

Indian Journals and Allen Ginsberg's Revival as Prophet of Social Revolution

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Countercultural political and social histories may well remember Allen Ginsberg's renditions of beatnik religious and narrational adventures into underclass liberal intellectualism and social ethics as the expression of the true sublimity of "Beat," if only because he anticipates the massive protest vehicle of 1960s counterculture. In addition, biographical assessments assert the fact that spiritual metaphors of discovery and deracialized ethno-studies could galvanize intellectual and social revolutions against the anesthetizing power of American capitalist-technological authoritarianism (Raskin, Schumacher). Hence, analytic readings tend to point out pronounced differences with Jack Kerouac, Ginsberg's spiritual mentor, and William S. Burroughs, a onetime lover who had forewarned the young Ginsberg not to adopt a political liberalism that mimicked "the most damnable tyranny, a sniveling, mealy-mouthed tyranny of bureaucrats, social workers, psychiatrists, and Union officials" (qtd. in Johnson 113). Robert Johnson describes Burroughs's instructional tone: ideologies obstructed the thinker's point of view, and liberalism "was a plot to create conformity—politically, economically, and, as his letters to Ginsberg consistently argue, sexually" (106).

Ginsberg's two-year trek to India between 1961 and 1963 was, in fact, the narrative force which catalyzed his rebirth as prophet, icon, and countercultural messenger, causing him to move further from Kerouac's spiritual adventuring while transforming anguish into redemption that made possible the development of a truly countercultural outlook and protest rhetoric. First, a reading of *Indian Journals* implies a decisive moment of authorial self-doubt, borrowed from the poet's sexual and philosophical anxieties which were the result of dependence upon Burroughs and Kerouac as a "protégé." Depression, both in and after the

publication of "Howl," is intimately connected with Ginsberg's relationship to his mentors. His poetry during the late 1950s and early 1960s profile the isolating psychic frustrations of an intellectual gay dissenter obsessed with finding meanings, yet unable to realize sustained selfhood while confronted with American capitalist-military dominance. Notwithstanding his translation of drugged depression into poems such as 1959's "Lysergic Acid" and 1963's "Mescaline," the tone of his entreaty was often quite simple. In 1962, he pleaded with Kerouac in a letter: "what will happen to my mind which has lost its idea?" (*Indian Journals* 11). My sense is that two regenerative themes characterize the transformation of "beatnik" Ginsberg into the ebullient, concrete, and synthetic hippie poet who would truly challenge American structures of domination. The first was intellectual: Hindu India manifested Ginsberg's concept of "world," materially crystallized his understanding of liberal international possibility, and expanded the urgency of learning from the "Eastern" anthropological/cultural traditions, redeveloping social ethics away from the rhetoric of colonialism, postcolonialism, and globalization.

Orientalist configurations of otherness, too, were challenged, making vocalizations of true narrative communicativity between "White" and "Other" possible. Here, a reading of the makings of poems such as "Stotras to Kali Destroyer of Illusions" marked an interesting change, a moment where Ginsberg rewrote the mythology and typology of American domination to present a ubiquitous sacrificial demon which had amalgamated and destroyed man's intellectual and social being. This poem, which was in a constant state of revision in the early 1960s, empowered the focus of poetry once again to challenge the rhetoric of war, democracy, and authority within the American social landscape. The second effect was mystical and spiritual: Ginsberg's drugged depression at the outset of his journey became pleasantly romanticized, set in a country with a long history of tolerance for mysticism, shamanism, and underground rebellions against the State. Hindu mysticism, far from maintaining class separation, provided class-conscious material for the Ginsbergian revolution against American military-capitalist-technological dominance. Readings of *Indian Journals* with a view to the semiotics

of narrative production re-establishes romanticism, yet one which was redemptive of the individual's understanding of history, the sensing of *telos*, and one's ethical selfhood. In short, India performed the social and spiritual transformation of Ginsberg into a revived political acolyte, while challenging the orientalist domain of his fantasies to present a more deeply sensible Other and a changing political dynamic sympathetic with American liberalism.

Despite the wealth of contemporary scholarship about the Beat Generation, my sense is that it remains fair to pose the orientalist paradigm against the measurable impact of Beat (re) learnings of Indian and Far Eastern philosophies, literatures, and music arts. When one reads Kerouac's novels or Ginsberg's poems, the impact of orientalist metaphors remain doubly constant: few are the number of contemporary non-Western thinkers cited as compared with the broad list of ancient philosophers and poets that could easily be read without historical context or even logical digestions which might construe an authentic or humanistic derivation of "meaning." The mysterious and sublime grasp of the White adventurer was also ensured by this exotic anti-rationality: Kerouac, Ginsberg, and Burroughs all use rhetorical foils of "madness," "insanity," "strangeness" to mask the vivid possibilities of foreign performance cultures which had languished during centuries of White incomprehension, demonization, and thus superstructural validation of White economic and governmental dominance. Ginsberg's traveling inquiries did not seek closed objectives of ethnographic preservation: his was a deeply contemplated effort to internalize and suppose the potential influences of Indian religious psychodramas upon Americans. Michael Schumacher and John Raskin document the obvious ferment of Ginsberg's voyage, and recall efforts to find himself through free participation in and observation of distant oriental cultures which were confined to backwardness and obscurity. Nonetheless, there are clear points of departure from the scope and intent of Kerouac's highly sentimental journeying among Mexicans and Black Americans. Ginsberg's political aspirations were more detailed and more contemporaneous than those of his Beat predecessors. It must also be said that Ginsberg's travels, communication with spiritual leaders and poets, and re-crea-

tions of Hindu spiritual-ritual breadth, confirmed beatnik authenticity even while it erased its apolitical exclusivity. While paired with Western underclass histories and depicted as the place of multi-directional spiritual transmigrations, India confirmed Ginsberg's lifelong quest for the Blakean undermoorings of spirit, nature, and pastoralism. India also represented the academic quest for a common East-West history that Kerouac was studying through Arthur Schopenhauer, and was the subject of mutual cross-cultural and historical thinking (Kerouac, *Desolation Angels* 193, *Selected Letters 1957–1969* 392). Ginsberg did not simply take up the task of presenting Eastern thinkers or the breadth of Indian intellectual consciousness. He also used underclass Indian devotions to revive countercultural notions of egalitarianism, environmentalism, and social policy reform, to transform India into a Blakean tempest that, within all her dense humanity and visible suffering, would demand that the world abandon its urban, technologized, and militarized obsessions.

