. Inconscient is "material base of existence" and "apparent unconsciousness" which is not fully unconscious but appears so. By "symbolic pregnance" we means "how a lived perceptive experience as a 'sensible' lived experience contains in itself at the same time a certain non-intuitive 'sense'. (Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*) It can be seen as an "interwovenness" of Involution and Evolution. Without this, consciousness cannot march towards different planes and the division of subjects stays at distance without fruitfully interacting each other. In literary sense, the archetypal vision cannot be produced without it. Involution, describes the consciousness progressively veiling itself within denser planes of being, bestowing in the apparent unconsciousness of the matter. This descent, however, is not an end but a prelude, setting the stage

for Evolution—the gradual unveiling and ascent of consciousness from its material sheath. In this narrative, the mythic image of dawn is a channelisation of sight and does not stay in single form but becomes a perceptible energy and the attribute of progression of the spirit, symbolizing the 'perpetual awakening of the light of consciousness from the Night of Nescience'. This aspect of breaking one unitive time into multiple energies as forms of light, space, sound, colour is the overmind touch of Nature's phenomena and similarly of author's in the text world.

Thus, for art the presentation of content in the feminine image is the precondition of the expression, and for that, goddess becomes the objective whole, energised with forceful elements. The conceptual basis of this activity at initial mental planes, can be understood as the structuration of uncontrollable impulses of visions of reality. But these initial mental planes approach image of dawn through the fix allegorical characteristics. It is no doubt that myth is not present here but mere as body of hidden significance and meaning. The task of overmind is to create the new language and effect of the image. To do so, the overhead inspiration practice "undertones" and "overtones" of 'rhythmic sound image'. As in *The Symbol Dawn*, Aurobindo describes the initial stirrings of awakening as a "hesitating hue," a "vague smile tempting a desert heart". It is a state of tentativeness, ambiguity and the feeling of hesitation in inconscient. It is an unawakened potential of darkness hesitating for the emergence of phenomenon of colour due to the grandeur sanctitude of its "inert black quietude" and the lawful autonomy bestowed on ignorance by supramental obligation. Additionally, "A message from the unknown immortal light", "An eye of deity peered through the dumb deeps", "The brief perpetual sign", "The persistent thrill of a transfiguring touch", "seed of grandeur" are the images associated with dawn. These images collectively create an aura of newer attributes of dawn under the touch of overmind aesthesis. It adds to the image of dawn that it is a 'waking ignorance' breaching the cloak from the face of sleep or from the face of ignorance due to lawful obligation. It is a wake of ignorant consciousness (promise of light) from the vast, innate enigma of the Inconscient. It breaks the monotonic reality of sleeping ignorance and waking ignorance. Dawn is not a random occurrence but is driven by an "innate aspiration present in each form of matter", referred to as "the secret Will in nature".

The trajectory of this evolution is towards the Supermind, that synthesizes truth and existence. The "hesitating hue" of early dawn embodies the nascent stirrings of consciousness from the deep sleep of matter, establishing a direct, causal, and teleological link between the cosmic movement and the experience of light's return. The idiom in these attributes is concerned with overmind aesthesis and is not merely a phenomenon to be observed, but an active force, a "mysterium tremendum" that becomes the delegate of supramental. In this way, the attributes attached to the phenomenon of dawn shows the "rapid series of transitions" and an act of widening the horizon of its mythic image.

# Epitome of Kashmir in the Nilamata Purana

"The land is protected by Nila, the lord of all the Nagas, whose regal parasol is formed by the circular pond with the Vitasta's newly rising stream as its stick." —Rajatarangini



gods, demons, and serpents alike. Upon hearing of Jalodbhava's rampage, he seeks divine aid. The gods respond with a gesture as poetic as it is powerful.

Ananta, the infinite serpent, ploughs through the Himalayas. Mountains split. Barriers shatter. And the waters of Satisara spill, revealing a hidden valley—Kashmir—like a lotus blooming in the wake of divine upheaval. Vishnu, in his eternal role as preserver, slays Jalodbhava with his Sudarshana chakra. Dharma is restored. A new world is ready to be born.

inheritance, not a spoil of war.

What follows is not history, but *cosmogony*. We are told that Kashmir was once a great lake—Satisara, a divine basin pulsing with sacred energies. But this wasn't just a body of water. It was Parvati's memory. Her sorrow. Her sanctity. The lake was a womb of potential, holding within it the seeds of future civilizations. But who could unlock its shores?

The story winds back to the celestial sisters Kadru and Vinate the mothers of serpents and eagles, respectively. A curse, a feud, and divine exile sends the Nagas into the watery expanse of Satisara, seeking refuge from the relentless Garuda. Through divine grace, Nila rises as their sovereign a serpent king, but also a protector, priest, and progenitor.

Yet all is not peace. A dark force festers. From the residue of a slain Daitya, nourished by the Nagas' protection, arises Jalodbhava a being not born, but *seeped* into existence. His name itself betrays his nature: water-born, untamed, uninvented. Empowered by penance, he becomes nearly immortal a destructive force who tears through Gandhara and Darvabhisara, disrupting

the cosmic balance and defiling dharma. The Earth cries out. Enter Kashyapa the great progenitor, the sage who fathered

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consciousness.

And then enters King Nila not just a ruler, but a culture-bringer, a civilizational anchor. He opens the valley's gates to Brahmins, entrusts them with sacred rituals, and establishes sixty-five festivals each aligned with cosmic rhythms and metaphysical meanings. These are not mere holidays. They are *acts of alignment*, rituals that harmonize the individual with the divine. Even today, Kaw Poonim and Yaksha Mavas echo in Kashmir, remnants of an ancient order that once sang to the stars.

In this vision, every fast, every chant, every offering is a thread in a vast cosmic loom. The deities worshipped (Vishnu, Shiva, Brahma, Parvati, Lakshmi, Saraswati) are not distant gods but archetypes, aspects of our own being, mirrored in ritual and festival. King Nila himself participates, reminding us that governance, in its truest form, is sacred service.

The *Nilamata Purana*, then, is no dusty relic. It is a metaphysical map, a poetic philosophy, a cosmic charter for a land that was not just shaped by tectonic forces but by divine will. It teaches us that Kashmir is not simply a beautiful valley nestled among mountains. It is a sacred geography, where myth and matter, sky and soil, gods and mortals meet. It whispers that Kashmir is Parvati herself a living goddess, once submerged, now revealed.

## EDITORIAL

As we unveil this ninth edition of Makrand, it is indeed vital to take note of the many ways in which art and aesthetics are 'celebrated' and 'reflected' upon. Though celebration and reflection each summon both the active and receptive faculties of the mind, it is essential to attend to the way art, in its symbolic essence, is apprehended—not merely as representation, but as a revelation that evokes spontaneity, wonder, and the sublime. Through this process of revelation, many rigidly settled archetypal forms of meaning and interpretation are often unsettled, giving way to symbolic gestures and acts of creative reimagining. In this state of reinvention both art and self-consciousness emerge not as static entities, but as co-constituted forms of being emerging from an ongoing dialectic of becoming.

In this edition, we endeavor to encourage new authors, even as we turn our attention to the rediscovery of the latent processes by which meaning comes into being—unveiling the transformative force that lies latent within the symbolic meanings of art. These articles seek to illuminate the inherent structures of understanding that deepen our grasp of both being and art, while also drawing attention to the transcendent spirit that moves through and beyond the predefined and subjectivized forms of routine modes of existence. This, as attempted, unfolds the nature of art, making it possible to access and enhance both experience and its expression in what can be described as a process of 'sense illumination' that re-ontologizes both consciousness and artistic expressions. With that brief contextualization, we take pleasure in sharing an insightful experience of art with our readers, which is deeply embedded in the evolving journey of collective self-realization.

- Amandeep Singh





# The Life of Symbols

It is by no means the case that symbols and likenesses arise in the course of a higher development of spirituality in men. On the contrary they draw nigh as means of rescue when there is a decline in our divinity and spirituality.

In order to bring the realm of the spiritual and the divine within the range of perception, humanity is driven to adopt a point of view in which it loses the immediate union with the divine and the immediate vision of the spiritual. Then it tries to embody in a tangible or otherwise perceptible form, to materialize let us say, what is intangible, and imperceptible. It makes symbols, written characters, and cult images of earthly substance, and sees in them and through them the spiritual and divine substance that has no likeness and could not otherwise be seen.

It is by no means the case that symbols and likenesses arise in the course of a higher development of spirituality in men. On the contrary they draw nigh as means of rescue when there is a decline in our divinity and spirituality. So it was that Jesus Christ gave out in parables the treasures of the divine kingdom to a declining, not to an advancing humanity, for his own and for all future ages. In the same way, in pre-Christian times, the visible symbols, the images of the great mysteries and experiences, provided a remedy for the indigence of the soul in the time of the decline.

It is only when one has acquired the habit of this way of looking at things that symbols and images can be understood; not when we are habituated to the narrower way which always brings us back to an investigation of the outward and formal aspects of symbols and images and makes us value them the more, the more complicated

or fully evolved they are. This formalistic method always leads into a vacuum. Here we are dealing only with the end, not with the beginning, and what we find in this end is always something hard and opaque, which opens up no further glimpse of the way.

erns must needs lose ourselves in irrelevant speculation, for every one of us can experience microcosmically in his own life and body the fact that he has wandered from the highest and that the longer he learns to feel a hunger and thirst for symbol and likeness the more deeply he feels it, that is if he only retains the power to guard himself against that inner hardening and petrification, in which we are all, alas, in danger of being lost.

The formalistic method can indeed only be justified the farther we move away from the archetypes to the present day. The sensible forms, in which there was at first a polar balance of the physical and metaphysical, have been more and more voided of content on their way down to us; so we say, this is an "ornament." That indeed can be treated and investigated in the formalistic manner. And that is what has happened constantly as regards all traditional ornament, not excepting the "ornament" so-called that is represented by the beautiful pattern of the Ionic capital. Scholars, like Puchstein in his researches, could hardly have done otherwise.

