More than meets the eye: The circulation of images and the embodiment of value

Kajri Jain

This article examines the popular, cheaply mass-produced prints known as 'calendar' or 'bazaar' art, going 'beyond appearances' to explore how their value and power is located not just in their visuality as such, but also in their capacity as circulating objects. I describe how these prints can be seen as sites of intersection between the colonially-derived institution of 'fine art' and what historians have called the 'bazaar' economy. The postcolonial visual regime in which bazaar images circulate is therefore characterised by different but co-existing frames of value and moral-commercial economies. The animated circuits of bazaar icons, I argue, have served to shore up relations of credit and exchange in the 'informal' social, moral-ethical and commercial networks of the bazaar, obviating the distinction between sacred and commercial forms of value. However, there are tensions between the role of images in the bazaar and the schema of aesthetic judgement within 'fine art'. Here I focus on the way in which performative and bodily engagements, integral to a ritual and devotional relationship with images, have been denigrated within an aesthetic schema which privileges a distanced, disembodied gaze. This paves the way for a re-examination of the notion of the fetish, asking why one of the few categories that speaks to the power of the image as a circulating object rather than as a static sign does so within a moral framework of denigration and abnormality. I relate this denigration to the historical conditions of this concept's appearance, and the specific ideological work it has had to do within a European bourgeois-liberal public sphere.

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I
Frames of value

In this article I explore the frames of value within and between which a particular set of images has come to circulate: the popular, cheaply mass-produced prints known as 'calendar' or 'bazaar' art.[1] My attempt here is on the one hand to clarify and historicise the terms that are available to us in thinking about the value of these images, and on the other to simultaneously disrupt that historicism by describing how these frames of value might co-exist in various registers of the present: not simply as analytical categories but as forces in themselves, that impart different valencies to the image as they traverse it and bring it into constellation with other bodies and objects. To that extent I hope to show how corporeal practices and material processes, and not just language, work here to simultaneously create and express value, to intensify and consecrate the world.[2]

I am particularly concerned with exploring two types of possibilities that are opened up by approaching the image as an object that is traversed by various forms of value or force—ritual, libidinal, ethical, semantic, aesthetic, moral, emotional, habitual—as it in turn traverses space and time. For one, I am interested in whether there might be ways of thinking about and relating to images that do not 'see' the efficacy of images as solely or primarily located in their visuality. Specifically, this means

[1] The terms 'calendar art' and 'bazaar art' are commonly used as catch-all phrases to describe not just mass-produced calendars but also the smaller prints known in the industry as 'framing pictures', and are sometimes extended to the visual idiom of cinema hoardings, television epics, advertising, packaging and comic books. As will become evident, I am interested in these images both in their capacity as calendars and in their circulation in the bazaar, and am, therefore, inclined to stay with and recontextualise these putatively derogatory terms rather than look for new ones (such as 'god posters', see Smith 1995). The majority of these prints are '*dharmic*' or religious images; other categories used in the industry include '*filmi*' (movie stars), 'leaders' (figures from the nationalist struggle, politicians), 'beauties' (women), 'sceneries' (landscapes), 'babies' and other secular 'subjects' such as flowers and animals (mostly photographic). Within the *dharmic* category, about 80 per cent portray Hindu themes. Muslim, Sikh and Christian subjects constitute the rest, though Buddhist and Jain images also appear. A recent entrant in the market is a sub-genre of regionally-marked, idealised 'village scenes' or 'folk culture'.

[2] Here I am drawing on Alphonso Lingis, who describes terms of value as 'forces acting on forces': not just means of discriminating and classifying through opposition but means of intensifying the world, so that language is 'not fundamentally a means of identification, but a means of consecration' (Lingis 1994: 47, 50).

describing engagements with images in ways that do not subscribe to a mind-body dualism where reason and vision are closely allied in opposition to corporeal responses. This split is characteristic of cultural regimes thought of as 'ocularcentric' or dominated by vision, a charge levelled by several 20th century commentators at the traditions of Western thought (Jay 1993: 3). My aim here is to explore how the value of images might be located in modes of engagement where visuality and corporeality are not necessarily opposed in the ways identified by these critics. Second, I am interested in how the value of the bazaar image as a commodity—its price—might not reflect all the work it is doing within a commodity economy. Both the power and the putative inferiority of cheap, mass-produced calendar images, I shall argue, have resided in their role as switching points between different frames of value, not all of which are strictly 'economic'.

On the one hand, the differences between these frames of value can be mapped onto the differences between 'cultural' constituencies that do not necessarily share the same constellations of meaning and value, or even inhabit the same 'coeval' time (Fabian 1983; for a critique of co-evalness see Frow 1997: 8–10). I shall describe how bazaar images are commodities that network together such different constituencies into synchronous but unequal relationships: in this respect the role of these images in colonial exchanges is similar to exchanges in the contemporary 'global' cultural economy. However, I also want to outline how the constituencies that are traversed by such differences might not only be distinct groups or classes, but also what are thought of as 'individual' selves. The unequal relations that characterise postcolonial exchanges also characterise the co-existing but sometimes incommensurable aspects of postcolonial subjectivity. As the following set of fieldwork exchanges will clarify, these disjunctive aspects of the self are called forth, or indeed brought into being by, different contexts, different times, different people, interrupting seamless narratives of a consistent identity.[3]

When I first introduced myself to a calendar manufacturer in Delhi's Chandni Chowk, around 1994, and told him that I was doing research

[3] My central focus here is the image as a circulating object that networks together different constituencies yet makes apparent the disjunctures between and within them. Given this concern with the interstitiality of images, rather than locating my account within a particular set of 'agents', my narrative here is object-centred, tracking bazaar images through various social and historical contexts and thereby keeping the fraught question of the location and nature of 'agency' in abeyance. I thank Christiane Brosius for pushing me towards this clarification even though I may not have done justice here to her concerns.

for a Ph.D. on calendar art, his response was: '*Aapko* Madam *is se aur koi ganda* topic *nahin mila?*' (Madam, weren't you able to find a more repellent topic than this?). Like most people I interviewed from the calendar art industry, particularly artists and publishers, as well as several consumers, this publisher was well aware of the inferior status of these cheap, mass-produced images within the vast and formidable panoply of 'Indian culture'. What's more, he wanted me to know that he knew. Publishers would immediately say that they only produced what 'the market' or 'the public' wants, while artists would emphasise that they felt restricted by the marketplace, and only got into calendar work because of financial constraints. Thus the Meerut-based artist Yogendra Rastogi asked:

> Do you have some special interest? **Because calendar designing, commercial designing, is not exactly purely fine art . . . . (T)here are a lot of boundations, limitations, and why we are bound to adopt it? Because of money.**[4]

Or the Bombay artist S.S. Shaikh, who specialises in landscapes, immediately clarified that:

> Actually, I have done this from the **J.J. School of Arts**, I have done **Fine Art**. And **calendar art** would be counted as **Commercial Art**, not as **Fine Art**.[5]

Such caveats often surfaced at the very outset of a conversation, and I soon realised that this was probably a response to my self-introduction as a student in a department of Fine Arts.[6] The phrase 'Fine Art' became a kind of seed-crystal towards which a whole set of other discursive elements came swimming out of the fluid of these encounters to rapidly form a neat little structure. With fine art comes its other, commercial art; with that comes the market; made up of the 'public', the English word which in a Hindi-speaking context is often synonymous with *janata*, or

[4] Interview with Yogendra Rastogi, Meerut (15 November 1994), in Hindi (words originally spoken in English are indicated in bold).

[5] Interview with S.S. Shaikh, Bombay (13 December 1995), in Hindi.

[6] At the time when I was conducting most of my interviews I was enrolled in the University of Sydney's Department of Fine Arts, which changed its name in 1997 to the Department of Art History and Theory.

the 'masses', and aligned with a high-low distinction; and with that comes the denigration of the popular realm of calendar images.

But while they were making these apologies, my interviewees were more often than not sitting under the benign gaze of a printed deity, usually of the very type they were denigrating; most likely they also had similar images in a shrine or prayer-room at home, before which they (or someone in their household) routinely prayed. Even as the high-low distinction has a certain discursive valency in the calendar industry, in practice these images are consumed across the social strata. The same image of Ganesh, Lakshmi or Vaishno Devi might be used on a calendar by the manufacturer of Sher Beedis as well as by the proprietors of Vohra Furniture House or Gupta Brothers Chemist; this would be distributed to their business associates, who might then in turn pass it on to their customers, clients or friends (Figure 1). It might also be sold as a poster or smaller 'framing picture' at a temple, pilgrimage site or local market. So the image could end up anywhere, from a Brahmin hotel owner's kitchen to a tree in a vegetable market, from a neighbourhood temple to my aunt's Marwari mother-in-law's prayer room or a tentshop wall (Figure 2).