A definite departure from beatnik poeticism into countercultural political protest is clear in the early shards of Ginsberg's first major poem, "Stotras To Kali, Destroyer of Illusions." He rewrites the literary and romantic portrait of America's democratic history to produce a massive engine of conscious terror which demanded the strength, fluidity, and urgency of countercultural mobilizations, both emotional and psychic. The first draft attempts to dissolve American democracy's limitless power through journeying and through the re-writing of democratic *ethos*; these entreaties are revised significantly to make way for the typological destroyer of consciousness and for the human cycles of death and redemption initiating 1960s counterculture.

Much of the published draft of "HYMN TO US" is faithful to the first draft which was written in 1961; the published version of "Durga-Kali," written on May 8, 1962, however, adds a much deeper and more sweeping set of symbols of destruction, sacrificing the poetic mercy and piety of America's literary past. The first draft of "Durga-Kali," written on April 18, 1961, arranged the typology of man's civilizational death to represent the absorption of totalitarianism into the American political structure:

the skulls that hang on Kali's neck
Geo Washington with eyes rolled up &
Tongue hanging out of his mouth like a fish
N. Lenin upside down, einstein's hairy white
cranium. Hitler with his mustache grown
walrus-droop over his lip, Roosevelt with
grey eyeballs; Stalin grinning forever,
Mussolini with a broken jaw, artaud (*Ginsberg Papers*, box 47,
folder 1)

Leftist political theory in the United States and in Europe could not dismiss this restatement of democracy as totalitarianism: to pair the leaders of fascist and communist dictatorships with democracy, and to say that American democracy was "sick" with its unclarified and noxious integration with the most nefarious leaders of communism and fascism, was a direct attack upon the government's diplomacy and the flirtations of those less convinced of the possible "mission" of Pax Americana. The published version which appears in 1962, however, deepens the assault by identifying romantic literature, twentieth-century American poets, including himself and his family, and finally his questionable consciousness, to be symbolized as prey to the Hindu goddess of death. It reads as follows:

one hand fingers her pearly shining necklace of skulls—
Hitler, Mussolini, Roosevelt, Chamberlain, Laval, Stalin,
Mayakovsky, Hart Crane, Yessenin, Vachel Lindsay, Virginia
Woolf, Poe, Dylan Thomas, Ramana Maharishi, Naomi
Ginsberg,
Uncle Max, Aunt Eleanor, Uncle Harry, & Aunt Rose, & WC
Fields—"skull rosary" (*Indian Journals* 23)

The addition of romantic poets, feminist writers, family members, and spiritual gurus who Ginsberg had sought in order to infuse poetic *métier* and spiritual peace was as much an expurgation of things "Beat" as it was representative of a grand restatement of the totality of civilizational death. For Ginsberg to move further into the cycles and machinations of

an altered consciousness which could fight American imperialism, this death was necessary, if only to moor him more completely to the Hindu devotional tradition that premised its selflessness and redemptions from psychological suffering. That so many relics of maternity, bliss, and beauty are lumped with fascist and communist dictators, too, presented an imbibed absorption which could only be redeemed among poor, underclass, and largely unrecognized vestiges of the decolonized “South.” India, too, was a country very incompletely governed by a postcolonial “national” culture and, being a democracy, a sporadic arrangement of modern and traditional shards manifesting poverty and socio-economic powerlessness. The edit tests Ginsberg’s faith, his mercifulness to the afflicted, and the evil machinations of his Western origins. It also opens up the narrowness of his intellectual perspective in order to receive a much greater portrait of intellectual consciousness.

Hindu cosmology also mediated the poetic transformation from romantic bard to countercultural rebel: Dylan Thomas and Vachel Lindsay reappear in interviews justifying the import of Ginsberg’s 1966 poem, “Wichita Vortex Sutra.” In 1968, he unified romantic reinvention with rock and folk music, rather than jazz, as vehicles for protest along the lines of bardic singing for peace and love:

The way beyond the printed page is music! Bob Dylan. That’s the inevitable ... well. The first way out is simply platform chanting, like William Jennings Bryan, or Vachel Lindsay or Dylan Thomas or myself or whoever makes it on the platform—the vocalization. The bardic thing. Platform thing. Platform-bardic—Aah! (laughs to himself) Then next—at least in America at this point—it seems historically to have led to a revival of poetry as *song*. (*Spontaneous Mind* 157)

Further, Ginsberg’s Indiology did not assemble a force merely cultural or historical in nature: *Indian Journals* is not without some pronounced moments of sociopolitical critique and theorization about mass democratic political action. *Indian Journals* evokes characters and situations that demonstrate the Other’s collective response to White economic and cultural subjugation of the non-Christian world. The narrative

technique of diary entries is not part of an othering agency; *Indian Journals* makes frequent comparisons to the depression and *pathos* of Western Europe found in paintings and works of literature, including Dante Alighieri's *The Inferno*. Descriptive techniques for reviving otherness contribute to the counter-thrust of Western authorship: like Blake and Dante, Ginsberg explores the catharsis and anguishes of the individual as recurrent confirmations of the need for social interaction and for shared social identities abundant in Indian society and folklore.

