

37th Annual STIMW Symposium

Abstracts

Uncoiling a concept: *Kuṇḍalinī* in the early Haṭha corpus

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Premodern Sanskrit texts on Haṭhayoga describe *kuṇḍalinī*, ‘she who is coiled’, as the female gendered serpent energy sleeping at the base of the yogic body. The texts prescribe physical, breathing and meditative techniques to awaken *kuṇḍalinī* and raise energy through the yogic body for empowerment and enlightenment. This paper reads passages on *kuṇḍalinī* from the Haṭha corpus alongside one another to analyse the language, function, and development of this key concept. Passages are selected from the *Amanaska*, *Vasiṣṭhasaṃhitā*, *Vivekamārtaṇḍa*, *Goraḁṣaśataka*, *Amaraughaprabodha*, *Yogabīja*, *Khecarīvidyā*, *Śivasamhitā* and *Haṭhapradīpikā*. These sources have not before been brought together in such a synoptic reading.

Through a close reading of these passages I explore the function of *kuṇḍalinī* in the haṭha corpus: how *kuṇḍalinī* is described, what her role is in the techniques of Haṭhayoga, how her role develops within the corpus, and what semiotic tropes emerge from the language and narrative structures associated with *kuṇḍalinī*. The paper suggests that a linguistic analysis of *kuṇḍalinī* contributes an elucidation of the ontology of the yogic body as more than the reductive bipolarity of mind and body. Refusing the limited readings offered by mind-body dualism and taking seriously the materiality of *kuṇḍalinī* facilitates a more nuanced reading not only of ontology but of praxis. Finally, the narrative reading draws out the implications of the interiorisation of sex. If for Heesterman (1985) the Upaniṣads interiorise the Vedic sacrifice, then the Haṭha corpus interiorises and enacts the tantric sexual ritual. As the *Goraḁṣaśataka* concludes, ‘we do not embrace a sweetheart but the Suṣumnā *nāḁī*, her body curved like kuṣa grass’ (Mallinson, 2012).

Dharmaśāstra in the Ayodhya Verdict (2019)

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In November, 2019, a constitutional bench of the Supreme Court of India delivered a unanimous, 1045-page verdict in *M. Siddiq v. Suresh Das*, a longstanding communal dispute concerning the ownership of the site (according to longstanding Hindu belief) of Rāma's birth. The Court awarded the ownership of the site to a divine litigant: Rām Virajaman - the infant form of Rāma, the tutelary deity of the Janmabhumi. My paper unpacks the Supreme Court's reasoning in the Ayodhya verdict and situates this logic within a wider history of equity and trusts in Sanskrit jurisprudence (Dharmaśāstra).

After providing a timeline of the Ayodhya dispute, I analyze the Supreme Court's ruling vis-à-vis two seminal jurisprudential debates: 1) the legal *personality* of the Hindu deities at Ayodhya; and 2) the *representation* of these deities in civil proceedings by various parties who portrayed themselves as Rām's legal guardians (fiduciaries). In the first debate, the Court was called upon to adjudicate the legal limits of a Dharmaśāstra passage from Raghunandana: *It is for the benefit of the worshippers that there is the conception of images of the Supreme Being which is bodiless, has no attribute, which consists of pure spirit and has got no second.* In the second debate, the Court was called upon to determine the limits of a verse from Kātyāyana - One should not put forth possession (as proof of title) in women, in the property of gods and kings, in the property of minors and Vedic Brāhmaṇas, and (in inheritance) from the mother and from the father.

In both instances, although the Supreme Court reigns in the Dharmaśāstric reasoning of the Allahabad High Court (in its 2010 verdict), the Supreme Court's decision to award ownership to Rām entails a projection of the Dharmaśāstra-influenced legal paradigms of Anglo-Hindu equity and trusts onto the facts of the Ayodhya dispute.

Hanumān's Leaps of Faith: Intertextuality in the Dharma-maṅgala

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Who is the Dharma of whom Rūparāma Cakravartī writes in his mid-17th *Dharma-maṅgala*? He has many names and epithets, including Arjuna-sārathi (Arjuna's charioteer [Kṛṣṇa]). But Dharma's champion Lāusena is often compared to Rāma, and his brother Karpūra

Pātara, who arose from a bit of camphor that fell from the pān that Lord Dharma was chewing when he first met the infant Lāusena, to Lakṣmaṇa. What does it mean that all three characters are equated with the focal deity of the epic? And more intriguing, why does Rūparāma so often call him by a Vaiṣṇava name?

Throughout his text, Rūparāma makes use of intertextual strategies to signal his heroes' identity as well as to entertain his audiences, who stay up all night over twelve consecutive nights for Dharma *gājana*. He unrolls epic content, beginning with court scenes in which *paṇḍitas* recite from the texts, to the DhM narrative itself when he or his characters identify themselves as divine figures from the epics. Rūparāma does not just mention the epics in passing; he also inscribes them on the heroines' clothing and the hero's weaponry.

Intertextuality is not unusual in South Asian literature generally, and in texts intended to be performed, all the more. It takes several different forms in the DhM. Following Culler, we find the overt intertextuality of the repeated naming of the great epics, usually in their Bengali translations, and the *Bhāgavāta Purāṇa*. As in other *maṅgala-kāvya*s, we find the implied intertextuality of the presence of Hanumāna along with reminders of his many feats in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Lāusena's many adventures, and indeed his very advent, are reminiscent of the life of Kṛṣṇa. What we have in the text is both the expected South Asian high level of intertextuality, and very porous ideas about just who god, and his champion, are.

Transcreating Sanskrit Humour through Kutiyattam Performance

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This collaborative project explores the cultural significance of irony, satire, ridicule, and other modes of Sanskrit humour within contemporary Kutiyattam and related performance traditions in Kerala. Our particular focus is the *bhāṇa*, a genre of Sanskrit comedic monologue with a long and illustrious history stretching back to the Gupta-period *Caturbhāṇi* ("Four Comic Monologues"). *Bhāṇas* had a particularly impactful but largely overlooked presence in early modern Kerala since the 14th century, forming a key

thread within the complex social-cultural fabric of traditional Kerala performing arts. To better understand the nature of this thread, we have partnered with the *Nepathya Kutiyattam* troupe (Moozhikkulam, Kerala) to produce digital multimedia “transcreations,” to use a term coined by Purushottam Lal, of select verses within the *Rasasadana* (“House of Love”) *Bhāṇa* of Godavarma Yuvaraja, an influential early modern Kerala writer. The result is a multimedia digital delivery of textual translations juxtaposed with recordings of the same texts performed on the Kutiyattam stage. The present paper outlines our research methodology in relation to the interdisciplinary nature of the project (heritage studies, performance studies, cultural history), provides sample data from a series of collaborative online sessions conducted with Nepathya in December 2020, and offers preliminary reflections on how a “transcreational,” multimedia approach to the text can help us to appreciate the social-cultural value of Sanskrit humour within Kerala performing arts today.