

Batayan

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POSTMAN HELICONIAN
Heliconius melpomene

Open Windows, Open Minds





Batayan

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Editor

Jill Charles



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Jerry is a lifelong floral artist as well as a passionate human rights volunteer. He works settling newly arrived refugees in Chicago.

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Amit Dalal and Kaushik Mazumder are thankfully acknowledged for their photography, used in this issue.

Pulak Bandyopadhyay
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Back Cover



Pulak Bandyopadhyay an engineer by profession enjoys his time clicking some special moments.

Tirthankar Banerjee
Perth, Australia

Front & Back Inside Cover



His interest in photography started in student days. Much later the long nights in the dark-room were replaced by hours behind the computer and focus shifted from Black & White to Colour. He likes to show the images as they are and does not approve of computer gimmickry. He loves nature – flowers, birds, trees and all things beautiful. Tirthankar is an engineer, specializing in Renewable Energy and lives and works in Perth, Western Australia.

বাতায়ন পত্রিকা **BATAYAN INCORPORATED, Western Australia** দ্বারা প্রকাশিত ও সর্বসত্ত্ব সংরক্ষিত। প্রকাশকের লিখিত অনুমতি ছাড়া, এই পত্রিকায় প্রকাশিত যে কোন অংশের পুনর্মুদ্রণ বা যে কোন ভাবে ব্যবহার নিষিদ্ধ। রচনায় প্রকাশিত মতামত সম্পূর্ণ ভাবে রচয়িতায় সীমাবদ্ধ।

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Editorial

Life is what you make of it. In this spring issue of *Batayan*, we see unexpected creations. Madhurima Das finds joy in design in *Makerspace*. Shuvra Das questions the past and future in *Unfinished Stories*. Weaving a tale of mystery, M.C. Rydel shows us *The Fabric of Coincidence*.

I examine the life and work of American poet Mary Oliver who found inspiration in nature and shared clear, eloquent poems with thousands of readers worldwide. In *An American Comes Home to Eat*, Mita Choudhury gives us a view of a meal and questions of where home is.

Kathy Powers shows us the best and worst episodes of an entire life with very few words in *Some Nouns*. Susim Munshi creates a great meal and a great essay in *The Unexpected Benefits of Breakfast After Retirement*. Finally Jerry Kaiser shares his illustration of the *Postman Butterfly*.

We hope you enjoy the spring issue of *Batayan*. Please send us your stories, poems, essays, reviews and travelogues for the summer issue.

Jill Charles

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Shuvra Das

Unfinished Stories

My father once broke a man's hand
And he barely can lift his frail one now
My mother spent hours quilting,
Now she barely sees.

And their drawer that lays open on my lap
with rusty bolts, old paystubs, faded postcards,
unfinished letters, a bent screwdriver,
with expired coupons clipped from papers
that were destroyed eons back.

My father once broke a man's hand;
he cannot recollect the story.
The rusty bolt, the bent screwdriver,
the clipped coupons, and the broken hand,
the many beginnings, the many stories,
the many abandoned pasts.



Shuvra Das is a Professor of Mechanical Engineering and lives in the greater Detroit area. He graduated from IIT Kharagpur in India and finished his PhD from Iowa State University. Photography, painting, writing, theater, and travel are some of his passions. Lately, he has been spending a lot of time in political activism.



Madhurima Das

Makerspace

I walk into the room and let the
sweet smell of sawdust and possibility drift over me.
It's thrilling and paralyzing- what do I do first
and how do I know if it's the best thing to try or not?
You're here with me and that worries me even more -
now there's someone else who is going to notice
all the mistakes I make and think less of me for it.

I grab an exacto knife to try and slice away my inhibitions,
and when it doesn't work, I am crushed under
the weight of my own expectations. You remind me
that there's nothing wrong with me- it's just the blade that's dull.
All I have to do is snap it off, come back with a fresh start,
and try again. This time, the knife cuts cleanly through
my worries and I peel them off the way I peel
the dried glue on my fingers, relishing the satisfying feeling.

You take your ambitions and blow them up like a balloon,
letting it float higher and higher until it nearly
lifts you off the ground. I almost stop you-what if it pops,
what if you fall, what if you float away from me -
until I remember how glad I was that no one cautioned me
when I flew away with the balloon like this
that brought me to you in the first place.

When your self confidence shatters into a million pieces,
I remind you that hot glue can fix anything.
Use the gold sparkly glue sticks to put yourself back
together so you don't forget that your flaws and
your weaknesses are what make you special.



We take your frustrations to the drill press
and make so many holes in it until it looks
like a block of swiss cheese and you're forced to giggle.
When you're stuck, we use pliers to pry you
out of your mental block. I grip one end and you
hold the other and we pull with all our might until
something gives and you spring back into the world of creativity.

I want to bottle up the feeling of seeing something
click in your mind for the first time and keep it
for a rainy day so I can spray it in the air when the
room needs a fresh perspective- essence of A-Ha, I'd call it.

We feel the pressure to be incredible and awe-inspiring
on the first try, but we remind each other- this is just
our first prototype of ourselves. The one where we try
everything and see what sticks, take the things we
love about one another and try to meld it into our own personalities.
You give me a slice of your confidence and take
a scoop of my sense of humor and we keep going
and going until we become alien combinations of each others traits.

Somehow, the math flies out the window because
suddenly the whole is greater than the sum of its
parts and we wonder how that could have happened,
but here in the makerspace, here, anything is possible
because where there is learning, there is magic.



Madhurima Das recently graduated from MIT with a degree in Mechanical Engineering. She is now working as an educator at an innovation school where she teaches innovation, design, and engineering. She loves building and making- through her words, her art, and her engineering. She is excited to have a job where she gets to empower the next generation to be makers and problem solvers, and her poem is based on experiences with her students.



Kathy Powers

Some Nouns

Fetus	Virginia
Disappointment	Chicago
Pigtails	Parenthood
Shame	Violence
Intelligence	New Jersey
Divorce	College
Grandparents	Award
Molestation	Graduate
Ballet	Hospital
Camp	Chicago
Suicide	John
Medication	Activism
Graduation	Pain
College	Age
Suicide	Award
Hospital	Dust

Kathy Powers — I am a civil rights activist and developed my passions from coping with bipolar disorder symptoms. I have a tagline: "Advocacy is my therapy." Through advocacy I have discovered truth and beauty in helping people and sharing art.