He for whom this conception of the origin of ornament seems strange, should study for once the representations of the whole fourth and third millennia B. C. in Egypt and Mesopotamia, contrasting them with such "ornaments" as are properly so-called in our modern sense. It will hardly happen that even one such can be found there. Whatever may seem to be such, is a drastically indispensable technical form, or it is an expressive form, the picture of



Great Plate of Bacchus from the Mildenhall Treasure, British Museum, London

it is only by such a glimpse of the spiritual that the ultimate goal can be reached, whatever the means or methods of research that may be resorted to. When we sound the archetype, the ultimate origin of the form, then we find that it is anchored in the highest, not the lowest. This does not mean that we mod-

a spiritual truth. Even the so-called ornament of the pottery painting and engraving that ranges back to the neolithic in Mesopotamia and elsewhere is for the most part controlled by technical and symbolic necessity. Research should deal with the problem, upon what plane of spirituality they must rest or have originated in; for in the domain of creation and life, it is by no means the case that everything lies on one and the same level. In a craft like that of pottery, now so little valued, but which once, as being the oldest of the arts, enjoyed the highest favor, we should expect to and do indeed meet with forms and symbols proper to a plane other than that of the field of "architecture" and "sculpture."

He who marvels that a formal symbol can remain alive not only for millennia, but that, as we shall yet learn, that it can spring into life again after an interruption of thousands of years, should remind himself that the power from the spiritual world, which forms one part of the symbol, is eternal; (and that only) the other part is material, earthly, and impermanent. Unseen by earthly eyes, the spiritual is able to survive in the smallest movements and traces, revealing itself only to the penetrating glance of one who looks deep, as has been our experience in the case of the forms of the Ionic column. Then it becomes an indifferent problem, whether the ancients, in our case the early Ionians, were aware of the whole content of the ancient symbol of humanity, which the East had bestowed on them, or whether or not they wanted to carry over only some part of that content into their formula. Conscious or unconscious, willed or unwilled, is not the question here. It is the spiritual power that here knows and wills, and manifests itself when and where its due time has come.

From that moment when the deep symbolic meaning of the Ionic column was forgotten, when it was changed into "architecture" and "art," its truthfulness was at an end. Then there came out of it an "architectural form," and "art form"; it became an element of construction, a form without any legitimate function. We learnt this even before the discovery of "modern realism," and it is a service that the latter has rendered, to have dispensed with what had nothing more to tell. But there we merely compromised with the ignorance and stupidity of our times. Sensitive students of ancient art already felt and still feel that illegitimacy in the decaying branches of Greek art, in Hellenistic and especially in Roman art, where what is holy in the symbols is more and more overlaid by the abundance and exaggeration of the large and small parts of the form and the costliness of the material. With the submergence of the old wisdom of the Mysteries, the understanding of this noble symbol of a higher humanity grew less and less. A new kind of spiritual attitude, and a new kind of holy symbol grew



Walter Andrae  
Translated by Ananda K. Coomaraswamy  
Excerpt from: *Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought?*

up into the Christian world out of the now barren soil of the Oriental, Hellenistic and Roman forest of forms, and subsequently, in the time of the Renaissance and Humanism, by a revivification of Hellenistic and Roman forms, built up for itself on this basis a new spiritual attitude, viz. one of service in the temple of its own self-conscious beauty, that of aesthetic humanism.

Was the Ionic column therefore dead, because its living meaning had been lost, because it was denied that it was the image of a spiritual truth? I think not. Goethe has rightly expressed it. Inviolable, never annihilated by any power or any age, this immemorial form of the "Ring-bundle" lives on and still reproduces itself. To all appearance hidden away for centuries and millennia, its course flows on, and appears, when the time comes, in new light and with new value. Someday humanity, hungry for a concise and integral expression of itself, will take hold of this inviolable and holy form again, and therewith attain to those powers of which it stands in need, to the bunity and to its own superstructure, to the perfecting of the all too earthly in the freedom of the spiritual worlds.

Perhaps we may be allowed a glance into the future. What is their significance for our day of all the investigations of the noble forms of antiquity and of all their identification in our museums, if not as guides, indispensable to life, on the way through ourselves and onward into the future? If the Greeks already called the crowns of leaves upon their stela, columns, and entablatures a *kyma*, that is "relic of the past," and handed them on with a never dying awe, even though the primeval significance of these crowns had been diluted, we ourselves can learn from that to penetrate our own being with the noble forms, and to saturate the creative patterns with the feeling of our own day. Again, the call is uttered to formative men in general and the creative artist in particular: Maintain the transparency of the material, that it may be saturated with the spirit. He can obey this command only if he maintains his own transparency, and that is the rock on which most of us are apt to break. Each and every one reaches a point in his life when he begins to stiffen and-either stiffens in fact or must by superhuman effort recover for himself what he possessed undiminished in his childhood but was more and more taken from him in youth: so that the doors of the spiritual world may open to him, and the spirit find its way into body and soul.

## SYMBOL IN BRIEF ②



The Egyptian Sphinx

Three types of Sphinxes appear as guardians in Egyptian statuary, all with the wingless bodies of crouching lions. Herodotus distinguished them as the *Criosphinx*, the *Hieracosphinx*, and the *Androsphinx*. The Egyptian Sphinx was only rarely portrayed as having the head of a woman. In such cases, the *Gynosphinx* symbolized the Goddess Isis or Hathor, and/or the reigning queen. In Egypt, it was believed that the creature's intellectual faculties, represented by the human head, ennobled and balanced its bestial attributes, represented by the lion's body.



Mirror Case French, 1350-75

Mirror cases were primarily destined for the aristocracy, and their subject matter reflects the activities and interests of their owners. Here, a lady and gentleman hunt with falcons, accompanied by attendants. Medieval literature frequently drew a parallel between falconry and courtly love, and the playful imagery of this ivory may be read as a metaphorical hunt for love.

# The Symbolic Resonance of Forty

A number is not just a count, it is a key. It unlocks memory, archetype, and myth. It carries weight in spiritual, cultural, and philosophical worlds alike.

"The opposition between the human world and the higher world is not absolute; the two are only relatively incommensurable, for the bridge between them is not entirely lacking. Between them stands the great mediator, Number, whose reality is valid in both worlds."

Carl Jung

The human mind seeks to anchor itself in meaning, securing thoughts, experiences, and symbols within the net of intellect. Yet the moment meaning is pinned down too tightly, it becomes a wall rather than a window. What once offered clarity now clouds deeper perception. It is here that the symbol emerges like a brushstroke across the rigid canvas of logic, like a melody rising from silence. A symbol breathes. It dances. It refuses containment. It opens the mind to multiplicity, to mystery, to a symphony of meanings that shimmer just beyond the grasp of reason.

A symbol is not merely understood; it is felt like a dream that lingers after waking. Among the many symbolic forms that fill human tradition, numbers stand apart. We often mistake them for mere counters, tools of arithmetic precision. But to the ancient and the wise, numbers were never empty—they were carriers of hidden resonance, of cosmic code. Each number vibrates with a rhythm all its own. And among these, the number forty (40) glows with a peculiar and powerful light.

Long before the modern age divorced mathematics from mysticism, the ancient Greek philosopher Pythagoras proclaimed that "all things are numbers." For him and the Pythagoreans, numbers were not simply instruments of logic or calculation, they were the archetypal patterns behind creation itself. The universe, they believed, was woven in number and proportion. Music, astronomy, geometry, even the soul all followed the same invisible mathematics. To contemplate numbers was to trace the divine architecture of the cosmos. In this view, numbers transcended materiality; they belonged to the spirit as much as to matter. They were meditated upon not as quantities, but as symbols of purification



1896 illustration of the symbol of the rainbow, which God created as a sign of the covenant

and ascent. The number, in Pythagorean philosophy, became a bridge between the visible and the invisible, the human and the divine, a sacred geometry in which the eternal disclosed itself. And it is in this tradition of numerological symbolism that the resonance of forty takes its place.

A number is not just a count, it is a key. It unlocks memory, archetype, and myth. It carries weight in spiritual, cultural, and philosophical worlds alike. For instance, the number one may appear small in value, but in essence, it is indivisible and eternal. It is the origin, the root of all that follows. As the scholar Annemarie Schimmel writes

tradition, God kneads the clay of Adam for forty days. The Great Flood lasts forty days and nights. Moses ascends Mount Sinai for forty days to receive the Law. The Israelites wander for forty years before arriving at the Promised Land. Christianity too breathes within this number. Christ fasts in the wilderness for forty days, confronting temptation. After resurrection, he appears to his disciples for forty days before ascending to heaven. Saint Augustine called forty the union of 4 (sym-

bolizing time) and 10 (symbolizing divine law or knowledge). Together, they form the rhythm of sacred time. In Islam, the resonance of forty runs deep. The letter Meem which frames the name *Muhammad* holds the numerical value of 40. Remove one *Meem*, and the name becomes *Ahmad*; remove another, and it becomes *Ahad* meaning *One*, a direct symbol of the Divine. One-fortieth is also the portion given in Zakat, a sacred act of purification. In Sufism, seekers often undergo *Arba'in*, a forty-day spiritual retreat. Al-Ghazali's *Ihya Ulum ad-Din* guides readers through forty stages of inner transformation.

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In Hinduism, the *Hanuman Chalisa* comprises forty verses. The *rishis* often performed penance for spans of forty days or even forty years. The soul's journey after death, too, includes a significant ritual on the fortieth day called *pind daan*, a final offering. Buddhism and Jainism, rich with meditative rigor, also hold forty as a sacred cycle; forty days of silence, fasting, and vow, known in Jainism as *Chalika Vrat*. And then, in the everyday realm of the body and the womb: after childbirth, a mother traditionally rests for forty days, surrounded by care. On the fortieth day, she emerges as renewed, purified, rejoined with the world. Marriage, too, carries echoes of forty, as do rites of mourning, marking cycles of emotional and spiritual healing.