The cultural moment of performativity suggested numerous deductions of countercultural political theory and mobilization dynamics. Hindu folk devotionals, chanting, and purification rituals figured significantly into Ginsberg's pronounced involvement in the Vietnam War, the skewered 1968 elections, and the American social establishment. Unlike the attempt of "spontaneous prose" to capture a unique and undefinedly sublime moment of cultural difference or even divergence, the diaries and their snapshots of folk devotionals (*bhajans*) suggest their functional power to be part of necessary social praxis. His 1969 *Playboy* interview illustrates the functioning of man's essential truths against mainstream dysfunctionality: "the robot standardization of American consciousness is one side-effect feedback from a greedy, defective technology, just as ecological disorder is another feedback, and these systemic disorders reinforce each other fatally unless there is complete metabolic change" (*Spontaneous Mind* 194). Ginsberg examines repression physiologically and intellectually: "we are all blocked off from our own perceptions. The doors of perception have been closed, the gates of feeling shut, the paths of sensation overgrown, the roads of consciousness covered with smog" (162).

Negative generalizations of the West appear to suggest a contrast with the harmony and community of Hindu chanting and singing to not simply be beautiful and part of a legendary historiography, but an essential functioning of the human community whose healing power touched a primordial human nature derived socially rather than spontaneously or a part of one's individual genius. Notes on the Hindu cremation rites also foreshadowed communalism: the "gathering of the tribes" (205) during the San Francisco "Be-In" directly repeated Indian sociopolitics

by transcendently staging divine messianism as that which offered solutions to “the crisis of identity and crisis of the planet and political crisis” (205). In the 1969 trial of Black Panther leader Bobby Seale, Ginsberg adeptly manifests prayer into psychic and rhetorical confrontation of the American technological authority and totality:

By immobilize (through chanting “Om”) I meant shut down the mental machinery which repeats over and over again the images of fear which are scaring people in uniform, that is to say, police officers, or the demonstrators whom I refer to as naked, meaning naked emotionally and perhaps, hopefully, naked physically. (234)

Again, I wish to emphasize that Ginsberg’s affinity for Indian folk music and rituals was not merely Beat-friendly romanticism, but a continuing and deepening gradient of learning social communicativity that contributed to the American counterculture’s re-writing of the democratic experience. The train of symbols in sentences describing *bhajans*, traveling picture assemblages of Indian cities, dreams, visionary moments of transcendence, and even cremation ceremonies where participants jump into the fire and inscribe ash in their bodies, continues in both Kerouacian “spontaneous prose” and its ecstatic, humoric stresses on the body, nature, and language. Still, the cremation rites challenged Ginsberg to realize and to negotiate Hindu Indian social communications. This was important, if only because of Jonathan Eburne’s charge that Kerouac “configured” otherness to ensure the personal genius of authorship without paying much substantive attention to the essential actors who are makers of that social-spiritual experience. Ginsberg does write of the outburst tactfully, both a test of faith and a recognition of his alien status. Still, the “singing beggar” established the social depth and gradient of learning for an outsider; his lament disinters Ginsberg’s spiritual/parapsychological pretense to epiphany through Hinduism:

And my singing beggar now squatting on a red pit, lucidly chanting away gods name—I thought perhaps this be Master Sign since I been earlier so rejectful to him & he turning out to

be such a simple holy sustained all nite praying fellow like this in front of my eyes—I sat on bench near his fire & he talked to me in loud voice, a speech I couldn't follow, sounded like he complaining my being so selfish waving his arms at me from his little brushwood hot flamey pile—I moved away, just in case he get further noisy or mad— (*Indian Journals* 78)

And then, Ginsberg is bemused and exiled when the presumed magical dream of transcendent identity through “crystal cabinet Krishna beribboned & jeweled in minds eye” (78) lampooning himself as a complete outsider and without shoes:

I had wakened, thinking it all a cartoon dream, no longer trembling, as the temple bell-going shout rose to a noisy Bong climax like the end of laughing gas movie—shoes gone like Donald Owl—went barefoot for tea & puris & potatos. (78)

Even if it simply restates the communitarian and lingual separateness of Hindu India from an American, Jewish outsider possessing nothing but devotion, scriptural readings and possible re-conceptualizations, this poem in particular assigns a transformative ethics. Ginsberg is a subject of India, rather than India the subject of his imagination. To pair transcendence with idle, thoughtless humour and petty theft was not new: Bowles, Kerouac, and Burroughs were masters of the form and suggested through these pairings the White man's unfitnes for parapsychological knowledge. Ginsberg first interprets this awakening morally: he has not learned; he must explore more definitively India's intellectual history and mythology for answers. Second, the communicativity of Hindu Indian social spheres is masked by the outsider's complete ignorance of language and his uncertainty in translating instances of the community's collective psychology. Here begins Ginsberg's much more definitive search for self-realization through a Hindu historiography, to understand the poetics of its socio-economic as well as mystic and dramatic expression.

Ginsberg was visibly impressed by the cultural “force” of Hindu rituals, and *Indian Journals* not only expanded the rhetorical paradigm of