M. C. Rydel

The Fabric of Coincidence

We are twins separated at birth,
One in Europe, the other in America,
We meet, sharing an Uber, to the airport.
I get to hear my voice with an accent,
See my hair go gray in the temples,
Hear my ring one play on his phone,
Learn that we live identical lives,
Experience irony the same way,
Say the same words at the same time.

We've exposed the fabric of coincidence.
Space and time like warp and weft
Guarded by three phantoms of fate.
The first specter spins the thread of life
From her distaff onto the spindle.
The second measures the thread with care.
The third cuts the thread as it unravels
With her abhorred shears and assures us
Of an identical demise on different continents.

Meanwhile, the fabric crackles with static electricity
Like simultaneous signals in a circuit
We monitor for car crashes, lotto numbers,
Telemarketers, robocalls, and left-handed signatures.
The fabric's all about passwords, captchas, and identical retinas
Who don't believe in either coincidence or fate.
Our twin faces neatly fit into the rearview mirror.
Our twin voices trail off like canyon echoes.
Our twin souls shine like young Cary Grants



Shirtless and lying in a chaise lounge;
Reading brown cloth first editions of *Anna Karenina*
Each wishing he'd been cast as Garbo's Vronsky.
Suddenly the ride ends. One twin needs Gate A.
The other Gate Z for the non-stop home.
We have nothing left but an awkward hug,
Synchronized pats on the back,
Identical birthmarks, stutters, neuroses, and a promise
We know neither of us will ever keep.





Mita Choudhury

An American Comes Home to Eat©

New Delhi. Late dinner.

Aubergine bharta

Chicken curry for one.

Rice

Plus Sula wine of course.

Buzzing. Faces familiarly unknown in the IIC dining hall, June 2015.

Prices for members more reasonable than restaurants in hotels, Khan Market.

Why not?

Intellectual middle class status-symbol-seeking fulfilled.

Very Upper

Proper.

A/C extreme.

Sari helps. Optional.

Those not sari-donned wear long-sleeved blouses. Kurtas of that Fab-India

Which I left behind. They know.

In here. Extreme cold.

Air outside inhumane, hot, humid, haze-filtered dreams of early years I spent — and wasted — in longing for West.

My sleeveless top betrays lack of local knowledge, faded memories of fashion long ago.

Celebrity walks in crisp white cotton Pajama-Kurta with gold nagrai shoes.

Oh so profoundly pointy toed.

Photographer finds no Achilles heel, follows. About 65? White kurta reflecting seductive white hair; distinguished.

Eye on the mirror.

A public smile, self-conscious gait (intellectual or political) whose time it is to shine.



Obsessive compulsive eagle-like persistence of US ubiquity.

My favorite perch: The India International Centered (IIC) around the promise of urbane exogamy.

At the next table, cacophony.

Young men and women, some sage.

Mixed bag of family and friends sit: Authority invoked,

The Woodrow Wilson School of Public Affairs.

Bryn Mawr versus Swarthmore.

More.

Info-sharing: pros, no cons, suburbs of New York City: big private lawns with natural green fences. The Hamptons? Talk.

More talk, no silence, of Bloomberg media, TV and mayoral election. De Blasio?

That reference point of Indian elite: The US reigns.

But France? South Africa?

To hell with Algeria-infested Paris or in darkness dimmed Cape Town.

London lost.

"Sula please."

Obsessive compulsive eagle-like persistence of US ubiquity.

A maverick comes home to eat.

No wine in the India of my youth.

"Sula *red* please."

Total \$12.98.

Mita Choudhury — Mita, a tenured professor at Purdue Northwest, is an expert in the cultural history of Britain and has published articles and books on interculturalism, migration, borders, colonialism, and related issues.



Jill Charles

Mary Oliver: Wild and Precious Life

*Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting —
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.*

From *The Wild Geese* by Mary Oliver

Years ago, I was fortunate to attend a poetry reading by Mary Oliver in Chicago. Her sense of connections between humans and nature, between words and reality, between herself and her beloved partner left a deep impression on me. Mary Oliver wrote powerful, accessible poems with poignant images and everyday words. The world lost a great American poet when Ms. Oliver died this January at age 83, but her words survive her and continue to carry the light of her mind to readers everywhere.

Born on September 10, 1935, Mary Oliver grew up in Maple Heights, Ohio spending much of her time in the surrounding woods. At age 14 she began to write poetry. Mary had the opportunity to visit the home of poet Edna St. Vincent Millay and helped her surviving sister Norma Millay organize papers that Edna had left behind.

Mary attended Ohio State University and Vassar College but did not complete her degree at either university. In 1963, her first poetry collection *No Voyage and Other Poems* was published. During the early 1980s, Oliver taught at Case Western Reserve University. In 1984 she won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry for her fifth collection of poems, *American Primitive*. She was Poet In Residence at Bucknell University (1986) and Margaret Banister Writer in Residence at Sweet Briar College (1991). In 1992 her collection *New and Selected Poems* won the National Book Award. She moved to Bennington, Vermont, where she held the Catharine Osgood Foster Chair for Distinguished Teaching at Bennington College until 2001. Oliver also received fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts. She published 33 poetry collections and four nonfiction books of essays on poetry and writing.

Mary Oliver's life partner of over forty years was photographer Molly Malone Cook. She described their relationship as a lifelong "conversation." Their home in Provincetown, Massachusetts inspired many of Oliver's poems. Molly was also Mary's literary agent. After Molly died in 2005, Oliver memorialized her with a book of her photos and journal excerpts entitled *Our World*. Mary later moved to Hobe Sound, Florida.

Because of her love of nature and free verse, many critics have compared Mary Oliver's poems to the writing of Walt Whitman and Henry David Thoreau. Like Emily Dickinson, her writing displays an introspective, unconventional spirituality. Her accessible language and themes have



made her one of America's most popular poets. In one National Public Radio interview Oliver said "Poetry, to be understood, must be clear. It mustn't be fancy."

I don't know exactly what a prayer is.
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down
into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,
which is what I have been doing all day.
Tell me, what else should I have done?
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?
Tell me, what is it you plan to do
with your one wild and precious life?

From *The Summer Day* by Mary Oliver



"Come with me into the woods. Where spring is advancing, as it does, no matter what, not being singular or particular, but one of the forever gifts, and certainly visible."

