

## Preface

There is a question that underlies every act of creative or cultural expression, though it is rarely asked aloud: what does it mean to give form to something that resists form? Whether one is speaking of the body in motion upon a stage, a melody carried from master to disciple across generations, a tale told in snowbound silence, or a philosophical argument that refuses to settle into ideology, the act of expression is always, in some measure, an act of negotiation between what can be contained and what overflows containment. It is this negotiation that the present issue of Poorvam explores, not as a declared theme, but as a living undercurrent running beneath its several inquiries.

With this second issue, Poorvam continues the conversation it began, a conversation about the arts and cultural expressions of South and East Asia, and about the intellectual traditions that have sought to illuminate them. The journal was founded in the conviction that scholarship need not choose between rigour and sensitivity, between the local and the transcultural, between the ancient and the urgently contemporary. The essays gathered here bear out that conviction in their diversity of method, language, and concern.

The issue moves, at its broadest, across three registers of inquiry. The first is metaphysical: what is the nature of the aesthetic act, and what does it accomplish in the consciousness of the one who performs or receives it? The second is critical: how do inherited forms, textual, musical, philosophical, carry authority, and what is our responsibility toward them as readers and scholars? The third is existential: what does art, in its many manifestations, tell us about the condition of being human, about suffering, about longing, about the terror of the familiar made strange?

These are not separate concerns. They fold into one another, as the essays themselves demonstrate. A study of embodied performance opens into cosmology; an inquiry into aesthetic universalisation arrives at the threshold of non-duality; a musical analysis becomes a meditation on lineage and devotion; a reading of a novella becomes a confrontation with silence and the dissolution of the self. Even the philosophical essay on ideology, which may appear at first glance most distant from the arts, asks, at its core, the same question that every artist must eventually face: what does it mean to remain genuinely open, self-correcting, and honest in one's enquiry?

It is our hope that the reader will find in these pages not merely arguments to be assessed, but invitations to dwell in a tradition, in a text, in a form. We are grateful to the contributors who have trusted the journal with their work, to the reviewers who have engaged it with care, and to the readers who bring to these pages a curiosity that no editorial effort alone can manufacture.

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