

Against Destiny

Vigilance at the Event Horizon

Adya Mudgal

“...In Mudgal, the *Light* is not an object. It is the enabling condition of all appearing. Before anything appears as meaningful, measurable, describable, or nameable, *Light* is already operative. *Light* is not identical with *Bharata-varsha*. *Bharata-varsha* is a configuration within *Light*. means gathered into *light*, lit world“ that which delights in *light*” or “engaged in *light*.”

Content

1. **Preface:** The Architecture of Awakening
2. **The Meditations** (I, II, III): The Verdict / The Wager
3. **Part II: Afterword**
4. **Part III: The Sources:**
 - **Exhibit A:** Menon (The Silence of Exhaustion)
 - **Exhibit B:** The Temple (The Custodian of Clarity)
 - **Exhibit C:** The Conference of the Ghost (The Noise of the Dead)
 - **Exhibit D:** Democracy and the Powers of Supernatural Worlds (Scaling and the problem of Plurality)
 - **Exhibit E:** The Rishi (The Clarity of Announcement)
 - **Exhibit F:** Notebook Entries (Facing the Wall)

Preface

The Architecture of Awakening

This book does not argue for awakening; it begins from the assumption that awakening is possible, rare, fragile, and easily lost. The central question asked here is: what kind of architecture is required to prevent reality from "closing over" this fragility? This inquiry is a sustained refusal of the "sealing" of modern systems; a refusal that does not seek reform from within modernity, but steps outside its final authority.

At the center of this refusal is the *Light of Light*, the self-luminous awareness that is the condition by which seeing sees and meaning binds. When our inherited vocabularies lose contact with this inner pole, our institutions and stories continue to function but no longer illuminate; they become an orbit without a sun.

The meditations gathered here respond to a single diagnosis: that modern systems of meaning, whether literary, philosophical, political, or religious, have become structurally resistant to interruption. They preserve continuity, legitimacy, and critique, yet increasingly fail to

allow rupture. They refine themselves endlessly while losing contact with the condition that first made refinement meaningful. The result is not falsehood, but a form of absorption in which thinking continues while forgetting that it is thinking. A world that functions, speaks, reforms, and accelerates while remaining ontologically sealed.

Rajiv Mudgal's work is read here as a sustained refusal of that sealing. This refusal does not take the form of reform from within modernity's moral jurisdiction, but of stepping outside its claim to final authority. It insists that all systems, however sophisticated, are secondary to a more primary luminosity they neither generate nor control. This luminosity is named, cautiously, as *The Light of Light*. It is not a concept, belief, or metaphysical doctrine. It names the condition by which seeing sees, meaning binds, and responsibility becomes unavoidable.

The structure of this book follows that insistence. The **Meditations** trace how closure forms, how scaffolding is mistaken for reality, and how seriousness stabilizes itself into legitimacy. They examine the exhaustion of inherited vocabularies and the limits of procedural ethics. They follow Mudgal's confrontation with modernity, phenomenology,

Marxism, and liberal hermeneutics, not in order to refute them, but to identify the point at which they fall silent.

Mudgal's strategy follows a deliberate arc from the concrete symptom to the epistemic cause, and finally to the ontological solution. He does not start with abstract philosophy because he needs to show how the "closure" he critiques is already operating in the culture's most intimate artifacts: its stories.

At the center of this inquiry lies a redefinition of error. Error here does not mean falsity. It names the first moment of closure. Correction, therefore, cannot occur primarily through argument, adjudication, or verification. By the time something can be debated, voted on, or reformed, error has already matured into structure. Correction must occur earlier, at the level of seeing. It must precede justification and operate prior to discourse.

This relocation has consequences that the book does not attempt to soften. Once correction is intrinsic rather than external, appeal becomes fragile. Responsibility shifts from procedure to presence. Clarity cannot be stabilized, synchronized, or guaranteed. These are not oversights, but conditions of the wager being examined.