— Mary Oliver



Jill Charles grew up in Spokane, Washington and majored in Creative Writing at Seattle University. In 2007 she moved to Chicago where she writes poetry and fiction and lives in the Albany Park neighborhood. Her career includes nonprofit, academic and legal office work. Jill is co-editor of *Batayan*, a bilingual literary magazine in Bengali and English. She performs her poetry at open mic nights at The Heartland Café and Royal Coffee. Jill is one of the Chicago Writing Alliance workshop facilitators at Bezazian Library in Uptown. Read her jazz age novel, *Marlene's Piano*, available from Booklocker.com.



Susim Munshi

Essays from The Education of a Bengali Gentleman — The Unexpected Benefits of Breakfast after Retirement

Happiness in being married and in retirement is an art. You can become quite the Zen master at both by cooking, relishing and enjoying breakfast together. The test of time in love is devotion especially to this very treasured of all meals. It's breakfast, and where and how you eat it, that is the key to a happy marriage in retirement. The finesse is not necessarily in the cuisine or its varieties. Of course choosing simple but spectacular spread of world dishes makes the meal, the setting, the conversation lively and entertaining. Love feeds on the food and strengthens the bonds. I do have a knack of selecting breads, toasts, bagels, jams, jellies, cheese, eggs, fruits, and preparing quite a surprise everyday for my wife, my lifelong companion. Once we both longed for paninis. Being retired we have to watch our budget eating out. Breakfast at home is so pleasurable that we are not willing to part with \$15-\$20 at Panera or Corner Bakery. I bought a \$5 panini press at Sur La Table super sale and pressed some wonders. My wife does not eat meat. I consume it like a tiger . . . Well, I hail from the nation and its state of the Royal Bengal Tiger. Avocadoes we both find are great in a panini. I lightly toast pumpernickel bread, butter both sides, layer pepper jack cheese, avocado goes on top, slices of home grown tomatoes, a couple of twist of the pepper mill, sprinkle salt, lay it on the oven top grill, and firmly push down on the panini press The grill leaves golden brown diagonal lines that says everything is just oozing perfection. I ball melon into small desert tumblers and slice a kiwi on top for more color. In the meantime the Darjeeling tea has steeped to the color and concentration we both prefer.

Our breakfast area is not a nook. Our living room has a very large bay window that looks out across our lawn to a park that is no less than an arboretum. There are pines, spruces, non-fruit bearing crab apples, magnolias, a tree whose leaves turn golden in the fall and never shed. A walking path winds around the park and is the perfect place for exercise. We have repurposed one of our high glass-top side tables as our breakfast table for two. There are two phoenix-rising-from-the-fire cloth draped winged chairs on either side. Breakfast gets served on gray pottery plates and the tea cups are rotated every day from a selection of blue, green, yellow, orange and brown depending on what's not in the dishwasher. There is a red tray with Japanese lettering in black on which we can stack up the jams, jellies, butter, cream for the tea, tiny salt and pepper shakers and our matching gray pottery tea kettle. Love the food and live the company. Conversation bounces like a ping pong around current events, the pesky phone call the night before, plans to visit Indía, lighthouses in Maine, my wife's next month's Facebook profile picture, to return or not return a library book. Then Linda, my neighbor who plays golf with me, walks and waves from the park. Next it will be the dog Lilly and her mistress Joanne. The crabapple tree is in full bloom. Or the once in a while cross country skier who is pushing through the new soft snow. It's winter. We are still having breakfast at our bay window, sitting in our phoenix draped chairs, munching on spicy cocktail samosas with mint and coriander chutney and steaming India spice chai. The fire is glowing. This time we can add a few sugar cubes to the tea and finish it all off with golden "motichur ladoos". Mmm - - - good!



My only quarrel with my wife is that she does not eat meats. However, we both like smoked salmon, on an open face half bagel smothered with cream cheese, topped with Tabasco. Needless to say that as bagel lovers we finally bought a bagel guillotine. For a couple of days my wife stayed away from the kitchen but adored the deftly cut bagel halves. Yes, we eat the other half spread with cream cheese topped with blueberry jam for the Mrs. and orange marmalade for the Mr. It's English Breakfast tea, no cream, no sugar cubes. The aroma escaping from the kettle spout. The big conversation - Do we have enough money put away for our younger daughter's Masters program. "It's all in the phone's notes app," I say for the third day reaching for my iPhone. I stop midway. Walk over to the island, retrieve my wife's journal and favorite pen, and go through the exercise of writing it all out in her own hand, placing a sticky page marker so she can come back to it at breakfast the next day, and the next. My dear wife returns the favor declaring we will have idli-sambar the next morning. It's love alright, for the food, the company, the joy of being put out to graze at the same time. We have earned it after thirty five years working in the Chicago Public Schools. That reminds me of the time we invited friends to brunch to celebrate our retirement. What a feast we both put out. It became the talk of the town and the envy of many still-at-work-friends. On summer omelette days, I sneak out the kitchen back door to the small but sufficient vegetable patch, grab a handful of cherry tomatoes, tear off a second handful of fresh chives and coriander, two slices of butter in our non-stick Japanese omelette pan, in go the vegetables, twist the pepper mill, sprinkle salt. The aroma begins to rise and drift while I fluff the eggs. Spoon in enough eggs to create a uniform thin layer. Wait for it to harden slightly, then roll and push back the first layer. Spoon a second thin layer and as the egg cooks, roll up the first layer into the second and repeat for the third, till you have a wonderful fluffy roll of Japanese omelette. Goes well with toast, butter, and jam. Choose green tea to stay true to the Japanese esthetics.

Love's labor is not lost. Our breakfasts help to smoothen the rough edges of our marriage. Most disagreements revolve around the idiosyncrasies of other "insensitive" family relations. Pesky and sour. If it were not for breakfast with my "buddy" we would have missed out on the excitement of sitting stone still while the hummingbird is hovering over the sweet lantanas in different shades of pink filling up the two hanging baskets we have carefully placed outside the bay window for just such small but significant visitors.

"Forward to the *Essays from The Education of a Bengali Gentleman*" by Susim Munshi — The great Stoic teacher Epictetus stated we become philosophers when we examine our preconceived notions, ask questions about our emotions and even the words we use each day. The essays in this collection are an honest self-examination of Bengali sentiments, values, and beliefs as perceived by the author who while growing up in a traditional Bengali household learned to look at them from a different perspective while going to a Catholic School and College in India, then moving to America for the rest of his adult life."



Souvik Dutta

Purusha Suktam — Explanation of the First Six Verses

Introduction

On the Vernal Equinox every year, the planet Earth experiences a magical moment equal day and night with the length of days eventually increasing from that point in time. Ancient seers imagined that moment in time as the Upendra (Vamana avatar of Vishnu) conquered the three worlds with his three steps. Vernal Equinox is thus called Haripada in Sanskrit. All across the globe, this marks the advent of spring and in ancient India, this was celebrated by colors to mark activity, love, and fun all symbolic of spring.