Thus, forty is not a mere numeral but it is an archetypal threshold, a crucible of metamorphosis where the finite self is refined by time, trial, and transcendence. It marks a ritual interval between dissolution and reconstitution, where the soul undergoes symbolic death to prepare for renewal. Across traditions, it is the number of gestation, exile, purification, and revelation, a sacred span in which the old order is emptied to make space for the divine. As a symbol, forty functions like an alchemical vessel, holding within it the tension of opposites: absence and presence, silence and speech, death and

awakening. It is the rhythm of becoming inscribed into time, a numerological covenant between the human and the eternal.



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# ON LIGHT AND DARKNESS

Darkness is simply an expression for the lack of light, nothing more; and it is not one of the privatives conditioned upon possibility.

Anything is either light and luminosity in its own reality or is not light and luminosity in its own reality. The meanings of 'light' and 'luminosity' are the same here, for I do not use these in a metaphorical way, as when 'light' is used to mean that which is evident to the mind, though even such usages do at the last derive from this light. Light is divided into light that is a state of something else (the accidental light) and light that is not a state of something else (the incorporeal or pure light). That which is not light in its own reality is divided into that which is independent of a locus (the dusky substance) and that which is a state of something else (the dark state). The barrier is the body and may be described as a substance that can be pointed to. Some barriers are seen to be dark when light ceases to shine on them. Darkness is simply an expression for the lack of light, nothing more; and it is not one of the privatives conditioned upon possibility. If the world were posited to be a vacuum or a sphere with no light in it, it would be dark. This would imply the deficiency of darkness without implying the possibility of light in it. Thus, it is established that everything that is neither a light nor illumined is dark. If a barrier is cut off from light, it does not need something else to be dark. These are like other barriers that never lose their light—the Sun, for example. These are like other barriers that may cease to have light in that they are barriers, yet they differ in having light

Suhrawardi

Excerpt from: *Hikmat al-ishraq*, tr. John Walbridge and Hossein Ziai



continually. The light by which these barriers differ from the others is superadded to their being barriers and subsists in them. It is thus accidental light, and its bearer is a dusky substance. Therefore, every barrier is a dusky substance.

Sensible accidental light is not independent in itself, since otherwise it would not depend on the dusky substance. Since (light) subsists in (the dusky substance), it is dependent and contingent. (The light's) existence is not from the dusky substance, since it would otherwise be its concomitant and the dusky substance would never be without it. This is not so; how, indeed, could it be, considering that nothing necessitates that which is nobler than its own essence? Thus, that which gives all dusky substances their lights must be something other than their gloomy quiddities and dark states. You will learn that dark states are caused by light, even though the light itself may also be accidental. The dark states, moreover, are hidden: how could they necessitate something less hidden than themselves? Therefore, that which gives lights to the barriers is not a barrier, nor is it a dusky substance. Otherwise, all barriers and dusky substance would cause accidental lights. Thus, that which gives them their lights must be something other than the barriers and dusky substances.





In the grand puzzle of existence, one mystery has persisted through the ages, perplexing philosophers and neuroscientists alike: what is consciousness, and where does it reside? The question isn't merely academic—it cuts to the heart of what it means to be alive, to perceive, to be self-aware. As the 21st century rekindles interest in the metaphysical and phenomenological dimensions of the mind, three provocative frameworks are shaping a new intellectual frontier: panpsychism, radical embodied phenomenology, and metaphysical idealism.

Panpsychism is a philosophical view that suggests consciousness, or some form of subjective experience is a fundamental and ubiquitous feature of reality. In simpler terms, it proposes that everything in the universe has some form of consciousness or mental quality, even very basic entities like electrons or atoms. Apart from panpsychism and its version called cosmopsychism there are two other versions of non-dualist and non-materialist school or notion famous in the cognitive science and philosophy of mind, first one is the notion of embodied cognition or the school that propounds embodied lived experience and tries to reframe the conventional notion of subject and object. This school is inspired from the flesh phenomenology branch of continental philosophy especially the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Neuropsychology of Francisco Varela. The other version is metaphysical or analytical idealism, propounded by the likes of Bernardo Kastrup and Donald Hoffmann in contemporary philosophy of mind and cognitive science. This framework of analytic idealism has non-dualist underpinnings, as in it can also be seen as a non-dualistic philosophy that is not materialist in nature.

Metaphysical idealism is not new. From Plato's *Forms* to the *Brahman* of Advaita Vedānta, from Berkeley's *esse est percipi* to Hegel's dialectical spirit, idealism has long dared to assert that reality is, at its core, mental—not material. The sort of idealism that I am trying to explore here belongs to the likes of Bernardo Kastrup and Donald Hoffmann, who are the pioneers in the recent revival of the defunct and most rebuked tradition in philosophy. The work of Kastrup is really worth mentioning here, not just for its analytical clarity, but also for its fierce engagement and debate with panpsychism and panspsychist. Kastrup adopts the method of analytic philosophy and draws from recent developments in neuroscience or cognitive science in putting forward his defence of non-dualistic metaphysical idealism.

He proposes a consciousness-only ontology and argues that matter is a reflection of that same universal consciousness or mind. He dissolves the famous combination and decombination problem of panpsychism by giving the analogy of dissociation. Kastrup contends that our individual

## Competing non-dualist frameworks in the light of rational metaphysics and embodied phenomenology

self or consciousness is nothing but the dissociated identity of the cosmic or universal consciousness. He famously draws a parallel between this process of dissociation and the psychiatric disorder called dissociative identity or multiple identity disorder. He further makes the distinction between phenomenal consciousness, which is pure sentience or awareness and exists in all life forms and meta-consciousness that is idiosyncratic to humans and signifies the self-reflexive capacity of human animals.

Kastrup's idealistic framework, despite being analytically and logically coherent, falls short on explaining the question of why there is a difference between phenomenal and meta-consciousness. His association of consciousness with life and how we get non-cosmic forms of consciousness with life is vague and reduces the process of dissociation to the brain rather than to the whole organism. These vague boundaries of life and consciousness make the otherwise analytically strong argument of Kastrup feeble in contrast to more parsimonious panpsychism. In contrast to Kastrup's analytic idealism, the *Integrated Informa-*

*tion Theory* of Giulio Tononi and Christof Koch, that resonates with some version of panpsychism gives us utterly non-vague boundaries of consciousness and strong empirical credentials backing it.

The non-dualistic or idealistic model presented Donald Hoffmann in his recent work, "*The case against reality*", takes the evolutionary picture seriously and contends that evolution has evolved for survival and for dissemination of our genes and not evolved us to perceive reality or see real stuff, in the way that they really are, this model put forward by Hoffmann is mathematical model that lacks empirical ground and credentials. All this makes the case for panpsychism made in this paper strong as compared to idealism.

The other non-dualistic framework apart from idealism and panpsychism that one needs to reckon is the framework or conception of world flesh phenomenology and neurophenomenology or embodied cognition and can be called as radical as it tries to do away with any distinction between mind and body or subject and object without turning the mind off. Francisco

Varela proposes *Neurophenomenology* as a methodological solution to the hard problem of consciousness, i.e., the problem of explaining how conscious experience arises and what its connection with the natural world is. It goes against a metaphysical solution to this problem e.g., by adding an "extra ingredient" to the cosmos the way by David Chalmers's, '*Naturalistic Property Dualism*' and *Panpsychism* Varela argues that we must develop a disciplined investigation of lived experience, establishing a correlation between phenomenological accounts of the structure of experience and neuro-cognitive accounts of brain processes.

The main proponents of this school who are agnostic of panpsychism are Michel Bitbol and Evan Thompson. In their view Panpsychism is a better theory than conventional materialism but still perceives the question of consciousness and subject or first person point of view by an objective analysis from outside. This according to them constructs this mind-body problem, which in their view is superficial. They on the other hand radically alter the notion or definition of subject and object and show the primacy or immediacy of experience over any sort of deliberation. They argue for a position in which any framing of the debate on mind and consciousness cannot be understood without the embodied experience in which it exists. This notion of world flesh phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty as propounded by Bitbol perceives the world as flesh, which is also self-experiential. In his formulation of Ponty's position, Bitbol argues that in flesh phenomenology, it is not the case that there is a being that sees other beings, but it is that being as a whole self-splits into a subject and an object. And the boundary between the body and the world gets obscured, since the world itself is flesh, self-perceiving and self experienced flesh.

**Panpsychism according to Bitbol takes ordered cosmos of reason and science for granted, which is a physicalist component of panpsychism and one has to just add 'qualia' or elementary experience to the cosmos of science.**

In existentialism or in existential version of phenomenology, mind is usually turned off, but which is not the case with Merleau-Ponty flesh phenomenology argues Bitbol, in fact it is the opposite in world flesh phenomenology because in this approach mind is ubiquitous and all pervasive. And we are not mind and body, but embodied mind (being in the world). This sounds similar to panpsychism, because in both the approaches to the study of mind and consciousness, there is no difference between sentient and inert beings and experience is basically suffused in the world. But according to Bitbol there are major differences between panpsychism and world-flesh phenomenology of Ponty.

Panpsychism according to Bitbol takes ordered cosmos of reason and science for granted, which is a physicalist component of panpsychism and one has to just add 'qualia' or elementary experience to the cosmos of science. But in phenomenology one has to add nothing in the larger picture of the cosmos of science, because any belief about an external world different from subjective experience has been suspended by Ponty. In this formulation world is treated as experience and there is no difference between world and experience (experience is another name for world). This formulation resonates with Wittgenstein's notion of treating the *world, life and consciousness* as the same without any separation between them.

This notion of embodied mind is also inspired by a certain interpretation of Buddhism and the philosophy of Nagarjuna and a conception of non-self (as called as *Anatta*). In this view the question of consciousness and mind is not the question of ontology or the question of any substance missing from the larger picture of materialist physics. It is the question of method or epistemology because any question regarding consciousness according to this view has to be framed within consciousness. In other words we can't know anything about consciousness from outside because consciousness is not something to be known, but it is through which we know something. And conscious experience is always an embodied experience. This school treats metaphysics and questions of ontology or substance as an anathema to a complete understanding of subjective phenomenon.