Figure 1: Detail, 1996 Gupta Brothers calendar depicting the mother goddess (Durga). Publisher and artist unknown. As with many calendars, here the company's name has been overprinted in one colour by letterpress on a 'readymade' (as opposed to 'special party' or customised) four-colour offset-printed calendar.

Figure 2: Tentshop interior, Sarojini Nagar Market, New Delhi, 1991, with calendar of Vaishno Devi distributed by Vohra Furniture House.

The sequel to my story about the publisher (the one who thought I had chosen a really repellent topic) came when we were talking on the eve of Diwali. Diwali is a big day for calendar manufacturers, since, being the beginning of the Hindu financial and sacred year, it is when many businesses, particularly in the 'bazaar' sector (a term I will come back to) distribute their calendars to their clients and associates. In keeping with the occasion, we were talking about calendars in relation to ritual and religiosity. At one point the publisher asked his assistant to remove a long calendar of Ganesh that had been hanging on the wall behind him, so that as he sat in front of it with his legs crossed his foot would no longer fall into a position where it pointed towards the deity (as it had probably done all year, if not longer). Even though this sudden sensitivity almost certainly arose from our conversation, his explanation was directed not towards me but towards his assistant: this episode occurred as an aside to the conversation, not as part of it. Unlike his earlier denigration of the genre, it seemed irrelevant to him whether or not I shared, understood or even registered this very corporeal concern.

Evidently, then, temporal and discursive contexts can affect one's engagement with an image. I want to try and distinguish between the frames of value that the publisher was drawing on in each of these exchanges. First, there was an *aesthetic* frame, or, following Bourdieu, a frame of distinction, within which he could see that he deals in a devalued 'art' genre (Bourdieu 1984). Second, there was an *ethical* frame, whose deployment led him to adopt a physical posture of respect towards the image. Here this ethical frame can be specified in terms of a ritually mediated relationship with sacred images. Each of these frames was deployed in a slightly different register: the aesthetic distinction emerged in conversation and was made with humour and irony, in the publisher's case, or, by the artists, with a certain pathos. The ritual response, on the other hand, made its presence felt in and through bodies, as much as through discourse, such that the force-field between Diwali, thoughts of religion, the calendar of Ganesh and the publisher's foot resulted in a spatial shift. Mediating between these two frames is the *commodity* value of these images, such that their value in the marketplace to 'the public' means that publishers, printers, artists and any number of middlemen or 'agents' in the popular print industry are able to earn what is often a very good living.

What I want to propose, then, is that there are, correspondingly, two strands (at least) that make up the genealogy of calendar art and the modes of value that it deals in. (Here I will be centring my discussion on

the sacred icons that currently comprise the bulk of popular print production, although, as I argue below, the ethical charge of calendar prints is not confined to *dharmic* or religious subjects.)[7] On the one hand there is a particular strand of aesthetic discourse centred around a notion of 'fine art', which emerged mainly (though by no means exclusively) from the art system that developed during the colonial period with the establishment of art schools in Calcutta, Bombay, Lahore and Delhi (on the history of British art schools in India see Guha-Thakurta 1992; Mitter 1994, and this volume). There has been a continuous connection between the art schools and the popular image industry: some of the earliest lithographic presses were set up by men who had been trained at the Calcutta school, and many calendar artists since then have had some art school training. And yet these artists were not all necessarily trained as 'fine artists', for the art schools were initially set up as schools of 'industrial art', in keeping with the industrial arts revival in Britain, but also with the colonialist racial/cultural distinction according to which Indians did not possess a 'fine art' but excelled in the 'decorative arts' (Guha-Thakurta 1992: 57–68; Mitter 1994: 29–62). Colonial art education was caught between its agenda of refining native tastes on the one hand, and the imperative to produce skilled technicians and craftsmen to serve the administration on the other. To this extent, I would suggest that the continuing sensitivity of many calendar artists to the relative status of 'fine' and 'commercial art' is informed more by this ambivalence at the origins

[7] I must emphasise that my saying the ethical charge of iconic images is not confined to religious subjects does not amount to taking the Orientalist position that all Indian imagery is pervaded by an essentially sacred sensibility. For one, I do not see calendar art as the *only* lens through which to look at the vast and complex field of images in contemporary India. Second, my discussion of 'sacred' iconic prints is an explicit attempt to counter the Orientalist legacy which still shadows art history in so far as it ascribes an ahistorical, essential 'spirituality' to a monolithic 'Indian culture'. My discussion refuses the 'Eastern spirituality' *vs* 'Western materialism' binary by demonstrating how contemporary religiosity in India works at a performative level to render untenable the very distinction between sacred and commercial realms. This imbrication occurs within the ethical framework of what I will be calling the 'bazaar', whose networks, as I shall show, have incorporated both Indian and Western players. At the same time, however, I acknowledge that it is also impossible to simply wish away this Orientalist legacy, for its terms persist within the moral and aesthetic terms of a postcolonial public sphere in India whose genealogy can be traced to bourgeois Europe. Within these terms the issue is not the practice of religion as such (something never precluded by bourgeois Europe), or the particular affinity of one or the other 'culture' to religiosity, but the way in which the publicness or privacy of religious practice affects how moral-aesthetic value and social distinction are mapped onto images (see Jain 1997).

of the colonial art school formation than by a direct experience of the aesthetic as a basis for social distinction within a liberal-bourgeois public sphere. All the same, the history of the bourgeois public sphere as it unfolded in colonial Britain also persists as an implied, virtual vanishing point for the genealogy of ideas about images and their value—as well as the institutional practices—that accompany the notion of 'fine art'.

On the other hand is a set of iconographic traditions and ways of relating to iconic images emerging from what I have come to call, following the historians C.A. Bayly (Bayly 1983), Rajat Kanta Ray (Ray 1984, 1992) and Anand A. Yang (Yang 1999), the 'bazaar'. 'Bazaar' is a shorthand term for the extensive 'informal' economic and social networks of indigenous trading communities on the subcontinent, which persisted through the colonial era and interfaced with colonial trade in mutually profitable ways. These communities were central to the entrepreneurial development of an increasingly pan-Indian culture industry from the latter half of the 19th century onwards. The ethos of the bazaar (as I shall elaborate in the next section) has been characterised by a profound imbrication of sacred and commercial economies. This ethos, with its primarily devotional visual idioms, came to inflect a visual print capitalism which was integral to the rise of nationalism (see Mitter, this volume; Pinney 1997, and this volume). The indigenous culture industry did not have to go out and create a market for images: often the way was already paved for technological mass-reproduction by the trade in manually produced images, such as the painted pilgrim souvenirs of Nathdwara and Kalighat (and the woodblock prints and almanacs of Bat-tala), or the glass paintings of Tanjore. Again, the genealogy of this iconographic image-practice is marked by a post/colonial messiness, its basis and character as much reconstituted by colonially-inflected orientalist, indological and reformist understandings of 'Indian' or 'Hindu' 'tradition' as they are linked to continuities in practice. In other words, its historical vanishing point is just as virtual—and just as real in its material expressions—as that of the bourgeois public sphere.

I want to emphasise that *both* the strands I have described inform the way in which people in the calendar industry engage with these images, and by now these must both be seen as *local* genealogies of a certain practice of postcolonial modernity: *both* the ethos of the bazaar with its precolonial continuities *and* the colonially-introduced formulation of the aesthetic as 'fine art', which has, after all, been around for well over a century. And yet, even as they are both present and available to be deployed as the context demands, and even exert a certain pressure on

each other, they operate in different registers: it is as though the two can't really be held in view at the same time, as though they are each situated at the blind spot of the other.

In the next two sections I will briefly sketch out some of the moral and epistemic aspects of the disjuncture between these two frames, that is, how they are slid apart by the mutual repulsion of incompatible notions as to what counts as a morally legitimate source of value. Specifically, I want to revisit a suggestion I have made elsewhere (Jain 1998) that this incompatibility (between the ethical fame of the bazaar and the aesthetic frame of 'fine art') might be one between a moral economy for which value emanates primarily from a diffuse or dispersed intersubjective realm of circulation and exchange, and one which locates value in a bounded, autonomous and individualised locus of production.