Purusha Suktam is a hymn dedicated to Purusha. Purusha, popularly has been associated with Vishnu or Shiva. During spring, most calendars of India begin their new year. Reciting the Holy name of Vishnu during this time is considered to bring blessings for a new beginning.

The Structure

Purusha suktam (puruṣas kṭam, पुरुष सुक्तम्) is from hymn 90 in Mandala 10 (10.90) of the Rk Veda, dedicated to the Purusha and is composed by Narayan Rsi and is addressed to Purusha Devata.

The suktam has 16 verses, 15 in the anuṣṭubh meter, and the final one in the triṣṭubh meter. The hymn finds a place in Vedic texts such as the Atharvaveda (19.6), the Samaveda (6.4), the Yajurveda (VS 31.1-6), the Taittiriya Aranyaka (3.12,13) and it is commented upon in the Shatapatha Brahmana, the Taittiriya Brahmana, the Shvetashvatara Upanishad, and the Mudgala Upanishad. It is one of the few Rk Vedic hymns current in contemporary Hinduism like the Gayatri Mantra. The Purusha sukta is also mentioned with explanations and interpretations in the Vajasaneyi Samhita (31.1-6), the Sama Veda Samhita (6.4), and the Atharva Veda Samhita (19.6). Among Puranic texts, the sukta has been elaborated in the Bhagavata Purana (2.5.35 to 2.6.1-29) and in the Mahabharata (Mokshadharma Parva 351 and 352).

The Rsi — Narayana

The most interesting detail about this hymn from Rk Veda is the story about its author. The hymn is authored by Rsi Narayana. The Suktam is comprised of 16 verses, 15 in the anuṣṭubh Chanda, and the final one in the triṣṭubh Chanda.

Rsi Narayana is one of the twins from Nara-Narayana pair incarnated over periods of time on Earth. Sri Kṛṣṇa details this to Arjuna in Bhagavad Gita (part of Mahabharata) that Sri Kṛṣṇa was Narayana and Arjuna was Nara.

There are many tales of Rsi Narayana but the one that is most fascinating is the tale of humbling Indra. Rsis Nara and Narayana were meditating on Shiva in the holy shrine of Badrinath situated in the Himalayas. So severe was their penance that Indra became insecure that if their tapas would reach its goal, they might ask for the throne of the heavens — Indrasana.



Indra, the King of Devas, sent Kamadeva, Vasanta Rtu (spring) and apsaras (nymphs) to inspire them with passion and disturb their tapas. When Narayana saw the attempt of Indra, he placed a flower on His thigh (uru). Immediately from there sprung from it a beautiful nymph, far more attractive than any nymph Indra sent. She was so attractive that all other apsaras immediately returned to Indra and Indra was attracted to this apsara born from the uru of Narayana. She was called Urvashi (Uru- thighs, vashi captivating).

Indra realized his mistake and sought forgiveness from the Rsi. Rsi informed Indra that He was none other than the incarnation of Sri Hari and thus he can create beings beyond imagination for Indra and that Indrasana is not his goal since he owns the whole creation.

It is also said that Nara-Narayana worshipped Shiva at Kedarnath and pleased with their devotion Shiva resided at that place as a jyotirlinga.

Let us also at this point of time visit the name Narayana. Narayana translates to the goal of humanity, the one thing that human life seeks from its very inception. “Nara” means man, in broader sense humanity; “Ayana” meaning goal, in a broader sense purpose. This purpose can translate into many things but the true desire of the soul is to gain Moksha, liberation from the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth.

The Devata — Purusha

It is impossible to talk about Purusha without talking about Samkhya philosophy and it is impossible to talk about Samkhya without talking about Rsi Kapila.

Kapila (कपिल ऋषि) was a Vedic sage credited as one of the founders of the Samkhya School of philosophy. He is prominent in the Bhagavata Purana, which features the atheistic version of his Samkhya philosophy.

Broadly, the Samkhya system classifies all objects as falling into one of the two categories: Purusha and Prakriti. While the Prakriti is a single entity, the Samkhya admits a plurality of the Puruṣas in this world.

Unintelligent, unmanifest, uncaused, ever-active, imperceptible and eternal Prakriti is alone the final source of the world of objects which is implicitly and potentially contained in its bosom. The Puruṣa is considered as the conscious principle, a passive enjoyer (bhokta) and the Prakriti is the enjoyed (bhogya).

Puruṣa is the transcendental self or pure consciousness. It is absolute, independent, free, imperceptible, and unknowable through other agencies, above any experience by mind or senses and beyond any words or explanations. It remains pure, “nonattributive consciousness”. Puruṣa is neither produced nor does it produce. It is held that unlike Advaita Vedanta and like Purva-Mimamsa, Samkhya believes in the plurality of the Puruṣas.

Prakriti is the first cause of the manifest material universe of everything except the Puruṣa. Prakriti accounts for whatever is physical, both mind and matter-cum-energy or force. Since it is the first principle (tattva) of the universe, it is called the Pradhāna, but, as it is the unconscious and unintelligent principle, it is also called the Jada. It is composed of three essential characteristics (trigunas).



We find the earliest reference of Purusha and Prakriti in the form of Ardhanareeshwara (Half Man, Half Woman) where Shiva and Shakti appeared before Brahma to advise Him on creation. Shiva is generally called Purusha and Shakti is called Prakriti. However, the concept of Purusha is deeper than the mere form of Shiva.

Indra is Purusha, Indrani is Prakriti. Brahma is Purusha, Brahmani is Prakriti. Vishnu is Purusha, Vaishnavi is Prakriti. Kumara is Purusha and Kaumari is Prakriti. Narayana is Purusha, Narayani is Prakriti. Shiva is Purusha, Shivaa is Prakriti.

The object is Purusha, Attributes of that Object is Prakriti. All possibilities are Purusha, one out of those possibilities which manifest is Prakriti.

Purusha Suktam honors the Purusha in creation. If Prakriti is the Jada, then Purusha is the Jeeva. The ultimate motive of all Jeevatma is to gain Moksha. This concept of Moksha sets the tone for Purusha Suktam. If we truly understand the essence of Purusha Suktam then forms are meaningless as are names and identities. Moksha cannot be achieved if individual existence takes precedence, Moksha can only be achieved if one is ready to immerse oneself into the ultimate source which source has many names and yet it is nameless.

