1 Indian images under the shadow of colonialism

The images described in this book begin to emerge in the 1870s and exist in a relationship of both continuity and disjunction with earlier image practices in India. Many of those discussed and reproduced here are chromolithographs, that is colour images printed from multiple stone blocks developing the original lithographic process invented by Alois Senefelder in Munich in 1798. The design was applied to the fine limestone stone block used in the process with any greasy substance (such as a coloured wax) and fixed in the stone through a variety of different techniques. The stone was then damped with water and greasy ink was applied. This was repelled by the water and adhered only to the design, leaving a reverse image on any paper pressed on the stone for printing.

Lithography's chief advantage was that designs could be applied fluidly to the surface of the stone: there was no need for engraving, etching or cutting in relief. Later chromolithographs using multiple colour blocks, and occasionally the application of varnish, produced images of an extreme tactility. Colours were rich and heavy with an astonishing depth and sensuality. Disparaged by the aesthetic elite, in both Europe and India ('complete with complicated German-gilt frames, these things were horrible', opined the English lithographer Barnett Freedman in the 1930s),[1] they were powerful vehicles for the mediation of faith and sentiment.

Not all the images discussed in this book are chromolithographs. Some, such as the earliest Calcutta Art Studio prints, are single-colour lithographs and many of the 1930s political images discussed in chapter 6 are also black and white. Various non-lithographic images are discussed immediately below. Some picture publishers, including S. S. Brijbasi, continued to produce beautiful and archaic multiple stone chromolithographs until the 1950s but other companies were quicker to adopt photographic offset processes. While noting these technological transformations where historically relevant, I have chosen to continue to refer to them as 'chromolithographs'. I have done this because their colour range and tactility continues to perpetuate

3 Plate from a late-19th-century German publication demonstrating the effects of successive colours in a nine-block chromolithograph image.

a repertoire established through conventional multiple block colour lithography: technological refinement has been used to reinforce pre-existing conventions.

Lithography was first used in India in the 1820s and Graham Shaw has argued that its impact was more significant than the introduction of typography in the 1550s. Lithography was immediately appreciated for its cheapness, portability and relative ease of production, and the widespread ownership of presses by Indians in the following decade played an important role in 'democratizing print in South Asia'.[2]

Despite this, many kinds of Indian mass-produced images continued to circulate independently of this

technological breakthrough. What may be the earliest visual record of the domestic use of pictures of deities in India appeared in 1832 with the publication of Mrs S. C. Belnos's *Hindoo and European Manners in Bengal* (itself a prime exemplar of the potentiality of lithography). In plate 14, 'Interior of a Native Hut' (illus. 4), prepared by her French lithographer husband, a devotional painting ('ill-executed ... on paper') is shown stuck to the wall behind the cooking hearth. Next to this image is what has been described as a terracotta female cult-figurine.[3]

Images like this emerged as a particular concern in missionary accounts that stigmatized what they saw as Hindu fetishism. A late nineteenth-century London Missionary Society tract, in a chapter titled 'Idols, Idols Everywhere', enunciated the threat posed to an austere iconoclasm by the proliferating fecundity of Hindu images:

> Benares is the great centre of the idol-making business, though in all parts of India the trade flourishes. Potters the day through may be seen in the sacred city moulding images of clay for temporary use. Sculptors also may be found producing representations of the gods in stone or marble. Carpenters, moreover, make great wooden idols for the temples; and workers in metal – goldsmiths, coppersmiths, and brass-workers – turn out more or less highly-finished specimens in their respective metals.[4]

Mechanical mass-reproduction facilitated dissemination through potentially infinite pathways, but it is clear that pre-lithographic images also 'travelled'. Itinerant bards and storytellers played an important role in disseminating visual traces of the divine. A memorable example of this occurs in Mahatma Gandhi's *Autobiography*, in which he recalls an incident from his childhood in Gujarat in the 1870s that has 'clung to [his] memory':

> somehow my eyes fell on a book purchased by my father. It was *Shravana Pitribhakti Nataka* [a play about Shravana's devotion to his parents]. I read it with intense interest. There came to our place about the same time itinerant showmen. One of the pictures I was shown was of Shravana carrying, by means of slings fitted for his shoulders, his blind parents on a pilgrimage. The book and the picture left an indelible impression on my mind. 'Here is an example for you to copy', I said to myself. The agonized lament of the parents over Shravana's death is still fresh in my memory.[5]

4 Mrs S. C. Belnos, 'Interior of a Native Hut', a lithograph published in *Hindoo and European Manners in Bengal* (London, 1823). A mass-produced, hand-painted image can be seen on the wall at the back.