And, because of aforementioned concerns, considers panpsychism part of the same metaphysical model in which consciousness or mind is objectified and treated as a substance or entity.

The main problem with this school is its complete dissociation from the question of ontology and metaphysics. Its notion of embodied experience in a way reduces the question of 'qualia' or phenomenal experience to bodily experience, which in my view despite its abhorrence for a materialist paradigm and ontology falls into the same trap. In other words no theory or philosophical system can ignore or eschew the question of ontology and any attempt to do that will be done through an implicit acceptance of a certain ontology and metaphysics. This is called the primacy of meta-

physics over epistemology in the conventional philosophical debate between metaphysics and epistemology. This along with other reasons makes panpsychism and its versions like cosmopsychism a better contender competing in philosophy of mind and associated domain of cognitive science.

In the vast mystery of mind and matter, above discussed three frameworks, panpsychism, metaphysical idealism, and radical embodied phenomenology invite us to rethink everything we thought we knew about consciousness. Rather than treating it as a byproduct of brains or a ghost in the machine, each offers a daring alternative: perhaps consciousness is everywhere, or maybe everything is in consciousness, or possibly, consciousness is simply how we are in the world through our bodies, breath, and lived experience.

Panpsychism paints a universe gently humming with awareness, even in its smallest parts. Idealism flips the script, suggesting that the world itself might be a dream in the mind of consciousness. And embodied phenomenology dissolves the old dualisms, inviting us to feel our way through reality rather than dissect it from a distance.

None of these views is perfect but together, they reveal something powerful: that consciousness might not be hidden deep within us, but shining all around us, between thought and touch, perception and presence. Among them, panpsychism seems to offer the most balanced dance between mystery and clarity a reminder that perhaps the universe is not just made of stuff, but of sentience itself.

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We are born, we age, and we die. Coffee cups shatter but never spontaneously reassemble. Heat flows from hot to cold, never the other way around. This subtle but relentless directionality of time, the sense that moments unfurl one after the other like frames on a reel, is what physicists call the "arrow of time." And though it slips silently through every second of our lives, it is one of the most profound mysteries at the heart of physics.

Where does this arrow point, and why? Scientists have identified several aspects of our universe that all seem to obey this same forward flow. The most obvious expression of this is rooted in thermodynamics: the idea that entropy, the measure of disorder or randomness in a system, always increases or stays the same in a closed system. Never the reverse. A drop of ink disperses in a glass of water, never gathering itself back into a neat, precise dot. Our bodies, those marvels of biological design, slowly unravel with age. Wrinkles deepen, bones weaken, memory thins, all in step with increasing entropy.

But this isn't just about spilled ink or old age. Let's step back, way back. Imagine pointing a camera into a random part of the night sky and leaving the shutter open for long enough. What would it capture? A mosaic of glowing specks, each one a galaxy. And if we measured their velocities, we could find something astonishing: every single one of them is moving away from us. The farther away a galaxy is, the faster it's receding. The universe is expanding.

That expansion leads us to a peculiar conclusion: in the distant past, everything was much closer together. The universe was denser, hotter, more compressed. So far, that makes sense. But here's the twist. Despite this primordial crowding, the early universe was also incredibly smooth. That smoothness is hard to explain. It suggests that the conditions immediately after the Big Bang were not chosen at random. Something shaped them. Something unknown and unfathomable set the stage.

Then came Ludwig Boltzmann, a 19th-century physicist who forever changed our understanding of disorder. Boltzmann introduced the concept of entropy. He defined entropy as the number of microscopic configurations that a system can have while still appearing the same from a macroscopic viewpoint. A low-entropy state is rare, only a few arrangements can achieve it. A high-entropy state, in con-



Salvador Dalí, *The Persistence of Memory*, 1931

trast, is common and inevitable. Think of shuffling a deck of cards. You're much more likely to get chaos than a perfect sequence.

That's entropy.

This statistical imbalance explains the arrow of time. There are simply more ways

to be disordered than ordered, and so systems evolve naturally in that direction. That is why entropy increases. That is why time

be the Big Bang wasn't the beginning at all. Maybe our low-entropy universe is just one chapter in a longer, stranger cosmic saga, born from some earlier epoch, some for-

seems to flow forward and not backward. Every irreversible process, the fall of a glass, the explosion of a star, the memory of a moment, can be traced to this climb toward chaos.

And yet a deeper puzzle lingers beneath it all. If entropy increases because disorder is statistically more likely, then why was the universe ever in a state of low entropy to begin with? Why did it start out so smooth and ordered?

Even Richard Feynman, the great physicist and popularizer of science, couldn't ignore the enigma. He once observed, "For some reason, the universe at one time had a very low entropy for its energy content, and since then the entropy has increased." Until we understand how that original order came to be, we're only ever grasping at the tail end of time's mystery.

To fill that silence, scientists have offered a few speculative answers. One is unsatisfyingly blunt. The early universe just was that way. Low entropy at the start is simply a brute fact of our cosmos, a nomological truth that requires no deeper reasoning. The other is more imaginative. May-

gotten time before time.

Yet entropy isn't the only force that guides our sense of temporal flow. There's the causal nature of the world. Causes always precede effects. A glass breaks because it's dropped. It doesn't shatter first and then leap into your hand. And then there's the psychological current. We remember the past, not the future. We can predict or dream, but we can't recall what hasn't happened. Our consciousness is tethered to a one-way track.

And still, at the deepest level, the fundamental laws of physics don't care. They don't distinguish between past and future. Newton's equations and the Schrödinger equation of quantum mechanics work the same whether you run them forward or backward. The puzzle, then, is profound. If the universe's most basic rules are time-symmetric, why is our experience of time so asymmetrical?

Once again, the finger points toward those initial conditions. The idea that the Big Bang began in an exquisitely low-entropy state, highly ordered and deeply improbable, is the key to the arrow's direction. From that improbable starting point, the universe has tumbled relentlessly forward, unfolding into ever-greater disorder, ever-increasing complexity, ever-diminishing certainty.

This isn't just a question of physics. It's a question of philosophy. The arrow of time shapes not just galaxies and gases, but memories, choices, and dreams. It defines how we understand cause and effect, how we interpret free will, how we situate ourselves within the universe's great unfolding story. Without it, reality would dissolve into static noise, a blur of simultaneous nows with no before and no after.

And so, the arrow of time continues to fascinate and elude. Though entropy provides a powerful lens, the origin of time's direction remains one of the most compelling riddles in modern science. Understanding the arrow of time is not just about comprehending a physical phenomenon; it's about unveiling one of the deepest mysteries of our existence and our place in the universe.



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The attempt to define the intersection between literature and philosophy immediately encounters a fundamental dilemma: What constitutes 'literature'? What defines 'philosophy'? Where does one end and the other begin? At first glance, the question appears normative, but it is a question that unravels the very possibility of a stable answer as Jacques Derrida demonstrates in *Acts of Literature*. The dilemma is not merely about overlapping domains and methodologies but on the other hand embedded in the ontological configuration of language itself; the way definitions are enacted rather than discovered, and how categories contaminate one another in the very process of being named. Rather than seeking to define these disciplines in absolute terms, I aim to show how their intersection produces 'chiasmatic' space for reflection- one that resists closure and embraces ambiguity. Focusing on the narrative and imagery of Fyodor Dostoevsky's *White Nights* (1848), I demonstrate how literature can articulate subjective and existential dissonances that philosophy often struggles to contain within its conceptual frameworks.

*White Nights* centres on an unnamed narrator, the Dreamer, the Lover, who wanders the streets of St. Petersburg during the city's luminous summer nights. Lonely and introspective, he encounters Nastenka, a young woman who is herself waiting for a lover's return. Over four nights, the Dreamer and Nastenka share their stories, subjective worlds, and peak vulnerabilities. The Dreamer falls in love, but at the end has to step aside when Nastenka's beloved returns, embracing the destiny even as he is left alone once more. This bittersweet end, especially the Dreamer's act of renunciation, forms the focal point of my analysis, as it articulates subjective and existential dissonances that literature can express. The Dreamer exists in liminality- between day and night, reality and fantasy, being and nothingness-enacting philosophical insights through narrative intimacy rather than abstraction.

To personify my point, I will meditate and limit myself to the first night of text; in the first night, 'young' 'perspicacious' dreamer wandering in the city being 'wondered', 'ashamed' and 'sad' fell for a girl of 'terrible beauty' through pity. This first night unfolds in what Gaston Bachelard calls the "maternal time of the soul"- a time where the lover is detached from the demands of the social body. The world becomes a dark, womb-like space, sheltering and symbolic. In this nocturnal atmosphere, the Dreamer's journey is ateleological, without destination or purpose. His gaze, full of innocence, is childlike in its intensity, allowing him to perceive even evil in its most naive and unformed state. He is not corrupted by desire, but suspended in a state of emotional purity. The lover, moving within this maternal temporality, becomes childlike- young not in age but in disposition. The body, in this state, longs for the presence of the Mother - Mary, the mother of the Son. In Christian theology, Jesus (as love incarnate) is the Son precisely because of Mary's immaculate maternity. The Mother receives innocence, no matter how terrible or overwhelming. Without this maternal grounding, all beings are merely children- lost, exposed. Adam's fall, too, occurs in the absence of the maternal; Eve's desire for wisdom leads to a fall because it contaminates the innocence of maternal time with the hunger of Eros. Without the nourishment of motherly milk, all food becomes a medium of temptation. Our Dreamer wanders not just through the city but within himself. The city becomes an extension of his interiority, and his emotions echo like a child's cry in a vast, unfamiliar room. His innocence is not passive but actively perceiving, a receptivity that allows him to sense suffering in its most elemental form, including the woundedness of figures like Magdalene and the confused, broken desires of urban existence.