Verse 1

सहस्रशीर्षा पुरुषः सहस्राक्षः सहस्रपात् । स भूमिं विश्वतो वृत्वात्यतिष्ठदशाङ्गुलम् ॥ १ ॥

**sahasraśīrṣā puruṣaḥ sahasrākṣaḥ sahasrapāt ।
sa bhūmim viśvato vṛtvāty atiṣṭhad daśāṅgulam ॥**

Thousand-headed is the Purusha, thousand-eyed and thousand-legged. Enveloping the earth from all sides, He transcends it by ten fingers' length.

The most common reference for this verse that comes to my mind is Chapter 11, Verse 16 of Bhagavad Gita. In this verse, after having observed the brilliance of the Vishwaroopam of Sri Krishna as Purusha, Arjuna says —

अनेकबाहूदरवक्त्रनेत्रं
पश्यामि त्वा सर्वतो ऽनन्तरूपम् ।
नान्तं न मध्यं न पुनस्तवादिं
पश्यामि विश्वेश्वर विश्वरूप ॥ ११-१६ ॥

**anekabāhūdavaravaktranetram; paśyāmi tvā sarvato 'nantarūpam ।
nāntaṁ na madhyaṁ na punas tavādim; paśyāmi viśveśvara viśvarūpa ॥11-16॥**

I behold you infinite in the form on all sides with manifold arms, stomachs, faces, and eyes; neither your end nor your middle nor also your beginning do I see, O Lord of the Universe, O Cosmic Form.

The Vishwaroopam Darshan is the turning point in the Mahabharata war. Before this stage, Arjuna keenly listened to Sri Krsna but had doubts in his mind. It was only after viewing the Purusha in Vasudeva that Arjuna truly understood the true nature of the Universe and that his being is nothing but a part of Purusha that manifested in the Universe and that which he bore a witness to in the Vishwaroopam of Sri Krsna. Truly, this verse of Bhagavad Gita echoes the verse of Rk Veda in its entirety.



In the first verse of Purusha Suktam, the transcendent totality of all creation is conceived as the Cosmic Person, the Universal Consciousness animating all manifestation.

Swami Krishnananda explains "The word 'bhumi' (meaning Earth) is to be understood in the sense of all creation. 'Dasangulam' is interpreted as ten fingers' length, in which case it is said to refer to the distance of the heart from the navel, the former having been accepted as the seat of the Atma and the latter symbolic of the root of manifestation. The word 'ten' is also said to mean 'infinity', as numbers are only up to nine and what is above is regarded as numberless."

The second line deserves a better translation. In the creation myth, which mimics the birthing process of life forms on Earth, Brahma is born from the navel of Purusha (here Narayana or Vishnu).

In the science of Vastu, this place is called **Brahmanatmasambhava**. This is detailed in Mahanirvanatantra, Chapter 13, verse 54 and Tantra-Samuccaya, Chapter 1, Verse 1.62.

The **Brahmasthan** (again a concept) is Vastu Shastra lies between the heart and the belly of Vastupurusha. This space is also called dasangula. Sankaracharya's commentary on Svetasvataropanisad, Chapter 3 details this.

Thus **dasangula** is the distance between the seat of aham; ego (navel) to the seat of atma (heart).

In the human body, the distance between the Manipura Chakra and the Anahata Chakra is called Mahashunya or the simple terms the great gap. This is also called **Dasangula**.

In a pregnant lady, although the child is in the womb, the heart of the mother is what keeps the mother and child alive.

The universe (Bhumi) is the creation and Purusha is the Atma (heart) of the creation and is the overlooking it from a distance of ten fingers of Purusha. This is the true meaning of this verse.

Verse 2

पुरुष एवेदं सर्वं यद्भूतं यच्च भव्यम् । उतामृतत्वस्येशानो यदन्नैनातिरोहति ॥ २ ॥

puruṣa evedaṃ sarvaṃ yad bhūtaṃ yac ca bhavyam ।

utāmṛtatvasyesāno yad annenātirohati ॥

All this (manifestation) is the Purusha alone - whatever was and whatever will be. He is the Lord of Immortality, for He transcends all in His Form as food (the universe).

This verse has two very deep concepts - one related to Time and the other related to Sustenance. Purusha is imagined here as the Kalapurusha - the personification of Time.

In the Galactic sense, Purusha can also be imagined as the Nakshatra Purusha - the personification of the fixed stars in the sky which are Eternal.

To be very honest, even if the stars undergo supernova or destruction, Time still continues so Purusha is above Kala or Nakshatra Purusha but for all practical purposes, we as Earthlings can imagine Purusha as the Zodiac personified or the Star System personified.



The measurement of Time is done by using a system called the Calendar System. How is that developed? It is developed by the Sun (solar) and the Moon (lunar) and in most ancient civilizations it was Soli-Lunar.

The dance of the Sun and the Moon creates the zodiac as the Moon appears full twelve times in a complete revolution of the Earth around the Sun. This gives birth to 12 months and 12 zodiac signs, one for each month. This gives rise to Sankratis and the entry of the Sun in each of these zodiac signs. These concepts, to us Earthlings, are eternal and can be equated to our understanding of Purusha. However, even if these celestial bodies don't exist, Time will and thus Purusha is greater than Nakshatra or Kala Purusha.

What is the food (Sustenance) for the Universe?

Science has given us three possible fates of the Universe - Big Crunch, Big Rip, and Indefinite Expansion. Rk Veda has already provided the answer to this 10-12 thousands years ago - Indefinite Expansion.

To sustain something, one must grow. The growth of the Universe or expansion of the Purusha is based on a concept of food of the Universe.

To best understand the accelerating Universe, Rsi equated it to the simple concept of a human child growing due to sustenance it receives. In this case, the food is the dark energy (Vishnu/Krsna Shakti). Purusha transcends all His forms as food (anna) literally means the Universe expands at an accelerated rate and expands due to Dark Energy. The Purusha Suktam from this point on takes a completely scientific turn in its esoteric explanation.

Gravity (Akarshan Shakti) pulls things towards each other. Every celestial body has gravity then over time why is the Universe not collapsing on itself? Instead, it is accelerating (also can be viewed as growth) at a rate much faster than expected.

The answer is Dark Energy. In physical cosmology and astronomy, dark energy is a hypothetical form of energy that permeates all of space and tends to accelerate the expansion of the universe. Dark energy is the most accepted hypothesis to explain observations since the 1990s that indicate that the universe is expanding at an accelerating rate. This very Dark Energy is called Narayani or Aadi Shakti.