There is evidence here of overlaps between different media technologies and scopic regimes: the image of Shravana carrying his blind parents in slings is still available from the Bombay-based Sharma Picture Publication in the form of a chromolithograph. But

5 Advertising placard for Bradford Dyers' Association depicting Ganesh (*c.* 1900), chromolithograph on card. Such pictorial trade-marks were widely used by foreign retailers in 19th-century India.

6 Matchbox label (*c.* 1900). The design would have facilitated the customer's request for a 'box of Kali'.

alongside such continuities, chromolithographs and other industrially produced images clearly facilitated profound transformations in patterns of worship and of political practice.

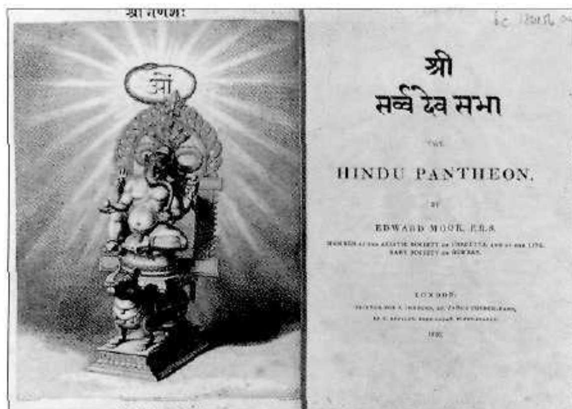
Nineteenth-century India was increasingly pervaded by images. These were hand-made and mass-produced, local and exotic, religious and commercial. A systematic overview of their terrain is difficult to acquire, but several compressed descriptions and other fragments provide great insight into the complex flux that increasingly characterized late colonial scopic regimes. Writing between 1885 and 1895, the Reverend J. E. Padfield of the Church Missionary Society described the extraordinary mixture of image styles and media to be found in some wealthy Hindu homes in the vicinity of Madras. In the front room of a house might be found images narrating the life of Krishna: 'These pictures are gorgeous and grotesque native productions, being paintings on glass that can be bought in almost every fairly large bazaar'. The occasional print might also be spotted and 'perhaps a cutting from some English illustrated paper'. But these, Padfield noted, 'appear very much out of keeping with the surroundings; far more suitable and at home are the glaring labels from the Manchester cotton goods that one sometimes sees adorning the walls or doors or shutters.'[6]

This 'suitability' reflected foreign entrepreneurs' wily recognition of their customers' cultural expectations. The manufacturers of cotton piece goods branded their products with pictorial trademarks and it was understood that consumers relied on these when making their selections in local bazaars (illus. 5). A good sense of their importance is given in the United States Government Department of Commerce Special Consular Report on British India, published in 1915 and designed to enable American entrepreneurs to 'enter foreign trade preparedly'.[7] The report highlighted the importance of 'pictorial advertising' in a country like India where consumers were likely to be illiterate: 'Goods intended for popular sale ought to be marked with some distinctive pictures which could be easily remembered. For instance, cotton piece goods are distinguished by labels in which Indian deities, tigers or other animals, dancing girls, etc., are displayed in attractive colours.'[8] The report also lists 'Hindu mythology, Hindu romantic drama, temples ... occasionally ... the King-Emperor of India and European actresses' as among other popular trademarks (illus. 6). In many cases, the report concluded, 'the particular attractiveness of these pictures may have quite as much to do with the sale of such goods as the quality of the cloth itself'.[9]

The allure of colour and the powerful effects of images are a strong theme in the final chapter of this book where an account is given of rural consumers' devotional engagement with images over the last two decades. In the central Indian village described in that chapter, these images are known as 'photos of the gods' (*bhaguan ke photo*). They are not seen as the rarefied manifestation of a painterly tradition, but are, rather, centrally situated in the vibrant everyday visual culture of modern India. The judgements that are made about images focus on questions of efficacy and their ability to intervene in the world, rather than formal aesthetic criteria. Chromolithography finds its main market in early twenty-first century India among rural consumers who need direct access to tangible and powerful gods.

