

Preface

Poorvam International Journal of Creative Arts and Cultural Expressions, Volume 2, Issue 1, goes into the world today, on the fifteenth of August, the eightieth anniversary of a svarāj that came, as Kṛṣṇacandra Bhattacharyya had already anticipated when he delivered "Svaraj in Ideas" as a lecture in 1928, in only one of the two senses that word demands. Political subjection is felt, he said, so it can be resisted. Cultural subjection is quieter. It begins the day a mind stops noticing that the ideas it recites are not its own. Eighty years on, the flag is settled. The other svarāj, the one Bhattacharyya meant when he spoke of ideas rather than land, is still being worked out, paper by paper, in journals like this one. It does not apply evenly to everything in this issue, and I have not tried to force it where it does not belong. But in a few of these papers it shows up clearly enough that I want to name it before handing the issue over to readers.

Dr. Rakesh Das and Sri Prolay Nandi open the issue with Śrī Caitanya's meeting with Keśava Bhaṭṭa on the banks of the Gaṅgā, where a single verse in the Śikharinī metre becomes the occasion for a full display of command over alaṅkāraśāstra, five doṣas and five alaṅkāras identified in one composition by a man remembered mostly as a devotional revolutionary. Prof. Susanta Kumar Bardhan follows with an ecolinguistic reading of Eliot's *The Waste Land*, counting the poem's own vocabulary word by word (fourteen instances of air, eighteen of water, against stony, dead, rock) to argue that the poem moves from the mechanized cruelty of the Unreal City toward the peace of shantih. It is careful, close, empirical work, and I mention it here simply as excellent literary criticism, not because it needs the frame above to justify itself. Ashwini Srivatsan's paper is the third in the issue and the second featured on this cover. Building on Piya Bhattacharya's work on embodiment in the Nāṭyaśāstra, she reads karaṇa and aṅgaḥāra not just as units of dance technique but as meditative structures, mapping sthāna to dhāraṇā, karaṇa to dhyāna, aṅgaḥāra to samādhi. Of the nine papers here, this is the one that comes closest to svarāj as Bhattacharyya meant it: a category examined from inside its own tradition, on its own terms, rather than translated into someone else's vocabulary to be taken seriously.

The middle of the issue turns to more openly literary and philosophical ground. Dr. Ritushree Sengupta writes on Rabisankar Bal's *Dozakhnama*, and the detail worth keeping in mind is that Bal deliberately avoids the Latin American and European conventions of magic realism and builds a mode he means to be specifically Bengali, letting Ghalib and Manto argue across a century in a narrative that refuses any single, settled version of the past. Dishari Chatterjee takes up niṣkāma karma in the Śrīmadbhagavadgītā, and rather than dissolving the apparent contradiction in that phrase, she works through Arindam Chakrabarti's Nyāya-Kantian reading, in which the desire for mokṣa is not an ordinary desire at all, closing with the Gītā's own verse on acting without attachment to the fruit of action. Vishnu Mishra reads Vikram Balagopal's *Simian* and Samhita Arni and Moyna Chitrakar's *Sita's Ramayana*, and argues that retelling the epic in graphic form is not distortion but recognition, a way of letting Sita and Hanuman carry weight the received text never gave them room for. Pratichi Chowdhury reads *Stree* and *Bulbbul* against their own horror conventions and argues that the occult, in these

films, is the vocabulary through which women extract accountability from men who would otherwise face none.

Rajendrani Mukhopadhyay's paper on Byomkesh Bakshi is where the frame returns most plainly. She cites Pinaki Roy's observation that Bengali detective fiction moved from a peripheral position, always measured against Sherlock Holmes and his kind, to a new centrality of its own, built on its own sense of class, caste and nationality. Byomkesh's insistence on calling himself *satyānveṣī*, a truth-seeker rather than a detective, is read here as exactly that kind of refusal: a genre imported wholesale from elsewhere, made to answer to its own soil instead.

The issue closes with Nilambar Chakrabarti's review of *Subject as Freedom*, Nalini Bhushan and Jay Garfield's new translation of Krishnachandra Bhattacharyya's hardest book. It is a generous review, but not an uncritical one. Chakrabarti's real argument is that Bhushan and Garfield's Advaita "bookend" reading, however scholarly, may settle in advance what a text built on Bhattacharyya's own restless, tradition-departing vocabulary should be allowed to mean. It is a fitting question to end on. A journal that opened this preface under Bhattacharyya's idea of *svarāj* closes with a paper asking whether even Bhattacharyya's own thought has yet been given the freedom he wrote about.

I am grateful, as always, to the Editorial Board, to the peer reviewers whose work stays invisible in these pages but decides what stands in them, and to every author who trusted PIJCACE with work that could easily have gone elsewhere.

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