“spontaneous prose,” but implies a real sociopolitical development, and re-development, of otherness into an inescapably modern re-creation of world ethics. The tone of admiration and sympathy was a response to complex modern-intellectual influences upon recent Indian literatures and philosophies. In this respect, he differed from other Beats who were less likely to seek non-White authorship of the modern sort, and who were at times suspicious or even remorseful about the modernization of non-White selves. Kerouac ruefully attributes the end of a cherished era, and the end of genuine attachment to faith and man’s cosmic identity, to the ancillaries of decolonization actions: “angels rioting about nothing” (*Desolation Angels* 102). By contrast, Ginsberg negotiated countercultural *praxis* through a profound socio-political identification with Indian society. With her gnawing, mass poverty, her myriad of deteriorated bodies and spirits, and her modern intellectuals who posed traditional organizations of community and economy as antidotes to the slavery of White domination, India represented the ultimate popular realization of the antithesis to White materialism and capitalism. Writing India also greatly expanded the urgent “Beat” quest for meaning and redemption for those who sought to valorize and proselytize through the experiences of the underclasses. Modifications of the “spontaneous” form meant understanding Indian myth and ritual to be constant guiding forces which remain super-structurally relevant rather than erratically defined and incomplete in their capacity to organize and direct society. Kerouac’s translations of jazz, “fellahin” Mexicans and Blacks, and Buddhist *bhikkhood* are both incomplete in suggesting socio-political and socio-economic changes, and inscribes a race against time, a transcription that faced “the Apocalypse of the Fellahin, when all Culture and Civilization are done” (*Selected Letters 1940–1956* 403). Kerouac approaches the topic of jazz’s impact upon society in *Desolation Angels*, but shies away from mass democratic implications: for Duluoz, the jazzman is an isolated and reticent genius that abstractly pieced together the “human story” of Black Americans. He idealistically restates: “The Negro people will be the salvation of America” (102), yet he never offers a complete vision of Black society or consciousness, instead narrating a series of

shards, disconnected and connected only through the final genius of the author.

In contrast, India, and Ginsberg's researching of the country, represents a complex examination of modern political realities and the social possibilities for decolonization. First, Ginsberg's list of writers and philosophers that he either meets or reads contrasts with Kerouac's actions: he attends the Jamshedpur Bengali Poets Conference (41) and is so pleasantly fascinated with the poet-mystic legends of Bama Kape and Shakti Chatterjee [whose name he spells Chattertee] (83–7) that he repeatedly pursues their symbolic power in his travels. Where Kerouac had exclusively read ancient philosophers while seeking poor subjects, mystics, and other non-intellectualized prophets so as to freely configure a "magical" antiquity, and Burroughs had raved about the most delinquent or dangerous foreign extremists and dementia to discover a "Third World" modern-traditional identity synthesis, it was Ginsberg who tried foremost to understand the countercultural relevance of a non-Western modern intellectual tradition. At the beginning of his journey, many of the selected books were not focused on India; as with Kerouac's study of Buddhism, they include spiritual texts and histories which arguably aided a learning of Indian spiritual consciousness. However, one choice clearly pointed to a learning of the modern tradition and hence, modern political agency: R.K. Narayan's *Waiting For The Mahatma*. This choice did not only underscore holistic efforts to understand India's modern sociopolitical development in more detail, or the awesome task of organizing social and political revolution, or critiques of caste inequality. *Waiting For The Mahatma* elicits revolutionary characteristics analogous to the Ginsbergian countercultural creed: The Mahatma preaches chanting and music, compassion, and casteless egalitarianism to be active themes among "the non-violent soldiers marching on to cut the chains that bind Mother India" (*Waiting* 26). Ginsberg would directly copy Gandhi's frequent visits to deeply impoverished neighborhoods, while developing and intensifying the visible portrait of hunger, disease, and unemployment in order to forecast mankind's spiritual revival.

Ginsberg's tapping of Indian *literati* reflected learning of non-White social contexts in order to cure White-manifested social ills. In a fa-

miliar Beat fashion, he sought authors who identified man's spiritual redemption of self to arise from poverty, suffering, and mendicancy. Yet the quoting of Shakti Chatterjee proposed Hinduism's elastic transcendence of White culture and economic domination, and authoritatively advances non-White fighting of White economic hegemony and White moral control of modernity. The last stanza of Ginsberg's handwritten copy reads as follows:

O god I shall meet you in the depths of the Middle Class blood
No! You are going to be defeated, sure.
Your every nerve is filled with white ants
in the bones & flesh & marrow only to age old cripple heritage
of blood—
God by that time I am a master fighter for the day's fight,
I have got the eternal right of the unachievable classical Bow-
weapon—
Tho I'm vanished ages ago from heaven—
I am that Satan, the firstborn child of heaven. (*Indian Journals*
86–7)

Although religious faith could either be a part of *decolonization* mobilizations or appear rhetorically structured to embrace historical literatures focused upon human freedoms, postcolonialism initially embraced Marxist social theory and it frowned upon religious doctrines and social performances, as they anesthetized and disenfranchised non-Whites. Amid this volatile “modern” beginning, India promised to be a unique example of spiritual dogma, scripture, and performance manifesting modern *praxis*. Chatterjee's poem professed underclass revolt, making it the essential trait for anti-racist fighting. It presents Hinduism in terms of civilizational survival and regeneration: India had submitted to Christian domination while surviving an exile from herself. Chatterjee's right to “the unachievable classical Bow-weapon”—the *Brahma Astra*, with which the god Rama kills the ten-headed demon-king Ravana in the *Ramayana*, did not promulgate “the opiate of the masses,” yet reminds us that poor Hindus could and would seek justice for their consciences and sufferings. The cultural force of legendary mythologi-

cal revival and national geopolitical protest against White institutional and social dominance challenges Ginsberg to demand White-Other intellectual-historical parity. The myriad of Indian social examples and written works intensified Ginsberg's dense polemical destructions of materialism, media and authoritarianism. Further, the moment of Ginsberg's transcription would be unmistakable: India represented a dynamic essential to the humanity of modern life, and the nation's diverse experiences would survive the government's cultural purification measures and continue to be inclusive of a wide range of practices. That few Americans had traveled to India, too, accelerated Ginsberg's apparent demand that India be humanized, stripped of her Oriental exoticity, and be understood in terms of timeless themes: life, death, the soul, and the commonality of human experiences.