Yet, as will soon become clear in the following history, in the nineteenth century some British colonialists saw new representational techniques as a means of dismantling the Hindu world-view. Perceiving the great mass of Indians as inhabiting 'an era before art',[10] and to be interested in images only as 'idols', colonial art-educators sought to transform the intimate and interested engagement of the devotee into the disinterested and rationalized response of colonial political subjects to the image as 'art'. The history that follows is, in part, set against colonial attempts to turn devotional images into 'art' and popular chromolithography's rejection of this denial of religious efficacy.

Edward Moor's *Hindu Pantheon*, which had been published in 1810, can be seen as an early charter for some of the representational transformations the colonial state sought to effect. The frontispiece[11] depicts a brass cast of Ganesh (illus. 7), the elephant-headed son of Shiv who is commonly invoked at the beginning of orthodox Hindu texts. There are obvious transformations of media – the brass cast of Ganesh astride his mount (a rat) is rendered by line, and this medium allows the syllable '*aum*' (transliterated idiosyncratically) to appear in a sunburst above the



7 Frontispiece to Edward Moor, *The Hindu Pantheon* (London, 1810). Depiction is transformed from the reproduction of powerful deities into a technical problem of representation.

statue. But more significant is the cultural transposition of Ganesh from the space of Hindu devotion into the space of representation. The diagonal line running from right to left along which Ganesh looks can be thought of as a realist tangent, a deliberate (mis)alignment that transforms what might otherwise be a flat hieratic signifier of divinity into a representational conundrum to which the rules of single-point perspective can be applied. This slight rotation serves to displace the sculpture into a different European space of representation. This displacement is metonymic of a much broader representational transformation in which the world, as Anuradha Kapur suggests in Heideggerean vein, 'is seen . . . as a mathematically regular ordering of time, space, and human action'[12] informed by a 'disinterested' aesthetic.

However, this colonial 'aesthetic' might be better conceptualized as an 'anaesthetic'. This is the argument advanced by Susan Buck-Morss. Using Walter Benjamin's 1930s 'Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' essay as her starting point, she constructs a history of the 'alienation of the corporeal sensorium'. Kantian aesthetics – predicated on the distance or absence of the body – marks an inversion and denial of earlier aesthetics born, as Terry Eagleton has noted, as 'a discourse of the body'.[13] In its original

ancient Greek formulation, *aisthitikos* denoted 'perceptive by feeling' and revealed the original field of aesthetics as 'corporeal, material nature'.

This earlier, different, practice of aesthetics – which I propose we call 'corpothetics' – was also, importantly, synaesthetic, mobilizing all the senses simultaneously. 'Anaesthetics' is the result of the 'numbing' and deadening of the sensorium. Following Benjamin, Buck-Morss emphasizes the role of the shocks of industrialization and modernity in this process of attenuation. In colonial India, the 'anaesthetization' of what was formerly 'perceptive by feeling' was an intrinsic element in transformations of idols into 'art'.

THE 'POWERS OF EUROPEAN ART'

The realignment of Ganesh into this new space of representation alerts us to some colonizers' conversional desires, but we should not confuse desires with outcomes. In India attempts to undermine the sacrality of images only served to make the Gods appear more 'real'.

Advocates of art schools, such as Richard Temple, positioned perspective as part of a larger scientistic project that they imagined would make Indians 'modern' and 'rational'. There are various candidates for India's first 'western' art school. Several individuals and organizations established institutions from 1798 onwards that sought to disseminate what were perceived as imported visual techniques in India.[14] In the 1850s, however, pre-existing art schools in Madras, Calcutta and Bombay came under the direct control of the department of public instruction. Mitter pointedly notes that for the East India Company 'the scientific scrutiny of nature was a sacred act'.[15] Programmatic statements by those seeking to encourage the foundation and growth of colonial art schools stressed their role in inculcating a 'scientific' progress alongside the contribution they might make to the development of public 'taste'. A technical convention – single-point perspective – emerged as the key that would unravel an Indian resistance to the 'powers of observation'. Writing in 1880, Temple noted that 'the instruction' in art schools 'embodied the principles applicable to art in all climes and the practice most approved in European art'.[16] The ability to '[draw] objects correctly'[17] would in turn, it was hoped, foster an analytic re-orientation that would have profound consequences. Hence the stress on 'science'; perspective as a rigorous analytic tool would help fracture what Hegel referred to as the Hindu 'dreamworld':