When the Dreamer meets Nastenka, he meets not a savior but a revelation. Nastenka appears to him as a thundering flash- terrible, dazzling, and transient. She

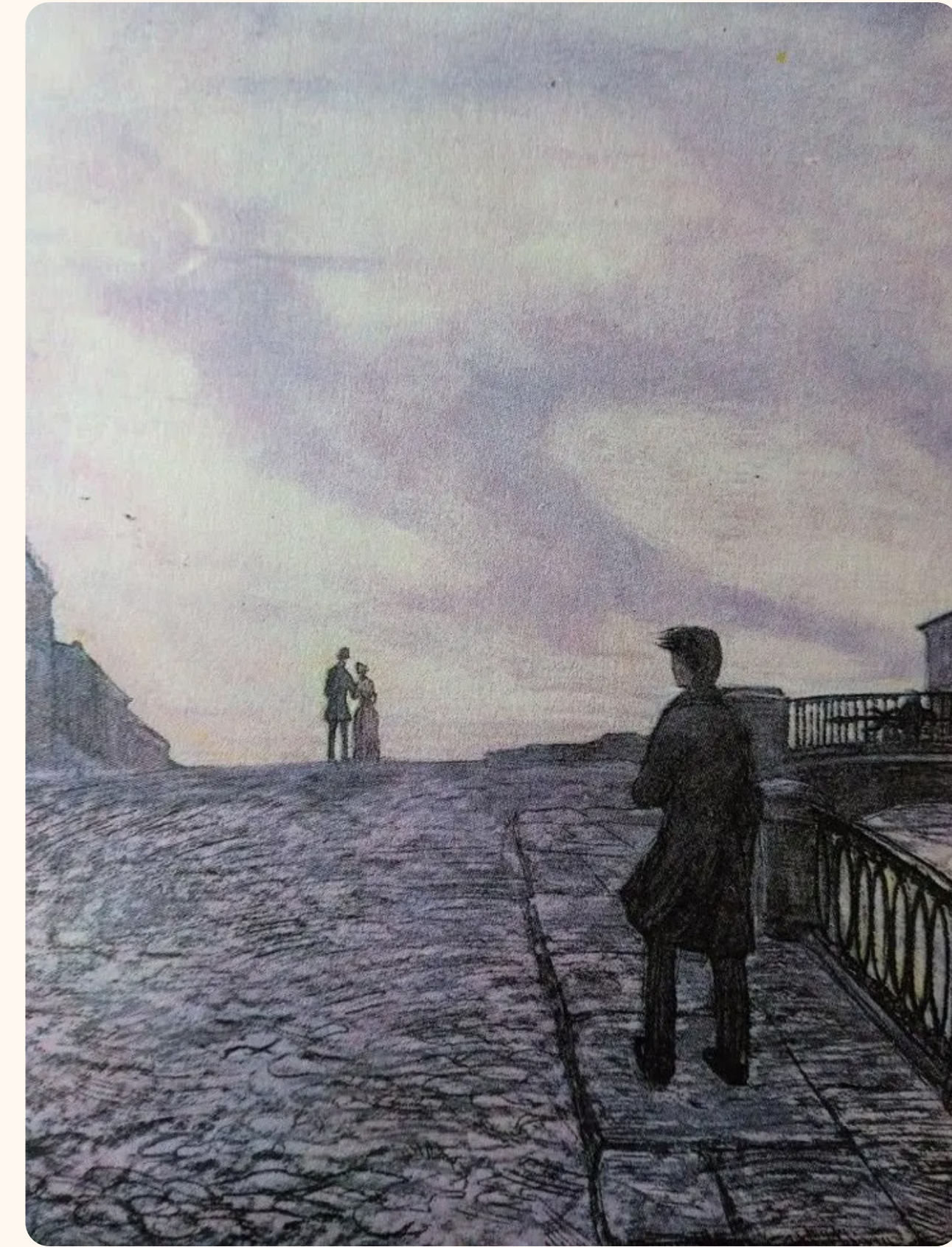
# Unsettled Boundaries: Literature, Philosophy and *White Nights*

The final lines of the novella, "May your sky be clear, my dear!"- resonate as both blessing and renunciation. They offer no moral triumph, only a bittersweet parting that eludes philosophical classification. This is what makes literature indispensable to ethical inquiry.

is not an eternal figure of love, but a cosmic event: brief, penetrating, and overwhelming. The lover fears her and himself in equal measure, sensing the fragility of the encounter. In this dynamic, Nastenka becomes a fragment of the maternal; a single strand of Mary's hair. Sweet, beautiful, but incomplete, and dependent on the gaze that observes her. The Dreamer's pity for her is not a healing act but a form of self-pity. The love he experiences is "preferential", it gestures toward the maternal ideal but is unable to realize it. It carries a trace of divinity but cannot sustain it. This failure is rooted in a deeper wisdom: that to love in purity, one must possess the innocence of the child and the strength of the mother. Eve's lust for wisdom, for power, corrupted that innocence, leading to humanity's fall. The Dreamer, too, falls, not because he is impure, but because he cannot hold onto the maternal rhythm that Nastenka momentarily embodies. In the first night, then, love emerges as both a yearning for maternal return and an encounter with the impossibility of such return. The Dreamer falls for the first personification of his imagination- not for the woman herself, but for the maternal rhythm she briefly signifies before vanishing.

So, at the end, His soliloquies ("I am a dreamer... I am going to dream about you the whole night, the whole week, the whole year") construct an ontology of longing, where identity emerges through fragmented self-narration. As Maurice Blanchot observes, this is literature *thinking*: not through propositions but through lived temporality, where poetic form becomes existential inquiry. The Dreamer's final act- renouncing Nastenka with "May your sky be clear!"- exemplifies Derrida's ethical aporia. This gesture collapses altruism/ self-interest binaries, performing an unrepeatable event of responsibility beyond philosophical categorization. It destabilizes the general structure of philosophy by forcing it to confront the depth of unique human experience.

The narrative's setting during St. Petersburg's white nights, when dusk stretches into dawn and the lines between day and night blur, becomes a metaphor for the philosophical-literary indistinction as Derrida explores. In *White Nights*, the recurring motif of the city's luminous twilight becomes more than setting: it is a metaphor for emotional and existential liminality. The Dreamer's visions; his imagined futures with Nastenka, his poignant recollections, are rendered through vivid, sensory language. Literature's unique power often lies in its use of imagery- a primacy of the image that conveys what philosophy hesitates to articulate. These images evoke longing, vulnerability, and hope in ways that abstract philosophical argument cannot. His dialogues with himself and with the ephemeral Nastenka form a meditation on loneliness, idealism, and moral responsibility, expressed not through philosophical abstraction but through narrative intimacy. His final act-stepping aside so that Nastenka can pursue her happiness with another man is a paradigmatic instance of flow of love, where lover transcends the beloved and enters into historical time. It neither conforms to traditional moral categories nor presents itself as a philosophical argument. It is what Derrida might call an aporia, a moment when binary oppositions (such as altruism versus self-interest, or love versus detachment) collapse, and what



White Nights Painting, Credits: Medium

remains is a singular, unrepeatable saturated event.

*White Nights* exemplifies what Derrida calls the 'performative' force of literature- its capacity to enact rather than assert, to expose rather than resolve. The Dreamer's narration does not move toward conclusion but lingers in suspension, tracing the contours of longing without yielding to certainty. His speech, marked by emotional delay and narrative deferral, gestures

toward meaning while continually withdrawing from it. This mirrors Derrida's claim that literature "says everything"- not by delivering comprehensive truth, but by refusing to be pinned down by it. Precisely because it opens itself to everything, it resists the finality that philosophy often seeks. In this refusal of closure, literature exposes the limits of philosophical grounding, compelling thought to inhabit its own undecidability. *White Nights*, then, be-

comes not an illustration of an idea, but a space in which philosophy must confront the impossibility of securing itself through language.

Moreover, Derrida's earlier essay *White Mythology* anticipates this argument by showing how even philosophical concepts are built upon metaphors. The idea that philosophy is somehow purer, more abstract, or more rigorous than literature ignores its own dependence on rhetorical and

narrative devices. As he writes, "Philosophy is a white mythology which assembles and reflects on itself the white man's system of metaphor" (*Margins of Philosophy*, 213). In other words, ontological configuration of philosophy is 'always already' literary, and its literary modalities are structured by figures of speech and the contingencies of language. Derrida challenges the conventional opposition between philosophy (as rational, literal, universal) and mythology or literature (as imaginative, figurative, particular) through his argument that philosophy is just as dependent on metaphor and narrative as literature is.

In *White Nights*, this collapse of binaries plays out through form as much as content. The novella refuses neat divisions between narrative and meditation, character and concept, story and idea. The Dreamer does not stand outside the world as a thinker contemplating life; he is in the world, suffering and loving, and thinking is inseparable from his lived experience. His reflections emerge through voice, image, mood-not argument. In this way, the text embodies what Derrida identifies as literature's power to "hollow out" philosophy by confronting it with the singular, the affective, and the uncontainable.

The final lines of the novella, "May your sky be clear, my dear!"- resonate as both blessing and renunciation. They offer no moral triumph, only a bittersweet parting that eludes philosophical classification. This is what makes literature indispensable to ethical inquiry. It enacts moral life in its most fragile, most contradictory moments. For Derrida, such moments cannot be captured by rules or subsumed into systems; they demand a different kind of reading, one that recognizes the aporia at the heart of responsibility. The Dreamer's experience cannot be categorized; it must be encountered in its singularity, its vulnerability, its refusal of conceptual resolution. This is the radical potential of literature as Derrida sees it: not to deliver truths, but to trouble them, to open the space where thinking begins again. Philosophy may describe altruism or self-interest, but it struggles to account for the emotional complexity and uniqueness of this gesture. Literature, by contrast, dwells in these singularities. Through narrative, dialogue, and imagery, it gives voice to the ambiguities and contradictions of human experience, offering a more expansive articulation of ethical and existential dilemmas.

This intertwining of literature and philosophy has been explored by other thinkers as well. Maurice Blanchot, for instance, asserts that literature is "a movement toward the point where meaning is no longer possible," suggesting that literature reveals the limits of language and the failure of representation. For Blanchot and Derrida, literature is not the opposite of philosophy but its spectral double, its silent other that speaks the unspeakable. Dostoevsky's *White Nights*, then, is not an anomaly but a revelation. It shows that the distinction between literature and philosophy is not a given but a construction- one that can be deconstructed, blurred, and ultimately reimaged. The novella becomes a space where meaning emerges not through certainty but through ambiguity, not through definition but through experience.