Verse 3

एतावानस्य महिमातो ज्यायैश्च पूरुषः । पादोऽस्य विश्वा भूतानि त्रिपादस्यामृतं दिवि ॥ ३ ॥

etāvān asya mahimāto jyāyāś ca pūruṣaḥ ।

pādo 'sya viśvā bhūtāni tripād asyāmṛtaṁ divi ॥

Such is His Glory, but greater still is the Purusha. One-fourth of Him all beings are, (while) three-fourths of Him rises above as the Immortal Being.

The Purusha is superior to his expansive power. This clarifies that the concept of the expansion (Dark Energy) is an attribute of the Purusha but Purusha is much more superior to this one attribute ascribed to Him.



A Yogi who has all the eight siddhis is greater than the siddhis he accomplished. The Eight siddhis are stated as -

- Anīmā: reducing one's body even to the size of an atom
- Mahima: expanding one's body to an infinitely large size
- Garima: becoming infinitely heavy
- Laghima: becoming almost weightless
- Prāpti: having unrestricted access to all places
- Prākāmya: realizing whatever one desires
- Iṣṭva: possessing absolute lordship
- Vāstva: the power to subjugate all

Hanuman was blessed with all the 8 siddhis and yet 8 siddhis He had doesn't define Him. He is superior to the siddhis He has. In fact what defines Him is His devotion, His Bhakti.

The glory of Purusha doesn't define Purusha but is one of his attributes.

According to the Planck mission team, and based on the standard model of cosmology, the total mass-energy of the universe contains 4.9% ordinary matter, 26.8% dark matter and 68.3% dark energy.

Rk Veda and Purusha Suktam have a simpler and approximately a close percentage. 25 % of Purusha is the manifested Universe, 75 % is the Un-manifested Universe.

The Universe has a fractal nature. 25% of Earth is Land, 75% is Water following a fractal pattern of Energy and Matter.

Verse 4

त्रिपादूर्ध्व उदैत्पुरुषः पादोऽस्येहाभवत् पुनः। ततो विष्णुः व्यक्रामत्साशनानशने अभि ॥ ४ ॥

tripād ūrdhva ud ait puruṣaḥ pādo 'syehābhavat punaḥ |

tripād ūrdhva ud ait puruṣaḥ pādo 'syehābhavat punaḥ |

Three-quarters of Him remain above (unmanifest). One-quarter of Him has manifested here. With that, He pervades all the living and the non-living.

Every Vedic text can be interpreted in three ways — Adi bhautik, Adi daivik and Adhyatmik — Material, Divine and Spiritual signifying a meaning that best caters to body, mind, and soul.

The materialistic meaning has already been explained earlier, Dark Energy prevails in 75% of the Universe and Matter (Dark and otherwise) prevails in 25 % of the Universe. It is through Matter that both living and non-living beings — Jada and Jeeva functions since these have material bodies.

The Adi daivik interpretation is the mythological tale of Vishnu, the youngest brother of Indra. His other name is Upendra (young Indra). The most popular name given to Him is Vamana Avataar. The world viewed Vamana as a small man or dwarf. However, this symbolizes the first step which is manifested world and a world in which we live but often don't recognize the Purusha in life



arounds. The three steps of Vishnu (tripada) were beyond imagination and perception of the human mind. It symbolizes the un-manifested or “not understood” part of the mind and the perceived creation.

The spiritual meaning is that soul is trapped in the body which is a product of our past karmas. However, the soul has the potential to tap into the unmanifested divine by a process of purification.

The Paramatma is all around the soul and both the Atma and Paramatma are identical with just one difference Atma has manifested and thus is bound by the Laws of Karma, Paramatma is un-manifested and thus beyond the Laws of Karma. The journey to reach from the manifested Purusha (us) to the unmanifested Purusha (God) should be the motive of life and once the destination is reached, the soul experiences Moksha or param padam of Sri Hari Haripada.

Verse 5

तस्माद्विराळजायत विराजो अधि पूरुषः । स जातो अत्यरिच्यत पश्चाद्भूमिस्थो पुरः ॥ ५ ॥

tasmād virāḍ ajāyata virājo adhi pūruṣaḥ ।

sa jāto aty aricyata paścād bhūmim atho puraḥ ॥

Variety came forth from Him and thus from within he became virAt puruSHa. He grew immensely and became the cosmos (Brahmanda).

Adi bhautik — The explanation is the process of creation from Big Bang Theory. Everything sprung from within the Big Bang. The Universe started to grow and expand. The same fractal nature of the Universe can be extended to the process of conception and development of the fetus and birth of a child.

Adi Daivik — Vamana (Vishnu) appeared as a small dwarf and from within expanded into Virat Purusha. He grew to cover the Brahmanda (Brahm-Cosmos, anda egg-shaped or linga shaped).

Adhyatmik — This explains the expansion of the mind and thought. A simple piece of paper and a verse written on it when meditated on can awaken the mind; the mind can then direct the Atma to the Paramatma. The Manas has the potential of self-evolution and to become as expansive as the universe itself.

Verse 6

यत्पुरुषेण हविषा देवा यजमतन्वत । वसन्तो अस्यासीदाज्यं ग्रीष्म इध्मः शरद्धविः ॥ ६ ॥

yat puruṣeṇa haviṣā devā yajñam atanvata ।

vasanto asyāsīd ājyaṁ grīṣma idhmaḥ śarad dhaviḥ ॥

When (there being no external material other than the Purusha) the Devas performed a universal sacrifice (in contemplation by the mind), with the Purusha Himself as the sacred offering, the spring season was the clarified butter, summer the fuel, autumn the oblation.



The Adi bhautik interpretation of this is related to the sacrifice of the Devas (Stars, Suras). Creation couldn't have begun unless Stars were born. The birth of the Stars is the birth of Devas. That created solar systems and galaxies. In this process, one thing to be remembered was that there was nothing there but the Universe to use so it was Purusha who was sacrificed and it was Purusha as the Devas who sacrificed. This finally led to Maha Yajna - the continued process. The seasons (Rtu) were used as mediums of the sacrifice — the ghee poured in the Yajna, the food that burns and the offering that is made. Spring here refers to the good, smoothing things created in creation like the Water, summer refers to the heat from the Supernova of the Stars and autumn refers to the dying stars or stars which have sacrificed themselves for the process of creation.



