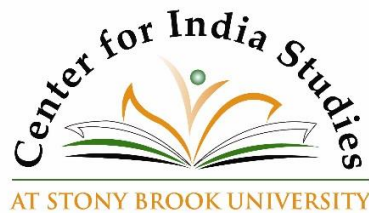


Bishembarnath & Sheela Mattoo



In cooperation with the Department of Philosophy
invites you to a Distinguished Lecture

**Aesthetics and Ethics of Disgust:
Applying Indic Aesthetic Theory
to Western Art and Politics**

Professor Arindam Chakrabarti
University of Hawaii at Manoa



Tuesday, April 18, 4:30 PM
Melville Library, 4th floor, E 4340
(Center for Italian Studies)

Aesthetic enjoyment is a special cognitive-affective-creative response to the beautiful. The disgusting is simply opposed to the beautiful, just like the ugly. Yet some aesthetically enjoyable sculptures, paintings, poems, plays and films, both ancient and contemporary, in the East and in the West, are about the disgusting and the ugly. This lecture will try to resolve the above puzzle, by more than just questioning the first two assumptions, by applying the complex aesthetic theory of Bharata (1st century CE) and Abhinavagupta (10th century CE). The Rasa theory, especially the theater-theoretic phenomenology of “savoring disgust” (*bibhatsa-rasa*), helps us explain how the basic and primitive emotion of “disgust” –literally, the experience of gustatory rejection-- can be transmuted into aesthetic and even spiritual relish. This Indian approach makes better sense, I claim, of “the refinement of the repulsive” in much visual, performing and literary art in our own times than Aristotle’s poetics or Kant’s transcendental absorption of negative pleasures of vomit and corpses into the category of the sublime (that Jacques Derrida deconstructs). I further complicate the basic Rasa-aesthetic of disgust with the phenomenology of our encounter with the ugly sketched by the early 20th century Indian philosopher K.C. Bhattacharya, and explain how our gut-revulsion becomes transformed through a process of aesthetic depersonalization or heart-sharing, turning eventually into a spiritual tranquility and egoless dispassion.

Finally, the lecture raises the ethical question: “Given that much of contemporary racism and xenophobia, and the politics of hatred that easily goes viral are driven by visceral disgust and fear of pollution, is it morally justified to react with a second order disgust towards such rampant politics of disgust?”

Arindam Chakrabarti works on Western and Indian analytic and comparative philosophy, aesthetics, political theory, comparative religion, and the humanities in general. He is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Hawaii-Manoa. He has taught and lectured worldwide and published over a dozen books and numerous articles in English, Sanskrit, and Bengali, including the edited volume, *Indian Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art* (2016).