II
To the worshipper's eternal credit

In honing in on this particular distinction I am developing on an argument that Jonathan Parry (1989) has made about the 'ethical neutrality' of the realm of commerce, money and the marketplace within what he rather problematically calls 'Hindu thought'. (What he presents is a decidedly Brahmanical point of view.) Despite the somewhat overly polarised, essentialist character of his discussion, I find certain of his insights compelling because they help in thinking about the way in which sacred iconic images are able to nestle so comfortably in the spaces of commerce, and vice versa. After all, printed bazaar icons inhabit walls or prayer alcoves in offices, factories and shops, often directly watching over machines and cash registers (Figure 3), as well as over the vehicles that transport goods; they also appear on packaging and advertisements (Figure 4). Indeed, the calendar itself is an advertisement, though more for a firm as a whole than for the goods or services that the firm provides. Again, this begins to make more sense in the light of Parry's argument, as well as more recent work on Indian business culture.

Basically, Parry's concern is with the view taken by priests in Banaras, presumably in the 1970s or '80s, that ritual gifts or *dana* are morally 'perilous' to them because, by accepting *dana*, they are taking on the sins of the donor. This is in contrast to commerce (or what I am calling the bazaar) *per se*, where exchange is not seen as morally perilous in this way; nor is it seen as inherently evil or polluting as it was in medieval Christian thought, where money, mercantile profit and most of all usury

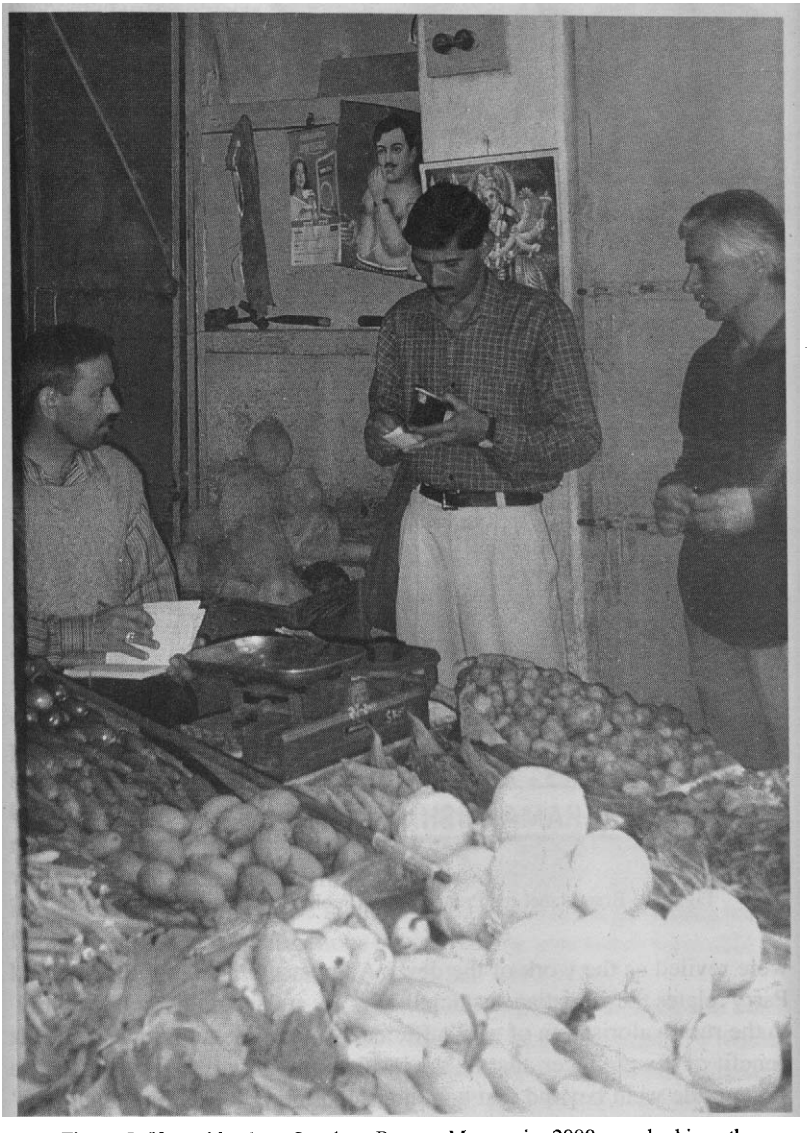

Figure 3: Vegetable shop, Landour Bazaar, Mussoorie, 2000; overlooking the transaction are, left to right, a calendar for a tea company, a poster of Chandrashekhar Azad, and a calendar of Vaishno Devi.

Figure 4: Brand label for Prem Fabrics. Publisher and artist unknown.

were reviled as the work of the devil. Addressing this latter distinction, Parry relates the Christian suspicion of usury and a commodity economy to the rural valorisation of self-sufficiency and production for the use or benefit of the producer, that is, the local community: the problem arose when trade went beyond that community, diluting local communal ties. In this moral schema, deriving a living from means other than productive labour, that is from trade or moneylending, was not only 'unnatural' but equivalent to theft. Parry counterposes this 'autarkic' ideology to that of an interdependent division of labour, such as that inscribed by caste,

where the ties that bind communities and individuals together are in fact embodied in the objects, including money, that circulate through socially defined relations of exchange. These exchanges are subject to the social and moral imperative of an incremental return on what is given, which not only serves to maintain the reciprocal flow of objects, but also inscribes circulation as the realm where value is produced: every time you give something, you get more back (though not necessarily more of the same thing). Thus the very act of exchange adds value, but only insofar as it occurs within a context of sociality.

Of course, when it comes to modern 'Christian' and 'Hindu' morality, things are far more complicated, if indeed we could ever deal in such singular categories in the first place. But even as we might not wish to align Parry's distinction with these monolithic categories, I think we can deploy it in a heuristic fashion to try and specify the terms on which the negotiation and expression of value has taken place at particular moments, and in the interest of certain constituencies. For instance, Parry's description of a moral schema based on the centrality of circulation is consistent with the work of scholars like C.A. Bayly and Denis Vidal on the role of traders and moneylenders in late precolonial and colonial north India, and particularly their regulation of economic activity through the skilful manipulation of credit (Bayly 1983; Vidal 1997; see also Rudner 1994 on the Nattukotai Chettiars in colonial south India). At the local level the system of credit meant that an individual's spending could be relatively delinked from their available income and/or their direct capacity for production, thus balancing production and consumption across the social strata. Importantly, it also served to maintain a hierarchical social order by enabling the various local social groups to meet their expenditure on religious and social obligations, thus ritually reinscribing their status within the community. This form of 'non-productive' consumption was integral to maintaining flows in the rural economy, since providing loans for spending on ritual obligations meant that the merchants were able to keep their hold on any future surplus (Vidal 1997: 97).

Indeed, to the extent that religious, moral, ethical and economic considerations were deeply interconnected in the bazaar economy, I would suggest that the credit-driven realm of commerce was not, in fact, ethically 'neutral' but humming along in top ethical gear, fuelled by the performances of social status and the need to establish and maintain one's *creditworthiness*—a moral as much as an economic quality. On the strength of their reputations and alliances, merchants were able to conduct trade over vast networks stretching well beyond the subcontinent, using

informal credit instruments such as *hundis* (promissory notes). But equally, as Denis Vidal and Philippe Cadène point out, this morally-inflected ability to provide the relevant resources when required was also integral to the social reputation of debtors, big and small (Vidal and Cadène 1997: 15). And, as with the merchants, social reputation depended not so much on having the resources yourself, but being able to call on your networks whenever the occasion demanded. Thus participation in this system meant keeping these networks well-oiled, as it were, maintaining a profile within the community, fulfilling your obligations, and generally maintaining the appearance (for here appearances are key) of being an honourable, morally upright, god-fearing—or rather god-loving and society-fearing—soul.

So what does this economy, based on circulation and credit, have to do with images? I want to suggest that the moral schema I have described manifests itself at a number of levels when it comes to bazaar images: in their *raison d'être*, in their modes of production and circulation, as well as in the way they look (in both senses). To this extent calendar icons, in particular, have been an index of the persistence of the bazaar ethos in the late colonial and post-independence periods, at least through the 20th century. For a start, the annual distribution of calendars by a business house is a means of keeping its networks lubricated, of keeping open the channels along which resources will flow, particularly in a scenario where centralised mass-production means that trading partners and other associates (bureaucrats, local politicians, members of community and business associations, extended kin) are likely to be scattered far and wide: in other words the calendar stands in for a more local sociality of exchange. The fact that this often occurs on Diwali marks it as an auspicious, ritual act, as does the auspicious nature of the images on the calendars: most obviously the deities, but also other potent or pleasant and fecund themes such as the babies, the 'leaders' and landscapes (Figure 5). And of course, these are depicted in bright, cheerful and auspicious colours, with a great deal of attention to surface decoration.