In this, it answers Derrida's call for a thinking that is not bound by the strictures of method but is open to the event, the undecidable. It is precisely because *White Nights* resists categorization that it becomes a powerful site for philosophical reflection. It is precisely in resisting closure and embracing the eventfulness of language that literature becomes indispensable to philosophical reflection-opening, rather than closing, the space where thinking can begin anew.

## What is Happiness?

A wise man also feels sorrows, and wants to cry but he does not let himself entrapped into the cowardly despair in spite he fights to relieve his miseries.

Happiness has been a central concern of human life and thought since ancient times. Different people understand happiness in different ways. Over time, many philosophers and ideologists have tried to define happiness and suggest how it can be achieved. Therefore, happiness has long been a subject of deep reflection and debate among philosophers and thinkers throughout history.

In this essay, based on Pierre Gassendi's writing *Happiness* I will explore various perspectives on happiness as proposed by different schools of thought. Pierre Gassendi describes happiness as the highest and most desirable state, the ultimate end behind all human desires. For him, happiness is the enjoyment that stands as the chief goal—the final purpose toward which all other goals ultimately point. Aristotle describes it as the ultimate desire that any

good action may achieve to get an enjoyment. It is important to note that we are not referring here to happiness derived from theological teachings—such as through divinity, acts of charity, or the worship of God—but rather to a form of natural happiness. This is a state experienced by a human being in harmony with nature where, one feels stable, secure, and at peace within oneself. Therefore, natural happiness is a state when all the necessities are fulfilled to live calmly, and securely in a society in any circumstances of age, lifestyle and health.

The other kind of 'supreme happiness' should not be assigned to the common man as he is not able to escape from the sufferings of the life. In this way, a wise man does not demand a perfect supreme divine happiness but tries to be happy

as a human as much as his circumstances allow. He tries to reduce the sufferings due to despairs and pains by his virtues of patience, and faithfulness. A wise man lives a guilt free life and enjoys a peace of clear conscience. Thus, true wisdom, helps to live a dignified happy life without any denial to sufferings by finding happiness in inner moral strength and not in blaming any external pleasures. A wise man also feels sorrows, and wants to cry but he does not let himself entrapped into the cowardly despair in spite he fights to relieve his miseries.

Now I will discuss various opinions discussing the causes of happiness. It must be admitted that most of the philosophical ideas are concentrated around the idea of goods of the mind, good of body and good

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and appreciating one's own condition. As he wisely states, "Admiring nothing, Numicius, is perhaps the one and only thing that can make a man happy and keep him so." This detachment from envy and desire forms the heart of Horace's moral philosophy. It is this ideal of self-sufficiency and contentment that Gassendi also celebrates when quoting Horace's verse on the nature of happiness:

Happy the man who  
studying nature's laws,  
Through known effects can trace the secret  
cause;

His mind possessing in a quiet state,  
Fearless of fortune, and resigned to fate.  
A man who understands the laws of nature cannot be deceived by the turmoil of the world, for he has the wisdom to observe and uncover the hidden truths that lie quietly within it. Such a person attains tranquility of mind, remaining calm and unshaken by the rise and fall of fortune. By wisely accepting what is beyond his control, he frees himself from anxiety and achieves a state of inner peace—a mark of true philosophical wisdom. Further, Democritus's philosophical view states that retaining solitude by avoiding worldly affairs brings peace of mind and keeps one happy. Such a man does not desire grand palaces or luxurious leisure, but lives a simple

and contented life, ploughing his native land and remaining free from the burdens of wealth and restless ambition. He is untouched by debt or taxes, and his happiness lies in sufficiency, peace, and harmony with nature. Let us conclude this essay with the lines from Horace, as quoted by Gassendi, which beautifully capture the essence of such a life:

With his own hand paternal grounds  
to plough!

Like the first golden mortals happy he  
From business and the cares of money  
free!

No human storms break off at land his  
sleep.

No loud alarms of nature on the deep,  
From all the cheats of law he lives  
secure,

Nor do the affronts of palaces endure.

While different schools of thought offer diverse paths to happiness—ranging from virtue and reason to pleasure and tranquility—they all reflect humanity's enduring quest to understand and attain a fulfilled life. Despite their differing viewpoints, they share a common insight: that happiness is ultimately a subjective experience. Every individual is unique in nature, and therefore, each person must discover their own way to be truly happy.





Ultimately, the Lam‘āt conveys that the Lover, the Beloved, and Love itself are One, reflecting the core Sufi teaching that “Being is One”—and in this consists his harmonization of the two streams.

## The Relational Labyrinth: How Love Escapes the Trap of Metaphysics ?

What does it mean to “understand” something? How does this differ from merely feeling it? Consider the mango. When we taste one, we experience its sweetness, the tender give of its flesh beneath teeth, the sun-infused scent that floods the senses—a private, immediate encounter. But how convey this to someone who has never tasted it? We instinctively reach for relational anchors: “Like a peach, but more floral,” or “Imagine citrus tang woven with apricot’s honeyed weight.” We compare texture to papaya’s butter-soft grain, aroma to pine resin and jasmine. To translate felt experience into shared knowledge, we lean on the familiar—bridging the solitary act of sensation with the communal act of meaning.

This compulsion to relate—to tether the unknown to the known—reveals understanding’s core mechanism. The propositional form “S is P” (subject-predicate) underpins language, logic, and reason. To declare “This mango is sweet” is not to isolate the fruit, but to connect it—to sweetness as a category, to other sweet things, to a shared lexicon of taste. Understanding, then, is relational architecture: building cognitive bridges between inner sensation and outer expression.

This relational impulse permeates everything we create. The arts and sciences are not repositories of isolated facts but intricate systems of expression, attempts to codify and share the vast, often ineffable landscape of human experience. Mathematics distills quantitative relationships into elegant, manipulable symbols. Physics constructs models of matter and energy through observed patterns. Philosophy wrestles with concepts, literature evokes shared emotional terrains, and fine arts capture fleeting perceptions—all are condensed representations, forged through the act of relating ideas, sensations, and data points. Understanding unfolds through expression, and expression operates through relation.

Driven by this same impulse, yet aspiring to transcend it, stands metaphysics. Its ambition is uniquely grand: to grasp reality in its most fundamental structure—“being qua being.” While mathematics peers through the lens of quantity, physics through matter, and aesthetics through beauty, metaphysics seeks the view without a lens. It yearns for unmediated access to pure Being itself, a direct apprehension of the ground of all existence. This quest, echoing from Plato’s Forms to Aristotle’s Prime Mover, represents the pinnacle of our rational drive toward ultimate understanding.

Yet, here lies the profound paradox. Even as metaphysics strives to shed all mediating structures, it remains hopelessly entangled in the very web it seeks to escape. It must speak. And language, its indispensable vehicle, is inherently metaphorical, analogical, relational. Words gain meaning

through difference and connection. To say “Being is…” immediately imposes a relational structure, a categorization, a comparison (even if only implicitly to non-being). The sublime concept of pure existence is inevitably expressed through the ordinary grammar of subject and predicate, the logic of “S is P.” The quest for the unconditioned is conducted with thoroughly conditioned tools. The sublime, it seems, can only ever be spoken in the tongue of the ordinary.

Friedrich Nietzsche, that masterful unmasker of philosophical pretensions, exposed the deeper, often unconscious, currents driving this metaphysical yearning. For Nietzsche, metaphysics is rarely the disinterested pursuit of objective truth it claims to be. Instead, it frequently a profound psychological need—a craving for order, stability, and security in a chaotic, unpredictable world—masquerading as pure inquiry. His genealogical method digs beneath the surface of philosophical systems, revealing the subterranean fears and desires that animate them: the terror of flux, the longing for permanence, the will to power seeking a fixed anchor. This act of unmasking, Nietzsche argued, is itself the first step toward “overcoming” metaphysics. Life, he insisted, is not bound by the strictures of logical consistency. We may adopt frameworks to navigate existence, but we must recognize them as chosen tools, contingent and limited, not revelations of absolute reality.

And what of love? At first glance, it seems to fit perfectly within this grand pattern of relationality. The lover and the beloved. A dynamic system seemingly governed by its own logic: the lover seeks the beloved, desires nearness, and acts in ways believed to foster connection. It appears as another intricate web spun from the threads of relation.

Enter Fakhrudīn ‘Irāqī, the 13th-century Persian poet, Sufi mystic, and scholar. A wandering teacher whose very life embodied the ecstatic vision he espoused, ‘Irāqī studied under giants like Bahā’ al-Dīn Zakariyyā, Šadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (stepson and intellectual heir of Ibn ‘Arabi), and encountered the luminous presence of Rūmī. ‘Irāqī fords a confluence of two streams in Islamic mysticism: one that of Being (Wujūd) and the other of Love



Love Scene, late 16th–early 17th century, Gift of George D. Pratt, 1925

(*Ishq* or *Mahabbah*), one that of Ibn ‘Arabi and the other of Rūmī. The metaphysical impulse is harmonized with the intense ecstatic and self-annihilatory love.

In his masterpiece, the Lam‘āt (Divine Flashes), ‘Irāqī undertakes a remarkable project: he constructs nothing less than a metaphysics of love. He doesn’t merely describe the feeling of divine love; he proposes a comprehensive theory of love itself—its nature, its dynamics, its ultimate goal—positioning it as the very core of reality. This he does, not by grounding love in a “higher” and “purer” metaphysical vision, but rather grounding metaphysics in love. All actions and movements are derived from Love, aiming to manifest the totality of Being. For ‘Irāqī, love is not separate from knowledge but is “realized knowledge,” profoundly affecting human existence. This perspective embraces a “spiritualized sensuality,” viewing human beauty as a direct manifestation of Divine Beauty, serving as a path to spiritual recollection. Ultimately, the Lam‘āt conveys that the Lover, the Beloved, and Love itself are One, reflecting the core Sufi teaching that “Being is One”—and in this consists his harmonization of the two streams.