> [Art Schools] will teach them one thing, which through all the preceding ages they have never learnt, namely drawing objects correctly, whether figures, landscape or architecture. Such drawing tends to rectify some of their mental faults, to intensify their powers of observation, and to make them understand analytically those glories of nature which they love so well.[18]

Alongside those who argued for a dis-enchantment effected by 'Cartesian perspectivalism'[19] were advocates of a re-enchantment – at the level of allegory – through the medium of history painting. Lord Napier, Governor of Madras, urged in a celebrated lecture in 1871 the development of an Indian style 'that deals with the ideal and allegorical' in which 'the virtues, the graces . . . and other abstract conceptions and agencies are clothed in human forms which owe their majesty or their terrors to the Artist'.[20] The epic *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* contained, he declared, 'the most inexhaustible and diversified stores of pictorial representation which any country possesses':

> All that is needed to promulgate their beauty and complete their fame is that, in their purer and nobler passages and with the powers of European Art, they should engage the service of the national pencil as they have fastened on the national memory and animated the national voice.[21]

European art worlds endowed history painting with a moral gravity denied to other genres and it was the attempt to export this genre to India that laid the groundwork for the emergence of what we might think of as Indian 'magical realism'. This might also be seen in part as an inadvertence on the part of the dominant colonial culture, which while expounding its superior technology failed to recognize the potency of its 'other side', that is its own infatuation with myth and the extramundane. It is also in part the consequence of the inevitable slippage that occurred during the translational passage of the concept into a colonized society in which 'religion' was increasingly being called upon to do the work of politics. Images that might remain largely 'allegorical' in the salons of Europe, inhabited a politically more challenging terrain in India.

INDIAN MAGICAL REALISM

A clear sense of the impact of the 'powers of European Art' is conveyed by O. Chandu Menon's observation in his 1888 novel *Indulekha*:

> Before the European style of oil painting began to be known and appreciated in this country, we had – painted in defiance of all possible existence – pictures of Vishnu as half man and half lion ... pictures of the god Krishna with his legs twisted and turned into postures in which no biped could stand ... Such productions used to be highly thought of, and those who produced them were highly remunerated, but now they are looked upon by many with aversion. A taste has set in for pictures, whether in oil or water colours, in which shall be delineated men, beasts, and things according to their true appearance, and the closer that a picture is to nature, the greater is the honour paid to the artist.[22]

Menon's invocation of the realist transformation that engulfed oil painting in India in the late nineteenth century was intended to persuade those of his critics who wondered how he could assemble a successful novel that described 'only the ordinary affairs of the modern life without introducing any element of the supernatural'.[23] Just as, he claimed, new representational idioms were collapsing the distance between 'pictures' and 'nature' and creating an aversion for older schemata, so a new literature that was 'true to natural life' would dissolve the ground on which stood older narratives, 'filled with the impossible and the supernatural'.

Menon articulated what might be termed the 'modular' version of realism.[24] The modular version as it operates within the novel, according to Fredric Jameson, took as its 'historical function' the 'systematic undermining and demystification, the secular "decoding", of ... preexisting inherited traditional or sacred narrative paradigms'.[25]

In *Indulekha*, however, as Meenakshi Mukherjee has argued, the intention had been forgotten as early as the end of the novel, the last lines of which echo a quite different genre, the *purana* or mythological narative: 'All the characters mentioned ... have reached the summit of human happiness, and now may God bless us and all who read this tale'.[26] This process of forgetting and the non-fulfilment of realism's 'historic function' can be seen inscribed even more vividly in Chandu Menon's exemplar, popular visual representation.