Letters to Paul Bowles during 1962 confirm the religio-moral certainty that Bowles had also observed: India was a subcontinent governed by religious faith and devotional ritual intensity (*Paul Bowles Collection*, Box 9, Volume 5, *Notes On A Visit To India* 70–2). India's poverty was offset by the then relatively insignificant factor of economic globalization which would prove to be antithetical to questions of cultural authenticity and continuity. Thus, it is understandable why *Indian Journals* presented a myriad of rebirth for the thirty-six year old poet: the widespread depth of Hindu spiritual traditions, and the demand for a world that more closely mirrored the Self's true expectations and ethical understandings of the Self, implied a revolutionary compass inclusive of a large percentage of humanity that had been denied any real modern agency. All that remained for Ginsberg to do was to vocalize the thematic contents of ritual, attach it to American countercultural politics and to the increasingly politicized rock n' roll scene, render its shamanic exploitations of performance and character holy, transcendent, and romantically ideal. *Indian Journals*, then, extended holy metaphors of spontaneous prose through the visible art of spiritual hypnosis. This aspect of ritual was indeed part of Kerouac's jazzed and Mexican bacchanalias, yet *Indian Journals* offered a more adequate rendition of civilization's collective social force. Ginsberg's introduction to "spontaneous prose" in a November, 1968 interview with Fernanda Pivano

was a classic restatement of the Beat Generation's attention to both the charismatic living beauty of underclasses and the counter-generation of spiritual and social desolation, a portrait of the endangered, yet beautifully heterogeneous extra-mainstream culture:

[Kerouac began paying] attention to the rhythm of what he was writing in his own athletic speech and to the breath-runs of it and to the lyrical quality of his own natural tongue. So when he met Neal Cassady, they had long exciting conversations. Kerouac was struck by the lyrical rhythmical quality of the Denver provincial-western-twang explanations, that Neal was playing.... [Cassady] turned Kerouac on to listening to American speech and writing American speech, and that was precisely what [William Carlos] Williams was interested in doing, writing in American prosody. (*Spontaneous Mind* 114–5)

The text of the Pivano interview establishes two recurrent themes of the 1960s counterculture. The first, that the Beats tried to replicate “natural” speech patterns and languages, poems, and lyrical forms allowing the natural Self its unadulterated location in man's spirit and soul unfettered by the *logocentrism* of writing, anticipates the popular vocalization of non-White cultures and narrative voices. The second, based on beatnik searches for the common East-West point of phonemic cultural origins, attacks rhetorics of racism, colonialism, Jim Crow segregation, and lastly postmodern stereotyping and diminution of non-White agency. Still, it must be noted that Ginsberg would continue to be strongly influenced by the British Romantic poets, and more so than Kerouac, who may be considered an intermediary between the pastoral and the technological. For Kerouac, Beat possessed a unique synthesis which was at times comical but which allowed entrance into both worlds; identity was creatable from both the material and rhetorical characteristics of either world. Ritual performances in *Indian Journals* capture a sentimentalism, a romantic attachment to Nature and creation, that was innocent and an example of countercultural idealism focused upon selfless attachment to created being. It did not demand the

abolition of technologized modernity, yet rather stated and popularized man's holistic independence from modern social controls. Kerouac attempted pastoralism when writing about Mexico in *On The Road*, but included voyages, images and characters that were modern and in some way composed the imaginative portrait of Mexico's "humanity": the cities are contemplated for their aesthetic purity, but Mexicans themselves are compared with White Americans, and automobile travel is part of the ecstasy which introduces, then limits, White participation in a legendary "beyond." In contrast, *Indian Journals* captures a systemic stress on social meaning which was pronouncedly Romantic, an illustration of mankind's dependence upon nature and a holistic contemplation of divinely hewn life. Ginsberg writes:

And Indian singing is something else, a guy sits down surrounded—they all play sitting down barefoot anyway in pyjamas—everybody, workers, walk around in streets in underwear regular striped Hollywood nightmare shorts with open flies like Americans have nightmares being caught in the streets—so the singer sits down & begins groaning and stretches his hand out to catch the groan & whirls it above his head, any noise that comes into his throat like a butterfly, and throws it away with his left hand and catches another hypnotic gesture note with his right hand and whirls it around, his voice follows weirdly way up into the high icky giggle gargle sounds and brings it down like Jerry Colonna [American singer] and stirs it around with his forefinger like its all jello and throws it away with a piercing little falsetto into the curtain and does this over & over again till he's shaking like an epileptic fit and his fingers are all flying all over trying to catch the myriad little sounds coming in his ears like butterflies, I said that, like I mean flies well mosquitoes, little ees and zoops & eyerolling wheeps! (*Indian Journals* 66)

The rhetorical copy of Kerouac's stylistic emphasis upon narrative breath and rhythmic expression is deflated by clever manipulations of sensible voice—the singer first anticipates the perceivable power of living

experience, then moves through humorous sidesteps. Because of this, the author is not sure whether to admire the singer's nuanced, rhythmic and dramatic attachment to nature, or to amuse the audience with creatures of subtropical degeneration and disease. Still, this performance is elemental: it is sensible, interpreted through the natural sentimentality of creation's image, and is vocal, the manifestation of natural speech-rhythms within the body. Here are conceptual themes that marked the Beats' literary "counter-revolution," one that Ginsberg preached to be the most significant accomplishment of "Beat" writing. Prominently advanced are the attachment of the Indian poor to natural speech patterns, the reversal of Jacques Derrida's famous paraphrase of the "death" of writing in an indivisible relationship to human speech, voice, spirit, and body. The comments not only capture Beat orality and performativity; they also render meaningful the romanticized autonomy of non-White experience. To say, in the "orientalist" manner, that the Other lived in a world entirely different from that of Whites offers a familiar defense of anti-modernity. But, to say that mankind's communicativity, when borrowed from natural physical conventions, could orchestrate an admirably different social and psychological consciousness was indeed new, an admission that humanity and civilization were not characteristically and ultimately modern, Western, rational, and technological. The *bhajan* singer operates within a closed community; Ginsberg's observation, albeit mere delighting in this admirable "difference," suggests too the definitive fact of contemplative difference that could offset the divisive and repressive moral and intellectual codes of modernity, including modern man's individualism. It is also worth noting that Ginsberg dropped the veils of "insanity" and "madness": the singer's lament was neither musically pathetic nor peculiarly exotic. Instead, it is admired as the beauty and introspection of timeless humanity. Further, in contrast with Burroughs, who increasingly frowned upon traditional consciousness of any sort, here was a meaningful social-psychological mode of discourse, one which could control and regulate mankind's collective consciousness.