Yet, ‘Irāqī’s genius lies in revealing how love, precisely in its highest manifestation, ruptures the very relational and logical structures metaphysics (and even ordinary human love) relies upon. While acknowledging love’s many forms and manifestations, ‘Irāqī points toward its apex: love that seeks only itself. This is a crucial, radical shift. Ordinary love operates within the subject-object dynamic of lover and beloved, seeking fulfillment through the relation to the other. It follows a kind of logic: desire seeks union.

But at its zenith, ‘Irāqī suggests, love transcends this duality. It becomes self-referential, an absolute reality seeking its own expression and intensification. Here, the demands of love defy the principle of non-contradiction that underpins rational systems. A tightly logical system cannot withstand a contradiction, yet love, in its sublime supra-rationality, can demand precisely what seems anathema

to its nature: separation from the beloved.

This is the breathtaking, paradoxical summit ‘Irāqī guides us toward: “*I want union with Him. He wants separation for me—so I abandon my desire to His.*” In this state of utter surrender, the lover relinquishes even the deepest longing of the relational heart—the craving for union. Why? Because the Beloved’s will is the ultimate expression of the very Love the lover adores. To obey the command for separation, even when it causes profound anguish, becomes the highest act of loving union with the Beloved’s desire. The lover’s own will dissolves into the ocean of the Beloved’s will. Love, in this rarefied state, is no longer *for* the other, but *is* the Absolute manifesting its own nature—a nature that can encompass seeming opposites: nearness and distance, union and separation, joy and agony.

This is where love transcends metaphysics. Metaphysics, even in its most refined forms, remains bound by the relational logic of language and thought. It seeks to grasp Being, to define it, to relate it to concepts. But love, at this apex described by ‘Irāqī, becomes an unmediated participation in the dynamism of Absolute Reality itself. It operates beyond the subject-object divide, beyond the logic of non-contradiction that governs our rational understanding. It embraces the paradox not as a flaw, but as the signature of the ineffable. The lover, annihilated in the will of the Beloved, experiences a unity that relational thought cannot map, a nearness in apparent distance that relational language cannot adequately convey.

‘Irāqī’s Lam‘āt thus presents us with a stunning resolution to the paradox outlined at the beginning. Our minds are indeed relational engines, building bridges of understanding from the known to the unknown. Metaphysics represents the most ambitious of these bridges, striving toward pure Being but inevitably built with the relational bricks of language and logic. Nietzsche rightly exposes the human needs often camouflaged within this striving. Yet, ‘Irāqī points toward an experience—the highest stage of love—that offers a glimpse beyond the relational labyrinth. It is not an intellectual comprehension, but a state of being where love, seeking only itself, shatters the constraints of subject and object, embraces the divine contradiction, and finds, in the radical surrender to separation, the ultimate, inexpressible union. In this ecstatic self-annihilation of the lover’s will, the unmediated reality metaphysics seeks is not known, but lived—a flash of divine illumination that transcends the very structures of relation that brought us to its threshold.

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## The Seal of the Wisdom of Being Lost in Love in the Wisdom of Ibrahim (Abraham)

Divine discourse relates according to what agrees with the ones addressed and what logical reflection accords it. It does not come according to what unveiling gives. For that reason, there are many believers, but the gnostics who possess unveiling are few.

Ibrahim is called the intimate friend, and he was an intimate friend (khalil), because he was penetrated (takhallal) and gathered all the qualities of the Divine Essence. The poet says:

You pervaded the course of my spirit, and that is why the intimate friend is called the intimate friend.

It is like the colour which permeates the coloured, so it is a non-essential matter (‘arad) in respect to its essential substance (jawhar), and it is not like the place and that which it occupies. Or it means the penetration of the Real into the existence of the form of Ibrahim. Each of these two principles is true as was mentioned, for each points to an aspect which appears without overstepping it.

Do you not see that the Real is manifest in the qualities of beings in-time and He gives news of that from Himself, and He is even manifest in the attributes of imperfection and the attributes of blame? Do you not see that the creature is manifest with the qualities of the Real from first to last, and all of them belong to him as the attributes of in-time things belong to the Real? “Praise belongs to Allah,” so the results of praise from every praiser and one praised go back to Him, and “the whole affair will be returned to Him,” (11:132) It includes what is blameworthy and praiseworthy, and there is only one or the other.

Know that when something is penetrated by something the first is contained by the second, so the penetrating is the name of the actor veiled by the penetrated, which is the name of the one acted upon, and it is the Outwardly Manifest. The name of the actor is the Veiled, the Inwardly Hidden. It is its food, as water permeates wool and so makes it expand. If the Real is the Outwardly Manifest, then the creature is

veiled within Him, and creation is all the Names of the Real, His hearing and seeing, and all His ascriptions and discernments. If the creature is outwardly manifest, then the Real is veiled and hidden in him, and so the Real is the hearing of the creature, and his seeing, hand and foot, and all his faculties as it related in sound hadith. (2)

If the Essence were exempt from these relations, it would not be divinity. These relations are made by our sources, so we make Him god by our dependence on His godness. He is not recognised until we are recognised. The Prophet, peace be upon him, said, “Whoever



Giovanni Baglione, Sacred Love and Profane Love, 1602.

er knows himself knows his Lord.” Such a person is the creature with the most knowledge of Allah. Some sages, especially Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, claim that one can have gnosis of Allah through disregarding the world. This is false. Indeed, the non-time pre-time is not recognised as god until that which depends on its being God is known. Thus it is a proof of Him. Then after this, in the second state, (3) unveiling accords you that the Real Himself is the source of the proof of Himself and His godness. The universe is but His tajalli in the forms of their source-forms whose existence is impossible without Him. He assumes various forms and modes according to the realities of these sources and their states, and this is after our knowledge of Him that He is our God. Then the last unveiling comes, so our forms appear to you in Him, and some of us appear to others in the Real, and then some of us recognise each other and some of us are distinct from one another. Among us are those who recognise that our recognition of ourselves occurs in the Real, and some of us are unaware of the presence in which this recognition of ourselves takes place. “I seek refuge with Allah from being one of the ignorant.” (2:67) By the two unveilings together, He only judges us by ourselves, rather we judge ourselves by ourselves, but through Him. That is why He says, “Allah’s is the conclusive argument,” (6:149) meaning against those who are veiled when they say to the Real, in conformity with their desires, “Why did you do this or that to us?”, thinking that it was not in conformity with their desires. “On the Day when the legs are bared,” (68:42) means the matter which the gnostics unveil here. They see that the Real did not do to them what they allege that He did, but that it was from themselves. For He only lets them know what they are in

themselves. From this their argument will dissolve, and the decisive proof of Allah will remain.

If you say, what is the benefit of His words, “If He had willed, He could have guided every one of you,” (6:149; 16:9) we say in If He willed “if (law)” is a particle of impossibility showing impossibility. He only willed the matter as it is. But the source of possibility accepts the thing and its opposite in the principle of logical proof, and it is the same with any two logical principles. That which occurs is that which the possibility implies in the state of its immutability. The meaning of “If We had guided you” is, had He shown you the Truth. Allah does not open the inner eye of every possibility in the universe to the perception of the matter as it is. There are those who know and those who are ignorant. Allah did not so will, so He did not guide all of them, and He will not will it, and it is the same as if He had willed it. How would He will this which is not? His volition is unified in its connections. It is a relationship dependent on the known, and the known is you and your states. Knowledge does not have an effect on the known, rather the known has an effect on knowledge, and so it accords from itself what it is in its source.

Divine discourse relates according to what agrees with the ones addressed and what logical reflection accords it. It does not come according to what unveiling gives. For that reason, there are many believers, but the gnostics who possess unveiling are few. “There is not one of us who does not have a known station,” (37:164) and it is what you are in your state of immutability which you manifest in your existence. This is if it is confirmed that you have existence. If existence is confirmed to the Real and not to you, the judgement is yours without a doubt in the existence of the Real. If it is confirmed that you are existent, then the judgement is yours without a doubt, even if the judge is the Real. It is only the overflow-

ing of existence on you.

You only praise yourself and you only blame yourself, and praise is only due to Allah for the overflowing of existence, for that is His, not yours. You are His nourishment by conditions, and He is your nourishment by existence. He is specified by what specifies you. The command comes from Him to you, and from you to Him, even though you are called obligated, a passive name (mukallaf), and He is not called obligated since there is no imposition upon Him.

He praises me, and I praise Him. He serves me and I serve Him. In one state I draw near to Him, and in sources I deny Him. So He knows me and I do not know Him, and I know Him and I witness Him. Where is independence when I help Him and assist Him? That is why the Real brought me into existence. Then I knew Him and manifested His existence. Hadith (4) brought us that, and in me He achieved His goal.

Then the intimate friend, Ibrahim, peace be upon him!, possessed this rank by virtue of which he was called the intimate friend. For that reason, he made hospitality to guests a sunna. Ibn Masarra (5) associates him with the angel Mika’il in respect to

provisions. Provision is that which nourishes those provided for: when provision permeates the essence of the one provided for until nothing remains in it except permeation and nourishment flows in all the parts of the one nourished. There are no parts in divinity, so all the divine stations are penetrated which are designated by the Names, and by which His Essence is manifested.

We are His as our proofs confirm, and we are ours. Only my being belongs to Him, and we are His as we are ours. I have two aspects: Him and me, but He does not have “me” through me. However, His place of manifestation is in me, so we are His-like me. “Allah speaks the truth, and He guides to the Way.” (33:4)



Muhi-e-Din Ibn Arabi  
Excerpt from: *Fusus al-Hikam: The Seals of Wisdom*





## Poem by Nammalwar (Translated by Sri Aurobindo)



Nammalwar seated cross-legged on a throne

Nammalwar, renowned as Nammalwar ("Our Saint") among the Vaishnavas and the greatest of their saints and poets, was born in a small town called Kuruhur, in the southernmost region of the Tamil country—Tiru-nelveli (Tinnevely). His father, Kari, was a petty prince who paid tribute to the Pandyan King of Madura. We have no means of ascertaining the date of the Alwar's birth, as the traditional account is untrustworthy and full of inconsistencies. We are told that the infant was mute for several years after his birth. Nammalwar renounced the world early in life and spent his time singing and meditating on God under the shade of a tamarind tree by the side of the village temple.