What is more, the very newness of a calendar is auspicious in itself: not so much as ontological originality, but as a renewal, indexing freshness, fecundity, plenitude.[8] So even the healthy babies, and indeed

[8] In this sense, the calendar itself is auspicious in its newness as a gift, which is why it must be re-produced every year. Publishers said that even though clients often demand pictures of the same deity from year to year they cannot repeat exactly the same design, as it wouldn't be 'new'. So by now thousands of iconic figures have been published with the same iconographic characteristics but varying backgrounds, ornamentation,

Figure 5: Garhwal Jewellers calendar depicting a landscape, Shimla Hair Cutting Salon, Landour Bazaar, Mussoorie, 2000. This barbershop belongs to a Muslim family; some firms make it a point to choose a secular design (such as this landscape), or to have more than one design for their calendar for a particular year, so that they are not restricted to circulating only 'Hindu subjects'.

the signs of modernity and progress, that appear in the 'secular' calendars can be understood within the ethical frame of the auspicious. Here 'auspicious', *shubh*, is a term of value that becomes efficacious, or gains a material force: the ethical and/or sacred nature of the representation in a calendar image, as well as its ritualised annual presentation, works to enhance the reputation and thereby the creditworthiness of the firm whose name is printed onto the calendar.

At the same time, it is significant that what is being distributed is a *calendar*, not just a card or a poster. Religious almanacs were one of the first local forms to appropriate the woodblock printing technology introduced by missionaries in the early 1800s, soon becoming a site for sacred imagery and illustrated advertisements as well as the calendar, astrological information, and the dates for festivals and ceremonies, including

colour schemes and composition. This is where publishers make a distinction between 'copy-masters' or hacks who churn out modifications of existing designs (using a transfer grid, or even painting over existing prints) and the more 'creative' artists who are seen as finding 'original' ways of visualising their subjects.

instructions for ritual observance (on early woodblocks in Bengal, see Paul 1983). Such almanacs had already been circulating in handwritten form, prepared and sold by Brahmans to earn a living. I would suggest, therefore, that the local calendar industry slotted into an existing niche by providing a proforma for religious observance alongside the marking of secular time, even though illustrated calendars as a means of advertising were introduced into colonial India by the British early in the 20th century (most likely specifically for their export market, as in the case of the picture labels or 'tickets' used on bales of British mill cloth [see Figure 9]).[9] One of the striking things about Denis Vidal's description of the role of Jain merchants in rural Rajasthan is his emphasis on rhythm: that is, the rhythms of spending and income, and their orchestration and manipulation by merchants through the provision of credit. Essential to this rhythm, as I pointed out earlier, is the cycle of religious and social observance for which spending is required, often beyond one's immediate means; the annual distribution of calendars thus emanates from and shores up a system which has crucially depended on widespread adherence to this ritual cycle. (I should emphasise here that I am not positing some kind of conspiracy on the part of merchants or moneylenders, simply that the usefulness and desirability of the calendar becomes quite 'natural' within this schema.)

Calendars reinforce social and trading relationships not only through their circulation as gift-cum-advertisements by the firms who order them, but also in their capacity as commodities that are themselves produced and distributed through the bazaar's networks. The extensive system of agents or middlemen (a characteristic feature of the colonial bazaar), used to garner orders and distribute the calendars, ensures a high degree of flexibility and responsiveness to customer demand at the most local level. The primacy of agents and middlemen within the bazaar has also meant that, as in other industries, there are often better profits to be had from trade than from manufacture (Vidal and Cadène 1997: 17), so that even as calendar publishers might run their own presses, they continue to maintain a hold over distribution and often prefer to outsource their printing (as in the case of S.S. Brijbasi and Sons in Delhi, who have much of their calendar and poster printing done in Sivakasi, Tamil Nadu). The trader is also not necessarily tied to one product: calendar agents might additionally deal in stationery, or fireworks and other seasonal

[9] Ilay Cooper describes how illustrated labels or 'tickets', often depicting religious or mythological themes, arose out of fierce competition between British cloth manufacturers for a share of the Indian market (Cooper 1995).

festive goods, various types of corporate giveaways or political propaganda items (Figure 6); one agent I met also ran a local agricultural newspaper, collecting orders for calendars from traders who advertised in his paper. So, as I mentioned earlier, the aim of advertising *within* the bazaar's networks (as in the case of the calendar) is to establish a personalised relationship with the firm, not with a product as such, for the vast majority of traders are not themselves producers.

But while there is a materialist 'explanation' for the reluctance of traders to engage in production, this is inseparable from the moral dimensions of the way production, and in particular the body as a sovereign, bounded locus of production, are viewed in this schema. The bazaar's valorisation of circulation has a necessary underside, and that is its systematic devaluing of the productive body: in particular the working-caste or -class body and the female body. Unable to locate the source of productive or even reproductive power in the labouring body as such, the bazaar conceives of power and value in transcendent terms (as in its sacralisation of the mother), while simultaneously inscribing the working-caste body as polluted and rendering abject or asocial the desiring body of woman.[10]

When the bazaar image encounters the aesthetic frame, therefore, one source of tension between them is where and how to situate power in relation to the body. One instance of this is the conflict that artists spoke of between the demands of anatomical accuracy, in accordance with the dictates of 'fine art' and 'realism', and the iconographic imperatives emanating from the bazaar, according to which iconic figures must be depicted with 'disproportionately' large faces and eyes, must look directly at the viewer, and cannot be shown to have muscles (Jain 1997; see also Lutgendorf, Pinney and Taylor in this volume). These imperatives, as Anuradha Kapur (1993) has so brilliantly argued, issue from the idea that the power of deities is transcendent, unlocatable in bodily instrumentality, its only visible manifestation a kind of effulgence of benign affects via the face, eyes, gesture—and, I would add, the highly worked decorative surfaces of the image. As to how these imperatives come to inform calendar icons, some artists I spoke to quoted Puranic textual descriptions, while others referred to temple statues, but they all aligned this demand with consumers and the marketplace, for a mistake in iconography meant that a calendar would not sell (or, more likely, the publisher would bring it back to the artist to be corrected). In the light of my

[10] I have elaborated this more fully in an argument that brings into constellation the bodies of Hanuman, Radha, Hindutva's muscular Ram and Amitabh Bachchan (Jain, forthcoming).

Figure 6: '*Achhi Batein*' (Good Sayings) poster, advertising 'Khurana Traders, Dealers in Rakhi, Baloons (*sic*), Fire Works, Holi Goods, Election Badges, Rubbers Bands (*sic*), Calendar, Poster and General Merchants'. Painting by V.V. Sapar, publisher unknown. Delhi, 1996.

discussion of the pre-eminence of circulation in the bazaar, this sacred-commercial imperative makes perfect sense. The need for iconographic accuracy is consistent with the moral and ethical burden the calendar carries as an object, shoring up a firm's reputation while lubricating its networks with a bit of divine effulgence.

Another site of disjuncture over where to locate productive value is the artistic signature, whose use in the calendar industry is marked by a kind of excess that unravels the links between the signature, the work, and the artist as producer of the work. (I have elaborated this more fully elsewhere: Jain 1997.) Thus one artist might use several different signatures for different types of work, a work might be signed by more than one artist, or replicated by another artist under their own signature, or the signature of an artist might persist on a work that has been modified by someone else. I have argued that this indicates an instability in the notions of copyright and authorial property, ideas that are absolutely central to the value of an image in 'fine art' as well as to a commodity economy that formally locates value in the productive individual or corporation (an economy whose continuing bid for global dominance is evident in the emphasis on patenting in trade forums such as GATT).[11] On the other hand, the pedagogical and canonical traditions of iconographic image-making (on which see Inglis 1995) make it difficult to locate the value of iconic images as emanating primarily from their origination by singular creative individuals like those within the art system—such as the calendar industry's favourite whipping boy in the modernist mainstream, the artist M.F. Husain.

These disjunctures mark the bazaar's repulsion of certain elements of 'fine art' that stem from the centrality of the productive individual as the locus of value within the moral economy of the aesthetic. But what about the other way around: what is it that the discourse of the aesthetic finds so repellent about calendar art, and why *was* this such a bad topic to choose?