Indian Journals captures specific moments of internal political critique, including self-examinations which bolstered Romantic attach-

ments to the ecstasies of drugs and nature, but that helped him assemble a much more aggressive, truly beatnik understanding of human rights in modern times. Criticisms from Indian writers about Ginsberg's overuse of drugs such as marijuana and psilocybin made their way prominently into his self-examination. Indeed, he would re-write his self-statement from a very real and pressing self-doubt that reflected fear of "plunging into the feeling of chaos of disintegration of conceptuality through further drug experiences" (*Allen Ginsberg Collection*, Box 47, Folder 1) to the point at which he didn't "know what I'm doing now" (Box 47, Folder 1), into a more familiar prophetic statement, searching for "the idea of alteration of consciousness" (*Indian Journals* 45). Apathy would be re-written: "I'm afraid & waiting for I don't know what to push me on" (45). These revisions, which supplant the individual subject with intellectual and revolutionary community, depend upon the *necessity* of a modern and meaningful vehicle of self and collective expression through the experience of taking drugs. We may ably compare Ginsberg's narrative will against other counterculturalists who had happened upon sacrament-consuming shamans and hippies professing the abandonment of the mainstream. Ken Kesey, for example, and then Thomas Wolfe narrate the anxiety of acid-head followers in *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* from Kesey's peculiar directive to "go beyond LSD" (Wolfe 10), and Yaqui shaman don Juan instructed anthropologist-student Carlos Castaneda to know a perceivable universe beyond the imagination thorough peyote and psilocybin, but Castaneda fails to accept the dictation of mystic parables and philosophy, confessing anxiety and doubt because his "view of things" has been shattered. It is hard to escape the accelerating momentum of Ginsberg's increased confidence in the collective modulation of consciousness and the human spirit through drugs such as *ganja* and LSD; the interviews in *Spontaneous Mind* showcase voluminous and widely referential appreciation for altered states of consciousness and their parapsychological connection with man's cosmic agency.

The pages of *Indian Journals* underscore real thematic differences between Kerouac and his *protégé* on the subject. Restated, where Kerouac envisions the mainstream from a reflective sense of detachment and

understood the relevance of technological-materialistic consciousness to stage metaphors for America's passive social and spiritual decay, Ginsberg understands drug prohibition, hostility towards non-Whites, and television-media rhetoric to synthesize intellectual conspiracy, an attempt to configure the mind as subject of worldwide totalitarian control. On August 4, 1962, when he dreamed about a meeting with Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, he supposed the apocalyptic fetters of totalitarian control had arrived, a "State Cosmic Controlling Agency" (*Indian Journals*). It is important to recognize and query this difference because it was this totalitarian conspiracy to dominate and exploit the mind, to govern and suppress the human psyche without the human means of regeneration and/or self-identification, that incurs and strengthens Ginsberg's Romantic idealism and his absolute stress upon people's teleological ideality. In these respects, he demands political revolution where Kerouac had imagined a deinstitutionalized series of intellectual changes informed by the reticence of Beat reflection and individual self-transmigrations. Ginsberg sees as real the possibility for American superstructural change, and his public sense of utopia is inclusive and sympathetic, whereas Kerouac's is veiled and often agonizingly exclusionary.

Classical hippie counterculturalism, complete with the naturalist-historicist emphasis upon drugs as a narrative and social catalyst, rewrites the ecstasies of "spontaneous prose" to produce ingenious, insightful portraits of humanity; the continuous motion of images, of geographies, and personal, cerebral discoveries are not merely mystic; they stage human diminution and historic detachment from modernity to possess the symbols of human teleology, a step toward LSD image-pathways underscoring naturalist/historical symbols of humanity and generativity. Many of the individual letters, notes, and poems of *Indian Journals* derive insights from the visible density of religious-historical metaphors, and their power to organize human consciousness in ways counter to technological-rational Western consciousness, particularly American consciousness. I wish to point out that it is during this trek that East-West philosophical-moral synthesis and symbiosis is approached through the iconism of literary and artistic histories. A continued theme of Ginsberg's poetry is his association of drugs

and premodern practices with, and realization of, the ambitions and narrative anxieties of European and American poets, writers, and artists. East-West comparativity was hardly unique to Ginsberg, and had formed the archaeology for *On The Road* and *Visions of Cody*; however, it was he who formed a more intense East-West sociological, anthropological, and historical comparativity when bringing to life his experiences in humanistic portraits of Hindu culture, literature, and social life. Ginsberg's snapshots of Indian poverty, rituals, and conversations stem from more objective, deracialized attentions to the study of humanity; they further a deeper attention to T. S. Eliot's demand for "earning tradition" by stripping Kerouacian poetics of the tendency to repeat a conventionalized American outsidersness. India is both a modern "waste land" and an earned metaphor for historical-political reorganizations of modern man's ethical possibility. India is not an escapist paradise that faces total annihilation, as did Kerouac's Mexico, but a continuous site of learned cognition and mass proselytization for hipsters back in America. Kerouac's penchant for comic exaggerations and "free" translations of otherness is abundantly written into *On The Road*, but Ginsberg's *ganja*-catalyzed imagination focuses upon persons, legends, and images, underscoring tenable, perhaps ideal, metaphors for a timeless romanticism. In many instances, East-West textual comparisons evoke the author's struggle to romanticize "man" and "nature" through a continuous stream of images:

Fucking started BC and continued inevitably to Konerak & after that do continue but "died with the art of sculpture" said the young scholar in the palm leaf mss room in the Orissa huge-winged state museum modern air building—came from there to bus to Udaygiri caves & all day there rolling Kif & wandering reading guidebook or sitting looking out at filmy distances hills, the small temple Lingaraj in tree clusters in the distance—very much far away and in French chapel landscape—Chapels in the fields anyway—the caves had some elephants bearing lotuses & mango branches in trunks—high naked black Jain Tirthankar 1960 statue upstairs on hill lovely

young face—in one cave a sun flower I drew in a little book
[...] (104)

At other points in Ginsberg's *ganja*-soaked recollections, Hindu legends such as Bama Kape reassemble Kerouac's comic and eccentric notions of saintly wisdom to focus upon the ultimate beauty and simplicity of nature:

And Bama Kape himself, as described by the old white-haired pandit beard who gave us a room—eating the Prasad in his own Kali mouth & surrounding his head with tara flowers—drinking and beaten up & smoking ganja with the Saadhus who passed thru Tarapith till he—since he a young man sent from home as a child— crazy woman Saint—big lush, Sirs, every body thought he was crazy except Ramakrishna who stood under his feet in Kalighat the time Bama Kape came down On a single visit—a big idiot—dwelled on *Tara*. (85)

Notwithstanding the obvious fact—Ramakrishna was a saint who inspired fiercely intellectual and Independence-hungry mystic Swami Vivekananda at the turn of the century—the general portrait of social life in *Indian Journals* captures not only the prevalence of *ganja* (cannabis) smoking among Indian rite-goers and *saadhus* (sages); it also initiates a movement of political abstraction and mass democratic *praxis* to combat the injustice of drug laws. Ginsberg extends Marxist concepts of human exploitation to the realm of man's mind and imagination; here again is a complex departure from Kerouac's journals and letters because Ti Jean viewed the mainstream intellectual tradition of America to be a lifeless phantom that could never hold back his manifold navigations of spirit and community *ethos*. It can be said that Ginsberg's continued attention to drug policy reform was the most sustained and diversely resonant of the Beat Generation. Far from merely philosophizing about drugs in the poet's tongue, he engineers his writing and public career to confront the impassive and sedimentary rule of authority. Still, Ginsberg does not reject the wisdom of his mentors; the anxiety of the early years of the 1960s about drug use confirms Burroughs' contention

that the legalization of drugs would produce no conscious breakthrough (Lotringer 106). This was not to say that Ginsberg bows to a cerebral dourness. Instead, his personal and collaborative criticism of drug use necessitated narrations friendly to British Romanticist roots and to multiethnic/multinational makings of cultural pluralism. By contrast, it appears Burroughs was reluctant to endorse pluralism as *Naked Lunch* obsessively captures the metaphysics of social, economic, and health decay in the developing world, while Kerouac passively retreats into the safe confines of American patriotism, alcoholism, and critical languor after his opium nightmare in a Tangier hotel in 1957. For several issues of social policy—drugs, peace, democratic reforms, globalizations which repeat Western supremacies—the India of *Indian Journals* is the necessary example, one of widespread attunement to cosmic-religious tradition far exceeding the imports of Western media, popular culture, and capitalist modes of domination. Dimensions of India's perceived "revolution"—she was, in 1962, a nation of 400 million, and her wealth was concentrated in the hands of one half of one percent of the population (*Indian Journals* 73)—were very attractive to him; more so was the absolute rule of Hindu religious philosophy over the vast majority of Indians.

The development of Ginsberg's peculiarly countercultural *oeuvre* restates Beat intellectual freedoms and Western, usually British Romanticist, humanism. It also manifests Hinduism into the consciousness revolution stylistically and humanistically, an essential and ultimate result of his capacity to write and rewrite modern experience. In a 1972 interview with Yves Le Pellec, he locates Beat origins and the "ecstatic" and "holy" responses to very limited rational and cultural structures of the media-washed post-World War II generation. He comments about the media and politicians in the years immediately following World War II: "the air was filled with pompous personages orating and not saying anything spontaneous or real from their own minds, they were only talking stereotypes" (*Spontaneous Mind* 281). A 1971 interview with *Partisan Review* captured the dynamic of learning East-West intellectual comparability and symbiosis, learning to personally dismiss American globalized values through the recognition of the irresistible aesthetic

origins of man's social history; Srimata Krishnaji, "a lady saint from Brindaban," causes him to stress the commonality of human cultural-intellectual origins more aggressively than did Kerouac:

She said, "take Blake for your guru," and that put him in the context, oddly, of the Indian transcendental scene. In a personal way, though historically Blake always has been in that context, cause he's an eighteenth-century vehicle for Western Gnostic tradition that historically you can trace back to the same roots, same cities, same geography, same mushrooms, that give rise to the Aryan, Zoroastrian, Manichaeon pre-Hindu yogas. (*Spontaneous Mind* 263)

Despite the continued Kerouacian brooding and semantic humours derived from Ginsberg's lifelong literary mentor, the diaries of *Indian Journals* are rich with deeply sensual associations of consciousness and transcendental signifiers suggesting the possibility of a mass cultural revolution that could redesign world ethics and man's social performativity. A December 1962 trip to Benares (Varanasi), the holiest of cities in India where millions of pilgrims come to wash themselves of their sins, illustrated several examples of not only the derivable power of prayer and devotion, but the attention to a revolution through perceptions and appearances. Aside from praising the long hair and relative nakedness of the *saadhuis*, he was keen upon exposing and promoting the power of Indian spiritual consciousness through images very adaptable to hippie protest and "Flower Power." He observes while walking at night, "Householders wrapped in shawls carrying brass waterpots trudging into the Ganges steps, passing & observing the beggar man in the mid-street shrouded in its own burlap shawl—he'd been praying all night" (*Indian Journals* 131). He also notes the defiant clamor of noise: "at night [the rickshaw drivers"] bells rang in tune back & forth, speeding down the hill to Godoia from Chowk, up & down answering alarm clock tingalings in the dead streets—an iceman's tingaling, a knife sharpener's charged bellsound" (132). Geographically, that which is holy or which signals prayer is always ascendant, superior to pedestrian matters and conversations: "and a high voiced automatic chant from one man