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Bani Bhattacharyya

Christmas Eve

"There is always some madness in love...."

"Would you please reach the container of sugar on the top shelf of the cupboard for me?" Rita asked her husband, Ben in a loud voice while he is watching the football game on TV.

Ben slowly paced towards the kitchen, keeping his eyes fixed on the TV and handed it to Rita. She understood Ben wasn't entirely happy doing her this favor.

This type of problem wasn't new in her life. Rita was four feet, eight inches in height. She had a dark complexion and poor eyesight. Rita recalled her mother's suggestion, "Instead of looking at his bank balance, you should look for a tall man with a relatively fair complexion who has good eyesight, so your children can enjoy a better life."

Maybe God was listening to Rita's mother. Rita married Ben, and he made up for what her mother considered Rita's shortcomings.

When they purchased their home, Rita made sure she could at least reach a few lower shelves in the kitchen. The upper shelves were harder to reach for her, so Rita either had to depend on her husband as he was five feet, ten inches, or she had to pull out a chair to reach the top cupboards.

Many years had passed. Rita became middle aged. It didn't bother her anymore when people commented on her short stature.

For the last few weeks, Ben was unusually cheerful. Rita guessed his good mood was due to anticipation of their two sons and their families coming from Boston for Christmas. She also invited the parents of one of her daughters-in-law, Amal, and Sheila, who lived forty miles from Rita and Ben. The daughter-in-law's brother and his family were also invited.

Rita prepared dinner for the Christmas holiday. She cooked all the items on her menu by herself. Sometimes she needed help from Ben to bring down some spices from the top shelves of the cabinets. He helped her with a smile on his face. Rita thought his upbeat mood was just his Christmas spirit.

After dinner on Christmas Eve, everyone was of good cheer as they exchanged gifts. Rita had bought a nice sweater for her husband which she handed to him. After opening the present, Ben said, "What am I going to do with this one? I've enough sweaters lying in the closet."

Rita felt embarrassed in front of the in-laws. Then she softly asked, "Are you going to wear it?"

"I have to now, because you spent good money on it."

Instead of losing her temper, Rita asked him to try it on.

Ben answered calmly, "I will. But first let me bring you your gift." He headed for the basement.



Rita was surprised. Knowing her husband, she couldn't think of him going anywhere on his own to buy a gift for her. On Christmas, Ben had told her, "Because you don't like whatever I buy you, take my credit card. You can buy whatever you like at whatever price you want to spend."

His comment was right. So far whatever he purchased for her either she didn't like or didn't need it. She chose to either return the gifts to the store or give them away to friends. Sometimes she even donated them to the Salvation Army. Rita thought, *What in the world did he buy me now that I will have to open in front of the in-laws?*

In the meantime Ben came up from the basement carrying a large box, nicely wrapped in Christmas paper. He placed it in front of her. Everyone stared at the box with wide open eyes. Rita opened the box with sheer curiosity. To her utter amazement, she saw inside the box a black three wheeled stepstool.

Proudly Ben said, "This is a special gift from me to you. Now you don't have to wait for me to bring down anything from the high selves in the cupboards." He gave her a sly look.

Rita started to seethe with anger. She thought, *Was this a proper gift to give somebody just to remind about her deficiency in front of guests on Christmas Eve?* She tried to compose herself as best as she could, and uttered "Thank you," in a low voice.

Her in-law, Sheila, commented, "A very practical gift! You're so thoughtful, Ben! This will be a great help for Rita!"

Amal added, "Wow! What a great idea."

Another year went by. The stepstool was a great help to Rita throughout the year. She was happy not seeing Ben's bothered unhappy face for her need.

A soft white blanket of snow covered the ground as a cold chilly wind blew reminding people that Christmas was approaching quickly. Party time would soon be at hand, Rita thought, so get ready. Again this year, Rita wanted the party in her house on Christmas Eve. Her sons, physicians wouldn't make it, as they were both on call at their hospitals. Daughter-in-law's brother also had an excuse not to come. So this year only Ben, Rita, Amal and Sheila, would spend Christmas Eve together with a fine dinner Rita would prepare. She kept three gifts under their decorated tree. Rita bought a sweater for Amal, a warm shawl for Sheila and a hat and gloves for her husband. She thought, her husband would most likely forget to buy any gift for her. Maybe he'd give her a check to choose her own gift. At least she wouldn't be embarrassed in front of the in-laws.

On Christmas Eve, after having a delicious, sumptuous meal, they went into the family room to open the gifts. A beautiful cozy warm atmosphere by the nice flame of fire in the fireplace brought cheers into everybody's mind. While Rita prepared to hand out some of the gifts, she noticed that Ben stands up and disappear. She thought because of a sudden call of natural demand in his body, he left the room for a few minutes. Soon, he reappeared with two large unwrapped cardboard boxes. Because he tried to balance the heavy load in his hands, he was going to lose his own equilibrium. Amal immediately got up to help him, carried one of the boxes and placed it on the floor. Rita looked at those boxes and knew immediately what was inside.



Without hesitation, Ben took out the pocket knife on his keychain and opened one of the boxes. He placed the box in front of Sheila. "This is for you. I know you go through the same difficulty Rita does, being short." It was a stepstool exactly the same color and same O shape as he had bought for Rita the Christmas before.

Rita was startled. She couldn't believe her eyes and ears. *Who would dare to say to a woman, an invited guest, especially an in-law, that her body was deficient because she was short?* Rita felt ashamed, her ears felt warm. This was almost like bullying. When would Ben learn to behave like a mature person?

Rita was almost ready to apologize to Sheila for her husband, but Sheila spoke first, "You helped me a lot and thank you. Ever since I saw the stepstool in your house, I looked at numerous stores to buy one for myself, but I had no luck. I was too embarrassed to ask you where you bought it. Thank you immensely."

Rita was stunned to hear Sheila's remark and felt relieved and happy that Sheila liked the gift. Before she could say anything, Ben said to her, "Darling, don't worry. I bought the exact same gift for you, so you could use it upstairs too." He then placed the unopened box at her feet. Rita had nothing to say to Ben in front of the in-laws. She managed a dry smile for him.

Rita found that the second stool came in handy. She kept bedspreads, blankets, etc, on the top shelf of the closet. Rita thought, *How had she lived so long without these gadgets?*

Another year went quickly by and it was December again. This year both of her boys decided to go skiing with their families. Daughter-in-law's parents and their son went to visit India. So Rita and Ben were alone in their nest for this Christmas holidays. Rita didn't feel like decorating the house with lights, nor did she want a Christmas tree. Who was going to see it or critique it? There was more snow outside than she expected. Because of her progressing age, Rita preferred to be homebound during holidays. She had no desire to exchange gifts. At the last moment, she bought a coffee mug with Ben's name printed on it. She kept the gift in the closet.