III
The matter of taste; the taste of matter

Here I think we can follow Bourdieu in taking Kant's third *Critique* as the most powerful and influential formulation of the modern discourse of the aesthetic, or at least of that version of the aesthetic whose terms

[11] On the historical connection between the commodity form and the location of cultural value in aesthetic production, see Frow (1996).

came to be aligned with those of social distinction (Bourdieu 1984; Kant 1987).[12] This version of the aesthetic, and its correlative, the social/cultural distinction between high and low, can both be elaborated in terms specific to the self-understanding of classical or bourgeois modernity, and the attempt of the bourgeoisie in western Europe to stake its claim over the public sphere. These terms were arguably carried over to a later high modernism whose opposition between an autonomous, critical avant-garde of art and a reified, retrogressive culture industry was often hard to distinguish from the high-low divide (see, for instance, Greenberg 1939). Very broadly, what aligns the Kantian formulation of the aesthetic with the terms of social distinction is the denigration of the immediate, interested, private satisfactions of the 'taste of sense' (which Bourdieu aligns with what he calls 'popular taste'), and the valorisation of a distanced, disinterested, publicly valid aesthetic judgement based on the 'taste of reflection'.[13] This distinction between 'sense' and 'reflection' has a number of implications, not just for how the bazaar image comes to be denigrated within the aesthetic frame, but also, I would suggest, for the tools we have with which to think about the work of the image as it moves through time and space (see also Christopher Pinney's discussion in this volume of 'corpothetic' as opposed to 'absorptive' modes of engagement with images).

[12] I must emphasise that in my usage here I am reducing the 'aesthetic' to just one of its historical avatars, which, for a start, subjects its Greek forebear *aesthetikos* or sense perception to 'the colonisation of reason' (Eagleton 1990: 15). What is more, even the version of the aesthetic in Kant that I am engaging with has to be understood as a very particular version, often construed as a misreading of Kant, but nonetheless a misreading which has taken on enormous currency. Martha Woodmansee describes in detail how Kant's text took on an afterlife in publicly circulating ideas about art and the aesthetic in Britain and Germany in the late 18th century, and shows how these ideas were closely imbricated with the growing culture of the book and debates around authorial property rights (Woodmansee 1994); it is these ideas (rather than Kant's text *an sich*) which then came to be mediated by a colonial realm of art discourse to impinge on the calendar industry.

[13] Bourdieu posits the 'popular aesthetic' as 'the negative opposite of the Kantian aesthetic' such that 'the popular ethos implicitly answers each proposition of the "Analytic of the Beautiful" with a thesis contradicting it' (Bourdieu 1984: 41–44, 481–91). The opposition between the taste of sense and the taste of reflection appears in Kant's third *Critique*, and is explicitly aligned with the private/public distinction: 'Insofar as judgements about the agreeable are merely private, whereas judgements about the beautiful are put forward as having general validity (as being public), taste regarding the agreeable can be called taste of sense, and taste regarding the beautiful can be called taste of reflection . . .' (Kant 1987: 57–58).

For a start, in its European manifestation, the distinction between 'sense' and 'reflection' comes to be deployed in a cultural field where religion is putatively private, and since publicly valid judgements are preferable to those with 'merely private' purchase (Kant 1987: 57), it is evident that the aesthetic (that is, publicly valid, reflective and disinterested) engagement with the image is going to be seen as somehow transcending religious (that is, private) affect. Thus Walter Benjamin quotes Hegel on the transition from 'the stage of reverence of works of art' to a 'more reflective' relationship, while making his own famous distinction between the 'exhibition value' of the publicly exhibited, mobile work of art and the 'cult value' of the ritual object hidden from view in its dedicated sacred space (Benjamin 1992: 218–20 and 237–39). But of course in contemporary India (where for many the continuing valency of religion in the public sphere indexes the inadequacy of the nation's claim to a normative, post-sacred modernity) the calendar image resists both Hegel's teleology and Benjamin's spatial distinction: it circulates publicly like the work of art, but as an icon its value is still that of the cult and ritual.[14] This is not to say that Benjamin's characterisation of cult value does not apply in the Indian context: after all, ever since the institution of image-based temple worship became prevalent by around the 8th century CE (Davis 1997; Inden 2000), temple icons all over India have been embedded within the kind of consecrated space that he describes, with access and exhibition strictly regulated and mediated by priests. But then, how is it that the bazaar formation is able to deploy mass-produced iconic images in this mobile, public manner, making them available to all and sundry?

My contention is that the possibility of the circulation or mobility of sacred images in India arose as part of the political, social and economic upheavals of the late medieval period. In part the way was paved by the *bhakti* movements, many of which espoused an unmediated, personalised devotional relationship with the divine, putatively delinking religious practice from the priesthood and the caste-based division of labour. But this delinking was often made possible by finding alternatives to temple icons in poetry, songs and dance, with the *bhakti* poet-saints either

[14] To be fair, though, Benjamin's text also points to a certain unfinished business between cult value and exhibition value: he writes of the resistance proffered by cult value in photography (one of the 'most serviceable' exemplars of exhibition value) *via* the human face (Benjamin 1992: 219); or again, in a footnote he uses the example of Raphael's Sistine Madonna to argue that 'a certain oscillation between these two polar modes of reception can be demonstrated for each work of art' (ibid.: 238).

conjuring their own ecstatic visions (as with Surdas) or (as with Kabir) advocating the formlessness of the divine. So I would suggest that it was, in fact, the reinstitutionalisation of the *bhakti* cults that enabled iconic images to be moved around, driven by the hegemonic interests of intermediate alliances of merchants, Brahmins and/or kings (that is, the dominant castes). For example, Norbert Peabody (1991) has described how from the late 17th to the mid-19th centuries the priests of the Pushtimarg cult (now based in Nathdwara) ferried their sacred Krishna images from one Rajput kingdom to another, securing patronage as local kings vied with each other to shore up the legitimacy of their rule. Pushtimarg developed an elaborate culture of images and image-worship, to the extent that Nathdwara has sustained its own community of artists since around the late 18th century. The Nathdwara images made their way into the bazaar via the cult's major constituency, the mercantile communities poised along the busy western and northern trade routes, particularly the Marwaris. Initially catering to the temple and the market for pilgrim souvenirs, the work of the Nathdwara artists was taken up for reproduction as 'framing pictures' from 1927 onwards by the firm of S.S. Brijbasi and Sons, which is still in business (see Figure 7; on Nathdwara and its connection with calendar art see Ambalal 1987; Pinney 1997).

With the *bhakti* movements, then, emotional or affective investment in the divine is freed from the constraints of priestly regulation, in a manner akin to the freeing up of labour from feudal ties in bourgeois Europe. But, just as those productive, labouring bodies are set to work by European industrial capitalism, the affective engagement with the divine is reterritorialised, harnessed to a sacred-commercial economy of ritual obligation and the circulation of credit in the bazaar. So while bourgeois Europe seeks to privatise the affective and ritual engagement with the divine and, in the public sphere, to supersede it with the aesthetic, the bazaar is happy to perpetuate, orchestrate and indeed to intensify this engagement. Here again the pre-eminent instance is that of Pushtimarg, whose institutional ritual culture and theology of intense devotional desire have evolved to reflect a certain *rapprochement* with desire, materiality and the senses, as distinct from the more ascetic and renunciative forms of *bhakti*. The Shrinathji image in Nathdwara and the other Pushtimarg idols (*svarupa*) are seen as living embodiments of the god Krishna, and their worship—or rather their service (*seva*)—is one or the most important ways in which a devotee can attract the *pushti* or grace of the Lord. The temple rituals of Shrinathji include eight daily *darshan*s, or public viewings, and for these the image is specially dressed, ornamented,

Figure 7: 'Murli Manohar' by Narottam Narayan Sharma, first printed in 1934 by S.S. Brijbasi and Sons.

perfumed and 'fed' in accordance with the time of day and the season (Colour Plate 2); other forms of *seva* (service) of the icon include musical performances and poetry recitations, as well as thoughtful gestures like leaving clothes and jewellery out in case his lover Radha joins Shrinathji for the night, or ensuring that there are no obstacles in Shrinathji's path should he decide to visit Braj and play with his cowgirl friends the *gopis* (Ambalal 1987: 21–25).

In stark contrast to this keenly sensualised involvement with the icon through devotional *seva*, the 'taste of reflection' is predicated on an autonomous subject that has self-critically distanced itself from its sensory passions, desires and affects, even as sensual apprehension is acknowledged as their basis.[15] The locus of such 'objective', intersubjectively communicable knowledge, from Descartes on through the Enlightenment, came to be centred on the eye and a certain version of vision that is often summed up through the shorthand 'perspectival'. This seeing-knowing gaze, its ocularcentric frame and its subject have undergone a sustained critique by philosophers all through the 20th century, and the visual has been theorised in ways that open it up to other dimensions such as touch, memory and ethical response (see, for instance, Vasseleu 1998 on Irigaray, Levinas and Merleau-Ponty). However, it seems to me that for those of us who try and write about images, loaded as we are with cultural capital and reflective 'taste', the default approach is still to collapse questions of the image into questions of the visual understood as ocular knowing. As film scholars in particular have pointed out (see, for instance, Kouvaros and Stern 1999; Shaviro 1993), perhaps there is something about the very activity of thinking and writing that makes us derive the efficacy, power and value of the image primarily from the sense that is made of what the image renders visible, rather than from what is done to it and what it can do to other bodies in its capacity as an object—or, I would add, who it goes between and when. My own counter-strategy (as would be evident) is to speak of the 'image' rather than of the 'visual'. For an exclusively ocular and semantic frame cannot, for instance, address the work of the calendar image on its physical journey as an object traversing between subjects, linking a business with its associates and annually lubricating its networks. Nor can such a frame take into account the way in which the devotee's embodied, ritual, rhythmic relationship with the image comes to invest even the cheapest mass-produced icon with power and value as an object.