### *Love -Mad*

#### The Realisation of God in all things by the Vision of Divine Love

Seated, she caresses Earth and cries "This Earth is Vishnu's,"  
Salutes the sky and bids us "behold the Heaven He ruleth;"  
Or standing with tear-filled eyes cries aloud "O sea-hued Lord!"  
All helpless am I, my friends, my child He has rendered mad. (1)

Or joining her hands she fancies "the Sea where my Lord reposes!"  
Or hailing the ruddy Sun she cries: "Yes, this is His form,"  
Languid, she bursts into tears and mutters Narayan's name.  
I am dazed at the things she is doing, my gazelle, my child shaped  
god-like. (2)

Knowing, she embraces red Fire, is scorched and cries "O Deathless!"  
And she hugs the Wind; "'Tis my own Govinda," she tells us.  
She smells of the honied Tulsi, my gazelle-like child. Ah me!  
How many the pranks she plays for my sinful eyes to behold. (3)

The rising moon she showeth, "'Tis the shining gem-hued Krishna!"  
Or, eyeing the standing hill, she cries: "O come, high Vishnu!"  
It rains; and she dances and cries out "He hath come, the God of my  
love!"

O the mad conceits He hath given to my tender, dear one! (4)

The soft-limbed calf she embraces, for "Such did Krishna tend,"  
And follows the gliding serpent, explaining "That is His couch."  
I know not where this will end, this folly's play in my sweet one  
Afflicted, ay, for my sins, by Him, the Divine Magician. (5)  
Where tumblers dance with their pots, she runs and cries "Govinda;"  
At the charming notes of a flute she faints, for "Krishna, He playeth."  
When cowherd dames bring butter, she is sure it was tasted by Him,—  
So mad for the Lord who sucked out the Demoness' life through her  
bosom! (6)

In rising madness she raves, "All worlds are by Krishna made"  
And she runs after folk ash-smeared; forsooth, they serve high Vishnu!  
Or she looks at the fragrant Tulsi and claims Narayan's garland.  
She is ever for Vishnu, my darling, or in, or out of her wits. (7)

And in all your wealthy princes she but sees the Lord of Lakshmi.  
At the sight of beautiful colours, she cries, "O my Lord  
world-scanning!"  
And all the shrines in the land, to her, are shrines of Vishnu.  
In awe and in love, unceasing, she adores the feet of that Wizard. (8)

All Gods and saints are Krishna—Devourer of infinite Space!  
And the huge, dark clouds are Krishna; all fain would she fly to reach  
them.

Or the kine, they graze on themeadow and thither she runs to find  
Him.

The Lord of Illusions, He makes my dear one pant and rave. (9)

Languid she stares around her or gazes afar into space;  
She sweats and with eyes full of tears she sighs and faints away;  
Rising, she speaks but His name and cries, "Do come, O Lord."  
Ah, what shall I do with my poor child o'erwhelmed by this maddest  
love? (10)



Muneer

### *Embracing the Abysmal Melancholy!*

O! The angels of despair,  
the guardians of love,  
I beseech you,  
yet again, humbly,  
to take me in,  
as you always did.

The times I was in  
the family of desolation,  
in the spells of abysmal death,  
amongst you and far from them,  
were the times of peace!

O! the keepers of the gates  
of love and deception,  
of faith and infidelity,  
of charm and curse,  
of life and death,  
grave me in!  
Grave me with all that  
world asks refuge from,  
and people curse enemies with!

The day is near,  
when I came here,  
in the world.

They were happy,  
family and gods!

But, I was crying and in pain.

I knew pangs and tears,  
screams and shivers,  
sobs and helplessness,  
would be my comfort!

I was born with them,  
yet I forsake them!

I divorced them  
for joy and happiness,  
for smile and love!

How cruel of me it is!  
How treacherous I am!  
How ungrateful I stand!

O! the tears and the sobs,  
mothers of love and faith!

I am here, again,  
knocking the doors of air,  
asking you to let me in.

I am yours only.

I don't belong here!

People here want happiness,  
love and wealth,  
health and life.

My prayers and wishes  
my desires and yearnings  
are just you!

I love you only!

Yes, I was astray

and worshipped wrong gods!

But, O the blessers of bosom!  
You know I am your child!

I am coming back  
and I am happy!

But I won't come in  
without you bestowing me  
with some painful feelings  
and dreadful thoughts  
and trembling nightmares.  
They are my punishment!  
I need them to cleanse myself!

They are my ablutions!  
I take dip in them

before I come and embrace you,  
without having  
any affair worldly,  
any colour lively,  
and any impression godly!



Jugaad Kaur

### *Daydream*

Ironie  
How the white cloud  
Settles in like darkness  
The Sun shivers in defeat  
Latched onto its harness

The birds screech louder  
Echoes penetrating fog  
Each playing its part  
Like a machinery cog

Beyond the terrace railing  
Sit unknown lands  
The void it creates, puts  
Imagination in my hands

Let us set the scene  
The year is eighteen eighty-three  
The cold air swirls  
Lining London's Baker Street

Two-two-one-B  
Ushers out a man in stride  
His tufts hold a deerstalker  
In his teeth, a lit pipe

Shifting the slide  
To the pre-Victorian Era  
Outside, I surmise  
Lies a gloomy gothic terror

Where shiny beaks of ravens  
Tap on my window-lattice  
'Nevermore' beaded into their eyes  
Where the moon is but a crevice

Then it lifts like a curtain  
Mildly settles down again  
Yellow grass greets my sight  
How it was when we began

Latching it to my desk  
Time grounds my wandering mind  
As the day moves onto noon  
And leaves the morning mist behind  
My quill ink transforms back  
Into unimpressive gel  
And reminds me of my duties  
The tasks I must do well

The pages are yellowed no more  
They're stapled and seamed  
But a part of me remains in my mystical  
Daydream.

Fazila Suhail

### *Soul to Self*

Do I see myself in tears?  
I questioned her.  
Long breaths, a shivering voice,  
Dreadful eyes, racing beats.

Weren't we strong?

I said to confirm.

Her shaking self,

Her rattling teeth.

Why are we...

I probed.

She froze,

With a swollen appearance

And pale skin.

Who is this? Us?

I inquired—were we ever like this?

I could see her sullied clothes

And petrified gaze.

Though she wouldn't voice a word,

I felt aware of the reasons,

Yet wished to hear them from her.

I longed for her to tell me  
How we ended up like this.  
She used to be fearless,  
She once longed to be strong and resilient.  
Yet now,  
She slowed her blinking,  
Clenching and rubbing her hands,  
Pattering her feet.  
She said,  
Do I know? I don't.  
And I do not know why.



Mandavi Choudhary

### *Twelve Months*

Had January been a lover,  
he would have icy feet and cold hands  
but his warm heart would soothe your  
vexed heart  
as he would walk with you in the snow,  
clad in a black overcoat

February as a lover would be an  
impassioned poet,  
invoking you as his heavenly muse  
He would turn your eyes into a meter  
and the jingling of your dangles into a  
rhyme

March would be a keeper of a garden  
and bring to you the choicest of peonies,  
make wreaths out of them  
As your passionate lover,  
he would plant an orchid on one of your  
cheeks  
and a pink rose on the other

April would be the cruelest of all,  
his eyes raging in hot flames  
He would gaze at you all day,  
suffocating you if you were to leave for a  
minute!

To him, you would be his Porphyria  
and a land to be claimed!

May would make a conceited lover,  
brows raised as sweat would settle on his  
forehead

He would deprive you of attention  
but put forth his demands and wants  
Burning in envy and arrogance,  
he would be a peculiar blend of Rhett and  
Darcy

June would resemble a summer noon,  
Calm and relaxed,  
sipping cold soda lying in bed  
June as a lover would be carefree and  
sluggish,

Often napping during the day,  
he would never budge an inch for you

July would hum you a soft lullaby  
on a rainy night  
He would embrace you  
with all his might and treat you with  
respect,  
fitting his hands effortlessly into yours

August would roar like a wild lion,  
Neptune in disguise,  
his love for you would be as bottomless  
as the seas

He would treat you nothing less than a  
queen  
but remember that no queen can tame a  
man like him!

September would make a true companion  
and a true friend  
In a world flooded with faces resembling  
Brutus,  
his face would be a radiant hope of eternal  
sunshine

A friend before a lover,  
he would make you laugh heartily  
with his senseless jokes

October would be a knight,  
balanced in his thoughts and bewitching  
you  
with his soulful voice,  
He wouldn't let you fall, catching you in his  
broad arms  
and he would love exactly how  
Philip Sidney loved a maiden who never  
loved him back!

November would be a mysterious character  
straight out of Agatha Christie's crime  
novels

Sweeping you off your feet,  
Enchanting you with his French Perfume,  
...And holding you tight with those firm  
hands,

He would leave you with countless  
questions!

December would feel like a  
long night wrapped in magical dreams,  
twinkling like a Christmas tree under the  
night sky

He would stop by your window to never  
leave





Sukhvinder Singh is an award-winning artist and devoted art teacher from Jalandhar, Punjab, whose journey flows like the Srivers and forests that inspire his work. Once celebrated for his lifelike portraits, he now lets nature speak through ink, crayon, and handmade paper, where trees, light, and water slowly emerge as if dreamt into being. His paintings invite the viewer into hidden jungles, winding paths, and tranquil shelters that reflect the quiet strength of the natural world. Honoured with state and national awards, Singh remains rooted in his mission to nurture young artists, passing on his unwavering belief that art is not just seen but felt, like a secret whispered by the earth itself.

Editor

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