On Christmas morning, Rita handed Ben the gift saying, "This is a small gift for you. For God's blessing, we all are doing good, and everybody is happy when we have here each other."

Before even opening his gift, Ben said enthusiastically, "Thanks. I have something for you. But, you have to keep your eyes shut tight until I tell you to open them."

He took Rita's two hands passionately in his and placed them on her closed eyes.

Rita was so touched that she could not utter a word. In her thirty years of marriage, Ben never had showed so much emotion. She thought, while keeping her eyes tightly closed and covered, *Ben had probably bought me an expensive diamond ring or a gold necklace. Besides showing off her expensive gift, she has to brag later on about this day.* She never expected him to be so romantic. As she daydreamed for a few minutes, keeping her eyes tightly closed, she could suddenly feel Ben's presence.

Ben softly said, "Open your eyes now."

Rita enthusiastically opened eyes to find on the floor in front of her an ugly, black, three-wheel stepping stool. This time, it wasn't even in a box or wrapped.



Ben whispered with a canny smile, "This one is to keep in the basement. I know you are thinking to remodel the basement, and these days people seem to be taller, so they make cabinets with higher selves. This stepstool will come in handy for you."

Rita didn't know whether to cry or laugh, scream or yell, kick him out of the house or keep him forever. Then suddenly she wanted to hug him for being so different, not like any other man in the world.

Many years have passed since that Christmas. The basement was eventually done and the kicking three wheeled stepstool came in handy. Many of her friends admired her husband's thoughtfulness. Some of them asked him where he purchased the stepstool.

With all these memories and their uncommon relationship, they lived happily together and love towards each other kept them going. Rita realized how special Ben was to her by adapting and compromising being the magic behind it.

If Rita could only share her Christmas stories to others.



Jill Charles

The Shape of Water

Guillermo del Toro's Oscar-winning film *The Shape of Water* defies boundaries from its very first scene, ordinary objects in a room shown floating underwater.

Main character Eliza Esposito (Sally Hawkins) lives a silent and ordinary life, without parents, siblings, spouse or children. She is mute and works as a janitor in a top-secret government lab in 1950s America. Her fellow custodian Zelda (Octavia Spencer) and neighbor Giles (Richard Jenkins) are loyal friends, but Eliza's work is tedious and her days routine until a mysterious aquatic creature is brought to the lab.

The creature has a humanoid size and shape, gills and luminous blue and gold skin. Eliza befriends the creature, offers him an egg from her lunch and begins to communicate with him in sign language. She realizes that the creature has an intelligence and emotional capacity equal to humans and the two of them fall in love.

The romance in *Shape of Water* sounds bizarre but parallels many folktales with an animal-like groom and human bride like Beauty and the Beast and legends like that of Coyote seeking a human wife from the Native American tribes of the Pacific Northwest. Unlike King Kong or Dracula, the creature is not a predatory monster. He feels compassion like humans, outwits his adversaries and even displays mysterious healing powers.

The real monster in *Shape of Water* is Mr. Strickland (Michael Shannon), the manager of the base who treats Eliza and Zelda like chattel and brutally beats and chains the aquatic creature. Like many American political and military leaders in the 1950s, Strickland is driven by Cold War fears of the U.S.S.R. and conceals the creature for fear that Russian spies might learn and exploit the secrets of his powers and underwater breathing. Strickland hopes that American science might exploit the creature first, using whatever they learn for defense purposes. Watching *The Shape of Water* in 2018 I realized how the 1950s were a time of conflict and hierarchy: capitalism vs. communism, male over female, the white race oppressing the others, heteronormativity over homosexuality and humans exploiting the natural world for profit without mercy.

While the creature is fantastic, the psychology of the human characters rings true; their fears, loyalties and conflicts are timeless. We can see ourselves in Eliza and her aquatic companion. As a child in the 1950s in Mexico, Guillermo del Toro watched monster movies like *The Creature from the Black Lagoon* and asked himself how different the story could be if the creature were good, not evil and could love and be loved.

The Shape of Water offers profound lessons to people of all cultures. It is R for sexuality, graphic nudity, language and violence. It won Academy Awards for Best Picture and Best Director in 2018 and received nominations for Best Actress, Best Supporting Actress and Best Supporting Actor, among others.



Arrival

Amy Adams stars in “Arrival” as Dr. Louise Banks, a linguist professor summoned by the US Army to communicate with alien visitors from outer space.

The arrival in the title is twelve enormous black egg-shaped spaceships that land simultaneously in twelve different countries on Earth including China, Kenya, Brazil, Russia, Australia and in the Montana wilderness in the United States. In each country, human experts attempt to ask the aliens “What is your purpose on Earth?”

While curious about the aliens' origins, the humans also fear their superior technology and worry about contamination with unknown diseases. The US Army mobilizes near the spaceship, to study the aliens, but also poised for a possible attack. Forest Whitaker is excellent as Colonel Weber, the Army officer who introduces Louise to the aliens. He mediates between scientists who want to understand the extraterrestrials and some political and military leaders who view them as a threat. Questions about the aliens in the twelve locales bring up mistrust and rivalries between nations on Earth, especially the US and China.

Under pressure to learn the alien language and teach them English, Louise finds an ally in another gifted scientist, Dr. Ian Donnelly, played by Jeremy Renner. Louise faces personal losses as well as the toughest linguistic challenge ever, and risks her own safety. As they begin to decode the aliens' written language, she and Ian grow closer. Translation can be dangerous, however, when the alien words for “tool” and “weapon” are almost identical.

International audiences will appreciate “Arrival” for asking the big questions about what language is and how intelligent beings from all cultures can learn from and empathize with each other. Amy Adams is brilliant in her best role since “Doubt” and the philosophical questions of how and why we communicate with each other will stay with audiences long after the film ends.

“Arrival” was directed by Denis Villeneuve, the French Canadian director of 2013's “Prisoners” and based on “Story of Your Life” is a science fiction short story by Ted Chiang. The short story was the winner of the 2000 Nebula Award for Best Novella.



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“Where flowers bloom so does hope.”

– Lady Bird Johnson



"It was one of those March days when the sun shines hot and the wind blows cold, when it is summer in the light and winter in the shade."

– Charles Dickens