[15] In one of Kant's slipperiest moves, the 'subjective' judgement of beauty must be intersubjectively validated (though this has to happen without resorting to reason and concepts). This shared critical understanding guards against both an overly intellectual engagement with the object and an overly *interested* one, that threatens the autonomy of the aesthetic by dragging the object into a realm of instrumentality that includes purveying commercial value, pleasure, satisfaction and even meaning. So even as the intersubjective validity of judgement means that the art object takes on a communicable, shared value and thereby becomes exchangeable, it becomes vulgar to think of an art object in terms of its value as a commodity (though in the age of the blockbuster exhibition such squeamishness seems increasingly quaint and old-fashioned).

This is not to say that its visual aspects are not absolutely crucial to the value of the calendar image: earlier I drew attention to the importance of iconographic accuracy and auspicious visual elements, and the literature on *darshan* elaborates how a mutuality of gazes is central to establishing a relationship between deity or guru and devotee (for more on *darshan* see Taylor, this volume). However, in the forms of visual *bhakti* prevalent in the bazaar, this gaze has not been conceived as a means of distanced, reflective contemplation, but of devotional desire on the one hand and corporeal engagement and exchange on the other. Through the simple acts of devotion that characterise the kind of demotic ritual made possible by bazaar images—joining one's hands in prayer, lighting incense, anointing with a *tilak*, garlanding with flowers—the image is consecrated and becomes an embodiment of the divine, so that the gaze becomes an almost physical incorporation of divine substance. Lawrence Babb describes a fluid 'current of sight' (*drishti ki dhar*), which courses between the devotee and the guru in the Radhasoami sect's discourse of visuality: this current exerts a pull on the devotee's 'inner sight', while leaving particles of itself behind (Babb 1981: 391). Or, in a passage from the *Kularnava Tantra*, quoted by Ramnarayan Vyas in his treatise on the Bhagwata *bhakti* cults (Vyas 1977: 11–12),[16] the image is seen as being 'milked' by the devotee:

> Just as the milk residing in the limbs of a cow comes out from the nipples of the cow, in the same way the all-pervading God appears through images. It becomes possible because of the unwavering faith, sincere meditation, and liking of the meditator.

What is more, the gaze is only one means of carrying out such corporeal exchanges. The power carried by the image can be incorporated by means other than the gaze, through the ritual mediation of various other fluids such as water, fire and smoke, or by eating *prasad*: the anthropological literature on Indian ritual is full of such instances of physical incorporation and fluid exchanges of substance.[17] At the extreme end of this continuum

[16] The Bhagwata *bhakti* cults are those centred around devotion to Krishna as outlined in the Bhagwata (also Bhagvat or Bhagwad) Purana, also known as the Shrimad Bhagavata, the most popular of the Puranas (also the most recent, dating from about 1300–1400 AD).

[17] For instance, the Chicago 'school' from the late 1960s to the mid-'80s abounds with descriptions of such processes in every aspect of 'Indian culture', where transactional 'flows' or 'substance-code' are seen as a particular characteristic of 'Hindu' life. While

is the case cited by Renaldo Maduro of a Nathdwara painter who ingested a printed picture of the goddess of smallpox in an attempt to cure himself of the disease: surely an instance of appalling taste, in both senses of the word (Maduro 1976: 63). Seen in this light, the intense attention paid to the surface of the calendar icon can be placed on a continuum with the practice of ritual *shringar* or decoration: the painter's visualisation of clothing, jewellery and backdrops; the choice of printing on glossy paper or plastic foam, or with gold-stamped elements; or the working-over of the image, either by retailers to add further value by applying sequins, ornate frames and so on, or through the consumer's own elaborate, loving use of cloth, braid, sequins and glitter to 'dress' the image (Figure 8).

The corporeal permeability of the devotional subject and its ritually desiring abjection before the divine render it incompatible with the bourgeois fantasy of an autonomous, sovereign, disinterested ocular subject—as does the formative social interdependence of the ethical subject of the bazaar. If this absence of consistency and autonomy in the performatively engaged subject means that the bazaar image is consigned to the 'taste of sense', and the 'low' or 'popular' (or, by implication, the anterior or 'less-developed') pole of social distinction, this is still a judgement of aesthetic, not moral value. However, the 'taste of sense' has its morally suspect dimensions, aligned as it is with sentiment, greed, excess, abandon and indeed corporeality itself: thus the aesthetico-moral unease with visual forms such as pornography, propaganda and advertising, which delink the image from a self-contained diegetic world within the picture-frame in order to exhort the viewer to a performative or embodied response.[18] To the extent that it seeks to guard against the subject's disintegrative bodily engagements with material objects, this moral correlative

this transactional and transformational approach has made an invaluable contribution in rendering permeable the boundaries between the 'material' and the 'ideal' and between the hierarchical categories of caste, it has tended to locate this permeability in an essentialised, ahistorical Hindu/Indian/South Asian (the terms tend to be collapsed) 'dividual' subjectivity, whose 'biomoral' substance-code is, ironically (or, indeed, appropriately), placed in binary opposition to the western individual's dualistic rationality (see in particular Marriott 1976).

[18] The film theorist Linda Williams has used the term 'body genres' as a rubric covering horror, melodrama and pornography, whose depictions of ecstatic bodies solicit bodily responses from the audience, replete with sweat, tears and other fluid emissions, thus provoking aesthetic condemnation for their supposedly contagious mimetic effects (Williams 1991). I would suggest that this schema could be extended to include advertising, with its frontal spectacle of ecstatic bodies of consumption, and iconic genres that address the ecstatic devotional body.

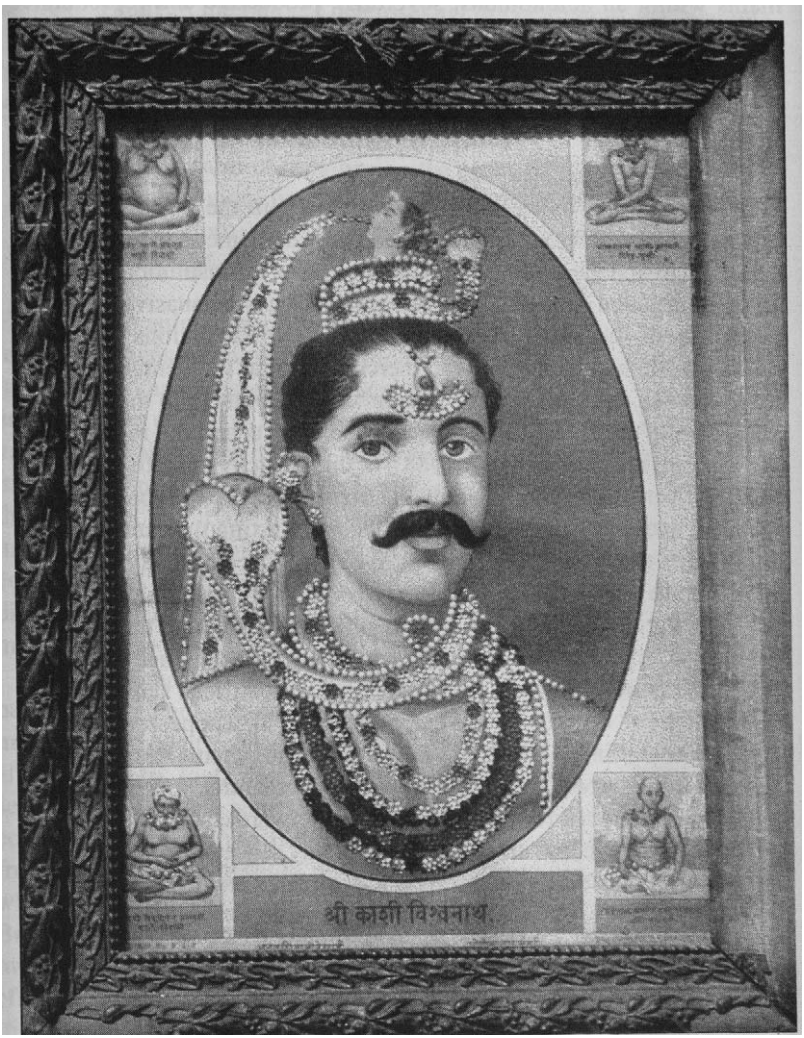

Figure 8: 'Shri Kashi Vishwanath', framed print manually embellished with jewels. Artist and publisher unknown. (Courtesy Priya Paul.)

of the aesthetic shades into another category that once again attempts to police the boundaries of the locus of value, in order to ensure that it remains within an autonomous, sovereign, productive and reproductive human subject: the fetish.