Temple and others certainly desired the displacement of the mythic into the realist, but, after a brief period of strategic mimicry and 'sly civility', Indian artists would develop something quite different, something akin to a visual 'magical realism'. This term was first used by Franz Roh to label post-Expressionist painting in Germany.[27] It achieved its currency, however, in Latin America where, partly through Alejo Carpentier's articulation of the 'marvellous real', it came to describe a genre of hybrid, anti-positivist, post-colonial literature. Carpentier essentialized

the marvellous real as a response to the peculiarly marvellous reality of South America, but in his articulation of a hybridized baroque – a more generalized cultural phenomena with which the ontologically valorized marvellous real intersected – we can unravel a set of insights that will help in understanding popular Indian visual culture.

Although the baroque was, for Carpentier, a 'constant of the human spirit', it needs also to be understood as a reaction to a spatial rationality. The baroque 'is characterized by a horror of the vacuum, the naked surface, the harmony of linear geometry';[28] it 'flees from geometrical arrangements'.[29] Carpentier sees Bernini's St Peter's basilica in Rome as exemplar of baroque; it is like a caged sun, 'a sun that expands and explores the columns that circumscribe it, that pretend to demarcate its boundaries and literally disappear before its sumptuousness'.[30] To Carpentier's stress on the creole and hybrid nature of magical realism we can add Luis Leal's observation that magical realism is an 'attitude towards reality' and not just as a literary genre,[31] and Amaryll Chanady's claim that magical realism 'acquires a particular significance in the context of Latin America's status as a colonized society'.[32] In Chanady's perceptive reading of magical realism as a response to the '"rule, norm and tyranny" of the age of reason'[33] one can hear echoes of Partha Chatterjee's claim that the nineteenth-century Bengali elite found in the rediscovery of popular aesthetics an escape from the 'prisonhouse of colonial reason'.[34] At various points in the ensuing narrative we will encounter images and genres that might be usefully thought of as magical realist in Chanady's sense. These images are responses to colonialism and refusals of a certain technology of representation. The late 1920s style associated with artists in the Rajasthani town of Nathdvara, for instance, might be seen as a post-perspectivalism that attempts to 'flee from geometry'.

'ABSORPTION' AND 'THEATRICALITY'

Buck-Morss's archaeology of aesthetics may also prove useful for our understanding of mass-picture production in India over the last 120 years, for here we will encounter images produced within and mediated by 'anaesthetizing' discourses, and those produced within and mediated by sensory practices. If we envisage this as a continuum, rather than a dichotomy, we can place images produced in Calcutta in the late nineteenth century nearer the 'anaesthetized' end, and the popular twentieth-century 'magical realist' images can be placed at the other end. It is the numbing of the human sensorium that makes the colonial mimicry of earlier images so compatible with conventional art-historical exegesis: a literature on the products of these early presses already exists. It is the sensory immediacy of the later images that makes them so intractable to conventional analysis and regard: the analysis of these images is in its infancy.

Images whose power is evaluated in terms of efficacy are difficult to understand from the viewpoint of conventional aesthetics. Aesthetic discourse is still, inappropriately, brought to bear upon popular representational practices and, since it misses the point of them, is inevitably forced to decry their various deficits. The questions asked by neo-Kantian aesthetics are – in this context – the wrong ones.

The central Indian villagers whose pictures are discussed in the final chapter of the book do not surround them with reified discourses. Rather, they speak of a depicted deity's efficacy, and link the origination of the image to their own biographies. The significance of images is expressed by rural consumers not through the efflorescence of words around an object, but a bodily praxis, a poetry of the body, that helps give images what they want.