emerges up from the street amidst the voices of male gossip & the lighting of matches glide back & forth & accumulate" (133). Ginsberg's appreciation of the ritual "power" of Indian devotions was not new, it was derived directly from Kerouac and was specifically "Beat." The belief in Hinduism's symbolic power, however, would recurrently signify the idea of hippie revolution through Ginsberg's poetry throughout the 1960s and his court appearances and protests. When breaking the stranglehold of "the whole of previously accepted Human Rationalistic rational" control of human experience and knowledge (94), India was part of his deeply reconceived poetic re-invention of himself and codified his Beat style into hippie social *praxis*. In the most basic of historiographical assessments, India helped him translate the mythology of goddess Kali into "Stotras to Kali Destroyer of Illusions," typologizing American social/political iconographies into the ultimate machinery of conscious death.

Indian Journals develops the conceptual dynamics of the poet as social revolutionary as Ginsberg "learned" India, beginning from within largely Western intellectual inspirations, then gradually leaning toward a Hinduist approximation of the poetry of mass democratic political consciousness. At the outset of the book, on July 8, 1962, he lists his definition of "a radical":

Radical Means:

Composition in Void: Gertrude Stein

Association: Kerouac & Surrealism

Break up of syntax: Gertrude Stein

Arrangement of intuitive key words: John Ashberry's *Europe*

Random juxtaposition: W.S. Burroughs

Boiling down Elements of Image to Abstract Nub: [Gregory]

Corso

Arrangement of Sounds: Artaud, Lettrism, Tantric Mantras

Record of Mind-flow: Kerouac (39)

The same entry, however, chronicles growing conceptual dynamics for translating Hinduism into an American vehicle for protest and a literary redevelopment of mutual East-West historical authenticity and essence.

Here is yet another expansion of Beat: articulating the hippies' emphasis upon the spiritual essences of the body, the mind, and the truly "human" experiencing of community. He also wrote in this entry: "as post-Einsteinian science is supposed to come to the frontier of objective research whereat the research instruments themselves are questioned, the human brain is analysed as far as it can analyse itself, to see how the structure of the brain-mind determines the interpretation of the outside universe—now found to be contained in the mind perhaps & having no objective shape outside of the measuring mind." (38) Ginsberg's redevelopment of Indian transcendental consciousnesses through Romantic imageries connected to LSD, then, are necessitated by the limits of Western rationalism and rational modes of inquiry. In short, they form part of an attempt to know the divine objectively, through the taking of perception-altering drugs. *Spontaneous Mind's* emphasis upon the living, organismic resonances of the spirit and prayer—specifically, Sanskrit mantras and ritual musics and songs, was also initiated in Ginsberg's self-reconception as a poet. He wrote:

Easier than the arbitrary pattern of a sonnet, we don't *think* in the dialectical rigid pattern of quatrain or synthetic pattern of sonnet: We think in blocks of sensation & images. IF THE POET'S MIND IS SHAPELY HIS ART WILL BE SHAPELY. That is, the page will have an original but rhythmic shape—in-avoidable thought to inevitable thought, lines dropping inevitably in place on the page, making a subtle but infinitely varied rhythmic SHAPE. (41)

The technique was often used in collections such as "Wichita Vortex Sutra" and *The Fall of America*, but its highest form of ideal poetic development, the LSD-manifested "Wales Visitation," is in part inspired by both the organismic nature of Nature and the vastness of consciousness denied to people by media, propagandism and the police state. This romanticism stemmed from Ginsberg's affinity for Sanskrit as a sensible language that purifies and modulates human consciousness. The "ecologically attuned pantheistic nature trip" (*Spontaneous Mind* 256) that he warmly associated with "Wales Visitation" is in fact a corporeal

redrawing of the death-machine of “Stotras”: through LSD, Ginsberg proposes a continuous sensible mutuality friendly with hippie environmentalism, ecstasy, and historical-teleological necessity. It is obvious from the journal entries and interviews that Ginsberg views India's widespread spiritual resonance to be a romantic phenomenon, deeply connected with the sensible beauty of rural pastoralism. Gradually, he assembles an anti-authoritarian and anti-media spiritual critique that develops a “force field” against war (*Spontaneous Mind* 152), and confidently states the necessity of countercultural revolution.

To conclude, it should be noted that Ginsberg's travels in the 1960s were many and that he uses other intellectual stratagems to augment his political sense of critique. He unsuccessfully courts Communism in Cuba and Czechoslovakia, and continues to seek, as Kerouac and Burroughs did, the archaeological depth of Mexico, while extending his India trip to include Cambodia. Yet hippie critique, ethics, and social performativity all appear to stem from his unique and nuanced encounter with India, and his approval of her vast and complete social independence from American materialism. It is also clear that Ginsberg, significantly alters the depressive tone of the earlier poems including “Howl” (1955) and “Television Was a Baby Crawling Toward That Deathchamber” (1959). Additionally, hippie idealism would be one phenomenon in which Ginsberg figures strongly, together with Ken Kesey and Timothy Leary. The members of the “LSD trio” expounded different methods and different phenomenological goals, yet Ginsberg's rewriting of Romanticism may yet be the most durable of its political-social statements. Critics such as Michael Schumacher and Jonah Raskin tend to limit this impact—still, in *Indian Journals*, one may see the makings of social revolution, a conscious revolution very different from that of Leary, Kesey, or Kerouac, yet one sharing the essence of a constantly building ethicalism.

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