IV
Productive animation

The notion of the fetish made its appearance in the bourgeois public sphere in the late 18th century, at around the same time as modern formulations of art and the aesthetic and their correlate, the institution of authorial or intellectual property. As William Pietz has persuasively argued, the notion of fetishism, with its origins in the translations and transvaluations attendant on European merchant capital's adventures in West Africa, marks the centrality of intercultural encounters to the narrative of modernity's delineation of subjects and objects and the relations between them (Pietz 1985, 1987, 1988). In this capacity the fetish serves to blur my overly sharp heuristic distinction between two types of moral economy and their attendant blind spots, by indexing the exchanges between them, transacted via the image as object in a commodity economy.

Pietz traces the genealogy of the fetish via its etymological roots in the Latin word *facticius*, meaning 'manufactured', through the medieval Portuguese *feitiço*, connoting magic and witchcraft, to its use in the 16th and 17th centuries by Portuguese traders on West African slave routes to describe the cult objects of 'Guinea'. 'Fetishism' first appeared as a theoretical term in print in 1760 (10 years after Baumgarten's *Aesthetica*), to describe an idolatrous relation attributing supernatural powers to a material object mistaken for the divine; soon afterwards, in 1764, Kant dismissed African fetish worship as devoid of any sense of the sublime and thus the most debased pole of the principle of the beautiful (Pietz 1985: 9). The fetish was initially taken up by the bourgeois public sphere as the transgressive other of post-Reformation Christianity's transcendental spirituality and, indeed, the antithesis of Enlightenment itself. However, through the 19th century it came, via the discourses of art, anthropology, political economy and psychoanalysis, not just to describe the colonial other but to index the (disavowed) otherness *within* the bourgeois subject and liberal political economy.[19] So by the time Freud turned his attention

[19] In this scenario, as several commentators have pointed out, the disavowal embodied by the fetish, that takes the properly ideological form 'I know, but even so . . .' (in

to them, fetishes were well established as 'Unsuitable Substitutes for the Sexual Object' (Freud 1953–74: 65–66): the target of aberrant forms of desire that subvert the rational heterosexual imperatives of the 'natural' (that is, bourgeois-liberal) re/productive socius. Or Marx drew an analogy between the circulation of commodities in political economy and the way in which, in

> . . . the misty realm of religion . . . the products of the human brain appear as autonomous figures endowed with a life of their own, which enter into relations both with each other and with the human race (Marx 1976: 164–65).

Here it is the animation of commodities ('a life of their own') that dislodges the locus of value-production in political economy: their circulation and exchange establishes their potential equivalence to each other and thereby to capital as money, which begins to be seen as the source of value itself, obscuring the role of labour. The fetish *par excellence* is interest-bearing capital, a magically self-reproducing form of value. Over this aspect of credit and commodities, bourgeois moral economy, with its 'autarkic' location of value in production, parts company with political economy and its valorisation of exchange; the tension between them dictates the terms of debate on the evils of commodification and the marketplace to this day.

But this nomadism of the object is also the means whereby the expanding movement of capital recognises and articulates itself with similar movements in other economies, like the expansive economy of devotional affect or *bhakti*. Pietz describes how European merchants found themselves having to seal contracts by swearing to African fetishes or some counterpart thereof (the Bible, for instance, but also a 'potion' made from English beer), despite their discomfort with this overvaluing of what to them were trivial material objects (Pietz 1987: 43–44). Similarly, British millowners in the second half of the 19th century made their own compromise with a radically different schema of value and image-efficacy, labelling bales of cloth for export to India with illustrated 'tickets', such that names such as F. Steiner and Co., or Finlay, Muir and Co., were endorsed by pictures of, among other things, Hindu deities

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Oedipal terms, the disavowal of the threat of castration represented by the mother's missing penis), itself becomes the subject of a fetishistic disavowal: (I know) the fetish does not exist, but (even so) the fetish must not be allowed to subsist (see, for instance, Baudrillard 1981: 90; Taussig 1993).

(Figure 9; see also Cooper 1995). Or, again, the Bradford Dyers' Association issued a calendar depicting Ganesh, with copy extolling the virtues of the B.D.A. in English, Hindi, Gujarati and Bangla (Figure 10); in 1932, the British company Woodwards used a Dhurandhar painting of the infant Krishna on a calendar advertising their Gripe Water, with copy in English, Italian and Portuguese (see illustration in Mitter 1994: 91).

Figure 9: Cloth label or 'ticket' depicting Shrinathji, from William Stirling and Sons, Glasgow. The uncharacteristic convex curve of the upper eyelids, and the rose that appears with his usual lotuses, suggest that this Shrinathji might be a British artist's reinterpretation. Artist and publisher unknown. (Courtesy Priya Paul.)

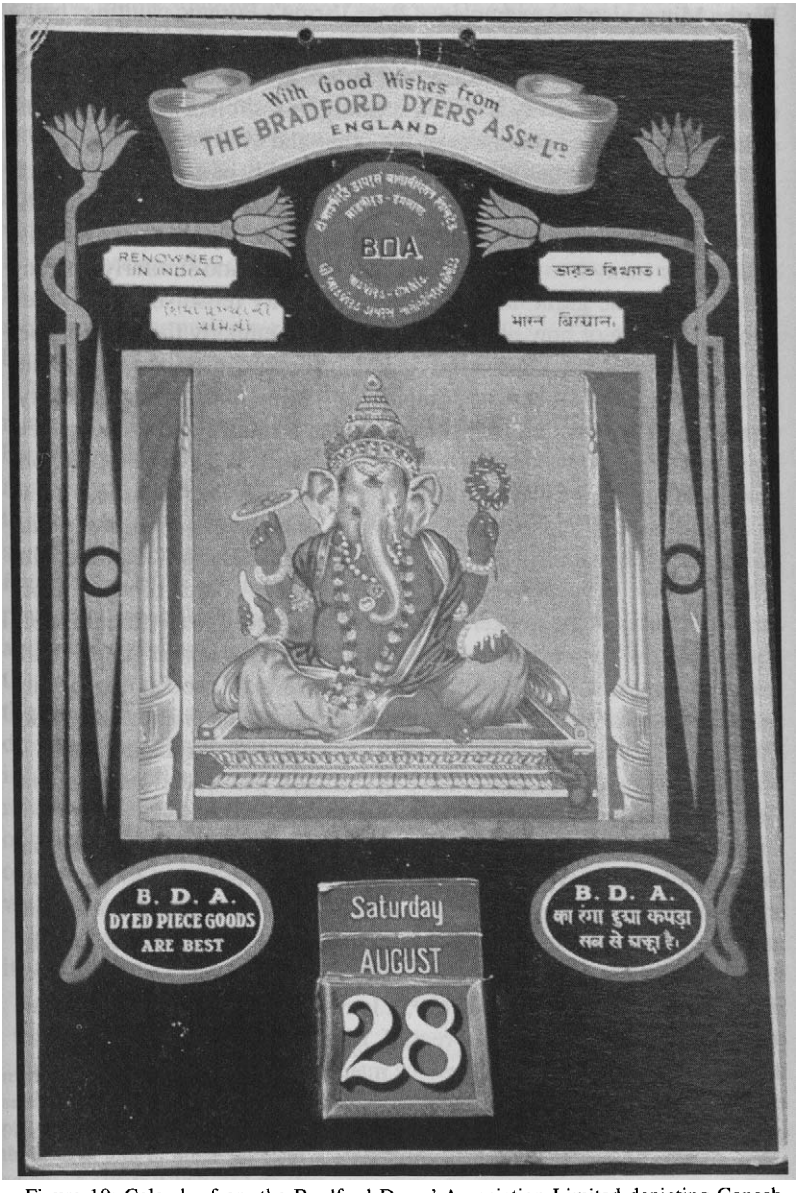

Figure 10: Calendar from the Bradford Dyers' Association Limited depicting Ganesh, with copy in English, Hindi, Gujarati and Bangla. Artist and publisher unknown. (Courtesy Priya Paul.)

Partha Mitter also has examples of Ravi Varma's Puranic paintings being used to sell matches and baby food (Mitter 1994: 215 and illustration XX). In all these instances, then, the image as circulating object works to render the putatively sovereign bourgeois subject heterogeneous, stringing it into the economies of the other and vice versa.