This corporeal relationship with images (what Adorno called 'somatic solidarity') resists 'predatory reason'[35] in rather the same way that in Lyotard's dichotomy 'figure' resists the 'linguistic-philosophical

closure' of discourse. For Lyotard, the figural is 'relatively free of the demands of meaning', indeed it is not the arena for the production of meaning but a space where 'intensities are felt'.[36]

This corporeality and resistance to 'reason' is the source of an endless series of misunderstandings. In an Indian context one of the starkest condemnations of popular art's corporeality has come from Walter Spink, who in 1978 reviled it for its 'voluptuous[ness]' which seems 'marvelously camp to the western eye bemused by such highly sentimentalised and "realistic" religious productions'.[37] The invocation of voluptuousness (the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* definition of which is 'gratification of the senses [and] imparting a sense of delicious pleasure') and its association with kitsch is instructive, for theoretical writing on kitsch stresses a similar embodied immediacy, defining it as the inverse of disinterested and disembodied aesthetics. Tomas Kulka, writing from the high ground of Kantian disdain, suggests that kitsch differs radically not only from 'good' art but also from 'bad and mediocre' art, for it is a sensory phenomenon set apart from ordinary aesthetic discrimination. For Kulka, kitsch is dependent on motifs that are 'stock emotions that *spontaneously* trigger an unreflective emotional response'.[38]

The role of this corporeal immediacy in constructing popular contemporary North American religious art as 'kitsch' – and hence disavowed as 'art' – has recently been powerfully analysed by the art historian David Morgan. In addition to a disavowal founded on these images as 'interested', 'engaged' and 'extrinsically purposive',[39] they are also seen to embody a 'sentimentality'. This is associated with a female embodied emotionality, which is contrasted with a virile Kantian austerity.[40]

The story of how a numbed sensorium was brought back to life is one of the central concerns of this book. If 'anaesthetics' is about the discursive investigation and assessment of meaning, sensory aesthetics is about the relationship between the body and the image. This dichotomy becomes particularly clear in the contrast between colonial mimicry and magical realist images. The European art whose colonial shadow was cast over India had passed through engagements with vanishing points that incarnated corporeal viewers[41] to a practice that implied a 'transcendent point of vision that has discarded the body . . . and exists only as a disembodied *punctum*'.[42] Norman Bryson's arguments parallel those of Michael Fried, who observes the rise of what he calls the 'supreme fiction' of an absent beholder in late eighteenth-century French painting. This disembodied 'absorption' was exported to India and can be seen as an attempt – in tandem with the art schools' stress on 'naturalism' – to deny the magical origin of images. Later 'magical realist' paintings, by contrast, assumed an embodied 'corpothetics', by which I mean the sensory embrace of images, the bodily engagement that most people (except Kantians and modernists) have with artworks.

In Michael Fried's work the driving forces of change in European art – from French eighteenth-century history painting through to modernism – are strategies that deny the presence of the beholder through strategies of 'absorption'. Drawing in detail on Diderot's critical commentaries, an increasing disparagement of paintings that acknowledge the presence of the beholder emerges. Such acknowledgements usually involved direct eye-contact between the picture's subject and the beholder, a relationship Diderot disdained. His hostility to this mutual awareness of picture and viewer can be seen as a means of establishing a 'privileged' art as the antithesis of ritual art (that is, art whose sole *raison d'être* is to act as a conduit between beholder and deity). Likewise, for Fried, 'good' art is art that negates the presence of the beholder. Making a link between his study of eighteenth-century French art and 1960s modernism, he concludes that mediocre work has a 'theatrical' relation to the beholder, whereas the 'very best recent work' is 'in essence *anti*-theatrical'.[43] The emergence of modern art, Mitchell writes in his valuable gloss:

is precisely to be understood in terms of the negation or renunciation of direct signs of desire. The process of pictorial seduction Fried admires is successful precisely in proportion to its indirectness, its seeming indifference to the beholder, its antitheatrical 'absorption' in its own internal drama.[44]

Absorption, indirectness and history painting were part of the package exported by the colonial state into its Government Art Schools in the nineteenth century and we will encounter some silhouettes of these early anaesthetics. The 'supreme fiction' of the absent beholder becomes – in colonial India – a mark of western 'distinction' and a marker of distance from Hindu 'idols', from the fetish that was the common origin of all art. However, whereas in Fried's account 'absorption' marked an irreversible shift towards a desirable indirection, in popular Indian art its tenuous hold was quickly lost as consumers started to demand images stripped of this 'supreme fiction', insisting instead on images that fundamentally addressed their presence and invoked a new corpothetics.

