

## **Constructing a hermeneutics of re-cognition: accessing Raja Rao's corpus.**

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Indian studies has to deal with the mimetic traditions of re-cognition we find in Plato and Aristotle leading up to Martin Heidegger's re-cognition of the dasein as being thrown into the here and the now. But this understanding of re-cognition arises out of Continental understandings of the self which again is a mimetic or imago/imaginative configuration of the Logos found in the Johannine corpus in the Bible. John borrows the idea of the Logos from Plato and his intellectual forebears' understanding of the ideal world which is after all a metanarrative with no foundational reality except in the interiority or proto-phenomenology of the early Greeks. This is one way of approaching Indian texts in English. But this particular stance is problematic when we apply this hermeneutics to the crypto-Buddhist forms of non-qualified non-dualism which inform Raja Rao's works. Here we may mention the works of the Indian philosophers Dignāga and Dharmakīrti: all of these philosophers attacked the notion of the dasein and actually performed the cultural work which remains incomplete to this day by Francophilic overrated thinkers like Jacques Derrida. The concept of selfhood and self-fashioning is a very Continental approach to the human person who in turn has its ontology within the Abrahamic religions. Therefore, we need to rethink cognition studies when we turn to Indian novels in English, especially those of Raja Rao and to an extent, the works of R.K. Narayan. Both Narayan and Rao were schooled in various forms of monism where the thrust remains on non-duality and the existence of even Emmanuel Levinas' hospitable Other is questioned. So if there is no essence as found in Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, Nagarjuna and Atisha Dipankara and the same is imputed to Gaudapada; then who re-cognises whom in the works of Raja Rao? Rao lived in an ashram in France where non-duality was taught and practised. Thus Rao's novel *The Serpent and the Rope* through its very title gestures all readers to recognise that Rao rejected the mimetic traditions of the self so lauded by Erich Auerbach. To subscribe

to existentialism and to deconstructive methods for accessing Indian fiction in English perhaps itself is a form of neo-colonialism which is structured around doles qua scholarships from first world intellectuals to their Indian acolytes who forget that the Sigmund Freud too did not consider the ancient philosophies of India as totems and fixations. Rao's novels for instance are polemical attacks against any form of libidinal constructs of the economy; either of the logic of late capitalism or early capitalism. Because capitalism within this Indian system is cognate with meaning or 'artha'. Thus, this paper proposes a new hermeneutics of reading Indian texts in English.

There are two distinct schools of Indian philosophy that proposes recognition not yet mapped by scholars of cognition studies. For instance, Liza Zunshine did not bother to integrate cognition into her handbook on cognition studies and literature even though in the last decade she extensively travelled in rural India (indirectly partly funded by the author of this paper). She had been to temples, and saw, and experienced the reciprocity of the gaze: but her essentialist moorings in the normative beliefs of the/a self prevented her from accepting the fact that there remain two other possibilities. It is possible that there is no self to cognise, to begin , in the first instance; so I cannot cognise what is not there since I am not there at all. Descartes's fallacy has been accepted as the truth for too long. Zunshine is a good literary critic but a puerile philosopher. She neither considered the ramifications of the gaze when she visited temples at Bishnupur, Bankura in rural Bengal. She was not open to the idea that she is gazing at herself. There is no reciprocity of the gaze possible because there is just the one who has become the many. So within this established philosophy of recognition found in the likes of Utpaladeva and Avinavagupta we find a more nuanced hermeneutics of recognition. We can recognise that there is nothing to see because we are simply not there because of dependent origination as posited by all Buddhist schools. Or, we cognise that we are one monad which has to understand finally that we are just the One. This author typing at his laptop and being

read by an examiner are just the One. And it is mistaking a rope for a snake that needs correction if we are to study Raja Rao. This paper recommends a re-evaluation of the methods of reading seminal Indian texts in English. To bolster this argument we refer to a novel written by a Briton but set at Darjeeling: *Black Narcissus* by Rumer Godden. White critiques of *Black Narcissus* constantly contextualize the text within the white nun assailed by insanity in black/brown lands. But if we apply the ancient north Indian philosophy of recognition to this and say I Allan Sealy's *Everest Hotel*, then we will see that the intradiegetic gaze is phenomenological and has no extra narratorial foundations. Thus Indian fiction in English's main mode is the phenomenological mode squarely posited against the logos so fussed over by Indians schooled in Kwame Appiah without knowing Kalidas Bhattacharya's cosmopolitanism. Third world scholars in first world academia have to make compromises that get them tenures in white land. Thus we have absurd extant hermeneutics taught to us in the here and the now as far as most Indian fictions in English are concerned. The main mode of writing in Indian English letters is not the social realist mode; it is rather about the interior turn which the German Idealists and later Edmund Husserl and through Husserl, T.S. Eliot understood clearly: ours is the proto-phenomenological mode of writing and this paper invites a re-evaluation of the techne of doing Indian studies in the future.

Edith Stein's problems of other minds and therefore, her consequent problem of empathy does not arise within Indian studies of cognition because Rukmini Bhaya Nayar has misread in Harold Bloom's sense, the Indian canon and she admitted as much in November 2017 at Uttarakhand in an on-stage debate with this author. She finally re-cognised her autochthonous epistemology when her poems were exegetically glossed through this system of recognition. The constraint of space does not allow further elaboration of this line of thought.

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