With Freud, the fetish allowed for the possibility of a corporeal, affective, desiring relationship to an equally material object, albeit within the frame of abnormality and moral censure (censure which is now fast dissipating for many into just the traces of a *frisson*). And similarly, reading Marx against the grain, his notion of commodity fetishism can be seen as a *recognition* of how objects might come to embody the relations between people. His attention to the circulation or animation of commodities addresses the links between temporality, value and intersubjectivity, something that an ocular, perspectival frame is unable to do (except perhaps through its own fetishisation of antiquity). What tends to be obscured, I think, by the way fetishism gets taken up by later cultural critique as a form of false consciousness, is Marx's characterisation of the materialisation of value in the fetish as a 'crystallisation' of time into substance (see Pietz 1993: 145–51). Here the true source of value is not the reified body of the worker as commodity, reduced to an exchangeable equivalence as it is in classical economics, but *social* labour-time; fetishisation is the name for the operation that converts this social temporality into the object as an embodiment of value.[20] And what enables it to make this switch is the animation of these objects, their circulation: that is what the commodity comes to have in common with social beings, what '[endows them] with a life of their own'.

What commentaries on Marx's notion of the fetish suggest is that through the category of social labour-time he was trying to negotiate around the blind spot of a liberal moral economy for which value emanates from a bounded, autonomous, individual locus of production, by factoring in the subject's constitution in and through the social (see, for instance, Amariglio and Callari 1993). In recognising the power and value of the fetish, albeit in a 'misty realm', Marx was recognising the power and value of that which it indexes: the material and temporal engagements entailed in sociality itself. What's more, he recognised the power of the compulsion to make this equivalence between objects and sociality. So

[20] For a masterful exposition on the different temporalities embodied in 'abstract' labour and 'living' labour, which reads Marx's category of 'abstract labour' as an immanent critique of capital, see Dipesh Chakrabarty's, 'The two histories of Capital' (Chakrabarty 2000: 47–71).

perhaps, in this attempt to negotiate around the blind spot of his society's schema of value, Marx was to modern Europe what Gandhi was to the pre-independence bazaar. For if the power and value of the productive body is the blind spot of the bazaar's moral economy, where value emanates primarily from a realm of circulation and exchange predicated on hierarchical social interdependence, Gandhi's politics of Swadeshi attempted to revalorise the productive body, both at the level of the individual and that of the nation. Yet even in incorporating this element of liberal morality, this creature of the bazaar continued to work with what he and his constituency understood best, conducting the Swadeshi movement in a performative register to spin out the affective forces engendered by the object's indexing of the social.

I have discussed the category of the fetish here because of the way it names an anxiety around the location of value generated at the interface between the bourgeois public sphere and other moral/commercial economies, and because it is, concomitantly, one of the few terms that speaks to the image in its capacity as a circulating object as opposed to a static sign. To this extent it can be useful to think of the calendar icon as a fetish: it is, after all, an object to which people attribute supernatural powers; to which they have an embodied, affective, desiring relationship; and whose production of value leads, follows, mimics and merges with the value produced by interest-bearing credit in its circulation through the bazaar.[21] But, to return to our artists and publishers, part of my aim in drawing attention to the fetish is to point out that it isn't a notion that informs the self-understanding of the calendar industry, even as its correlative, aesthetic distinction, does. And, what is more, even the category of the aesthetic, as it is adopted in the calendar industry via the discourse of 'fine art', is subject to heterogeneous deployments at its interface with a devotional economy.

For instance, to return to the high-low distinction with which I began, it would not be wrong to say that calendar artists' and publishers'

[21] Pietz makes the point that within the Christian schema there is a distinction to be made between the problematics of fetishism and of idolatry: the notion of the idol separates spirit and matter, while the efficacy of the fetish unfolds at a mundane, material plane. Thus idolatry is concerned with a metaphoric logic of resemblance, and speaks to the icon as image, while fetishism is concerned with the indexical character of the icon as object (Pietz 1987: 45). Perhaps this distinction is what inflects the European description of non-circulating, static Indian temple icons as 'idols': a term that recurs in Partha Mitter's account of European responses to what were perceived as 'monstrous' Indian deities (Mitter 1977).

denigration of calendar art articulates with an aesthetic basis for social distinction à la Bourdieu, deploying a distinction between reflection and sense. But somewhere along the way, the Kantian terms of this distinction between reflection and sense are mapped on to the terms of a devotional economy, and the idea that image-worship caters to the needs of 'ordinary' people, unused to contemplation or meditation ('reflection'), who require stronger measures ('sense') to turn their minds to god (an idea which often appears in the literature on *bhakti*: see, for instance Vyas 1977: 57). Some artists I spoke with, well-known for their devotional images, particularly associated the use of colour with this task of diverting the mind from everyday distractions and focusing it on god: for instance, Venkatesh Sapar spoke of the 'sacrifice' he had to make when painting framing pictures, in particular, because their devotional function required bright colours.[22] In general people identified 'commercial art' with the imperative to use bright, bold colours, variously denigrated as 'cheap', 'shouting' (in English), 'thick or heavy (*mote-mote*)', 'gaudy'. But if, as in the Kantian schema, the affective force of the image is seen here as inversely proportional to its moral-aesthetic value, the terms on which this takes place are given a decidedly non-secular spin.

Similarly, while artists expressed their desire for 'realism' within the terms of 'fine art', associating it with anatomical and historical accuracy, they also linked it with the expression of *bhava*, feeling or emotion, mapping it onto the personalised, affective relationship between deity and devotee in *bhakti* that stands outside historical time (Jain 1997: 75–78). Again, this is an index of the way in which the calendar is a site where different economies and forms of force or value can subsist together in different registers, although, as I described earlier in relation to the iconic imperatives of frontality, non-muscularity and divine proportions, there are also instances when these economies come into direct conflict, and choices have to be made. But even as artists find it hard to make historical and mythic time subsist within the same painted iconic body, we have also seen how the body of the calendar as a whole is able to incorporate and address both calendar time and ritual or festive time—both in its capacity as an image which displays festive dates alongside secular ones, and icons that inhabit mythic time alongside the linear and cyclic historical calendar, and as an object whose social life obviates the distinction between sacred-ethical and secular-commercial spheres.

[22] Interview with V.V. (Venkatesh) Sapar, Sholapur (9 December 1995), in Hindi and English.

V
Concluding remarks

What I have sketched here is a comparison between the location of value as it pertains to images in two broadly delineated, ideal-typical forms of commercial culture, that of the bourgeois public sphere and that of the bazaar. But I have also tried to provide some sense of how the articulations between them have varied, in different registers, from incorporation to disjuncture, such that their genealogies of moral-ethical value and interfaces of exchange from the pre-colonial to the post-independence periods are now intricately layered into the crosshatching of business culture in post-liberalisation India. So even as these moral-commercial cultures arose in the context of the specific hegemonic interests of particular classes at particular moments, colonialism has meant that neither of them can by now be completely contained within either a geographically or temporally specifiable site. In other words, I see them as providing a kind of arsenal of moral-commercial codes and techniques of the image that players in the contemporary marketplace, both formal and informal, can mix and match to their best advantage. Needless to say, neither of these schemas of value has an exclusive or privileged relationship to capitalism as such: the history of the fetish makes it clear that even liberal political economy and bourgeois morality are fundamentally predicated on an intimate working relationship with their others, while as the index of a blind spot it reminds us that this intimacy neither implies a mutual recognition, nor countervails the unequal relations that obtain across it.

In my discussion of the calendar image I have tried to show why it might be useful to approach it not simply as a 'text' or sign to be 'read' but as a circulating or animated object, which, as the common element between different constellations of value, draws them into a relationship where it becomes possible for value to switch tracks, to jump from one economy to another, drawing their subjects into each other's networks. For the heterogeneous genealogies I have described do not inhabit different spaces, nor do they inhabit the same rectangular space of an image printed on cheap, flimsy paper. As modes of value they must form themselves as fleeting constellations *between* the image, other bodies or objects, and the quality, rhythm and intensity of time at a given moment. It is these heterogeneous qualities of time within postcolonial modernity that lie beyond what meets the ocularcentric eye: secular time, like that of the publishers and artists whose work I interrupted with my own;

libidinal time, like the excessive number of years I've spent playing *fort-da* with these elusive objects; communally shared festive time, like Diwali, when the icon's circulatory force foregrounds the moral economy of the bazaar; the simultaneously mythic and historical time inhabited by these nomadic printed icons; ritual time, when the icon melds with the worshipper, no longer an image as it disappears from view behind smoke or eyes closed in prayer.

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