In India the reawakening of the human sensorium went hand in hand with the insertion of mass-produced images into spaces of Hindu worship. This relocation had a twofold characteristic, involving movements towards, on the one hand, sacralized spaces and, on the other, domestic spaces. Thus there was a movement from mundane spaces such as the art schools into domestic spaces of worship and temples where images had a different work to perform. The need to demonstrate appreciation through explanation was replaced by bodily gestures and the look of the devotee. This entailed new forms of physical intimacy with images and an increasing irrelevance of formal 'anaesthetized' discourse.

The hold of absorption and history painting was tenuous and reached its apogee in the work of Ravi Varma (1848–1906), the Indian painter most amenable to the western genre of art-historical evaluation. Partly this is the result of his own self-mystification in Vasarian mode but it is, more importantly, the result of his adoption of a painterly style that strove for the 'supreme fiction'. His most art-historically celebrated works are those that look past the beholder. Ravi Varma's characters behave as if they had heard and ingested Diderot's command: 'think no more of the beholder than if he did not exist. Imagine, at the edge of the stage, a high wall that separates you from the orchestra. Act as if the curtain never rose'.[45] We shall see that it was this that his imperial patrons so admired. Conversely it is this (dominant) element of Ravi Varma's work that is so utterly invisible in the subsequent archive of Indian popular visual culture. The fragments of his work that do survive are those 'theatrical' or corpothetic images which unequivocally acknowledge the beholder's presence. In these images the beholder is a worshipper, drinking the eyes of the deity that gazes directly back at him.

'A SECRET OF THEIR OWN COUNTRY'

In Bombay, by the 1920s, Temple's conversional fantasy was long dead. W. E. Gladstone Solomon, the Principal of the J. J. School of Art in Bombay, encouraged the process of 'Indianization'. This was eulogized by Sir George Lloyd, the Governor of Bombay, who noted, when opening an exhibition of students' work, that 'successful artistic work cannot be achieved without inspiration, and inspiration can come only when the artist is working on lines natural to him, and endeared by inheritance and tradition'.[46] Discussing the school's curriculum, Solomon denied the claim that the work of the school was 'not Indian'. Some head and figure studies, he conceded, 'might almost have been painted by French or British students', but this is simply a reflection of the 'grammar of the universal language of Art'.[47] For Solomon, the language was part of a training that would place students in 'a stronger position for working out their own salvation'.[48]

Western representational techniques were no longer the vectors of a wholesale chronotopic transformation.

Instead they had become one among many tools, a means of revitalizing 'inheritance and tradition' rather than overturning it. With their own means of salvation to hand, students were choosing the 'Indian point of view', a conclusion shared by Bombay's Nationalist press. Surely, Solomon pleads, 'Indians are the best judges of what is Indian'.[49]

Temple's chronotopic revolution also implied a necessary disenchantment, a failure of the Hindu gods, which Ruskin had referred to as 'an amalgamation of *monstrous objects*'.[50] But Solomon revels in the dissemination of ever more potent gods into the public space of Bombay. In 1921 the School of Art was commissioned by the Prince of Wales Reception Committee to paint the 'pylons' with which the streets had been decorated with '170 figures of Deities, each seven feet in height':

> Then indeed it was a portentous spectacle to see the marshalling of multifarious emblems, tokens, ornaments, 'vehicles', and other insignia of an interminable line of Celestial Incarnations. Some of these were endowed with the usual complement of limbs, while others flourished arms like wind-mills. There were triple-faced, monkey-faced, vulture-faced Deities. There were some who rode on tigers, on lions, on eagles, on snakes, and some who used the lotus as a spring board for the stars.[51]

The art schools had been established with the intention that naturalism would vanquish Indian art, as suggested by Temple's hope that 'such drawing' would 'rectify some of their mental faults'.[52] But a very different vanquishing had occurred since, as Solomon wrote, invoking a remarkable set of metaphors:

> the shell that encloses the fruit . . . is so truly Indian that even the Western buildings in which the different departments of the School are housed almost seem, to knowledgeable eyes, to have been draped by the hands of their Indian students with invisible 'saris' . . . In the depths of their dark eyes are the fires of enlightenment, but it is a Secret of their own Country that they are engaged in unravelling in the School of Art.[53]

It is this unravelling – undertaken by the wider commercial picture production industry – that the following chapters will trace.