Language therefore becomes decisive. Closure hardens first in speech, not in institutions. Fear becomes phrase before it becomes power. Language can orient, but it can also explain endlessly while leaving orientation untouched. For this reason, clearing cannot be left entirely to interpretation. Reading is already downstream. The reader arrives shaped by inherited vocabularies and habits of sense-making. What follows does not offer meanings to be assembled so much as interruptions to be noticed. It asks for attention rather than agreement.

Certain figures in the book mark boundary conditions rather than conclusions. The *Devi*, in particular, names a limit point: the moment when early correction has failed, when language was not held, and when closure has hardened into system. She does not function as doctrine or prescription, but as an exposure of what becomes thinkable once interruption is no longer possible through announcement alone. Her appearance signals a question the text will not resolve in advance, but will not evade. From Nirala's *Ram Ki Shakti Puja* to the Rajput tradition of evoking shakti *Ranchandi* (the fierce aspect of the Goddess Chandi or Shakti on the battlefield) through a night-long vigil known as *Jagran* or *Ratrijaga*, which served as both a

spiritual preparation for war and a psychological reinforcement for Rajput warriors.

While the men prepared for battle, the women performed ritualistic dances to channel the Goddess's power and bless the departing warriors. Often *Talwar Raas* (Sword Dance): was performed by Rajput women where hundreds of women perform synchronized movements with unsheathed swords, symbolizing their own readiness to defend their honor and their role as the earthly manifestation of Shakti. The women folk from early childhood were often trained as poets, administrators, and warriors themselves, capable of leading defense if the men fell in battle.

The final section gathers sources from the book '*Devtaon ka Maun*' rather than authorities. The chapters *The Gods have gone Silent* (Menon), *the Conference of the Ghost*, and the *Who is that Rishi* are approached as sites of exposure rather than models to be followed. They show exhaustion mistaken for silence, borrowed voices mistaken for thought, and announcement mistaken for doctrine. Together, they suggest that awakening is neither transmissible nor preservable, and that civilization is shaped less by continuity than by intermittent flashes that leave no secure inheritance.

What follows offers no program, no method, and no guarantee. It does not promise continuity or protection. It traces a set of pressures and asks what it would mean to live without relying on substitutes for clarity. The task is not to understand these texts correctly, but to notice the conditions under which understanding itself becomes irrelevant.

For readers unfamiliar with Mudgal's work, the selected Exhibits drawn from his autobiographical text *The Gods Have Gone Silent*, together with the notebook entries from his novel *The Loom of Time* included in the appendix of selected editions, provide orientation.

Atma Prakash (Bengaluru) 2025

End Notes:

Note 1] The Sites of Exposure

To understand how this closure forms and how it might be interrupted, we must move from the Meditations to the specific "**Exhibits**" drawn from Rajiv Mudgal's work. These chapters function not as models to be followed, but as sites of exposure:

The Exhaustion of Practice: In Exhibit A (Menon), we encounter the silence of exhaustion mistaken for the silence of truth. It exposes a closed circuit where ritual attempts to manufacture confirming light through repetition alone.

The Vanishing of Structure: Exhibit B (The Temple) illustrates the collapse of the subject-object split. It describes a state where the temple "vanishes" because it is no longer an external object of vision, but an infusion of Sat and Shraddha.

The Noise of the Dead: Exhibit C (The Conference of the Ghost) diagnoses "ghost speech"—the condition where language circulates fluently after its luminous source has withdrawn. It stages the collision of colonial reason and revolutionary ideology in a library that has become an archive of "borrowed light".

The Political Wager: Exhibit D (Democracy and the Powers of Supernatural Worlds) examines how democracy becomes a "surface architecture" for unheld fears. It argues that without an inner pole, plurality merely scales Anrta (trance) rather than guaranteeing luminosity.

The Human Possibility: Exhibit E (The Rishi) introduces the "announcement" as the only force capable of naming appropriation before it hardens into totality.

The Wager of Presence: Exhibit F *The Loom of Time* (the weave of history, habit, and fear) is delicate. Every attempt to pull it forcefully toward a final solution only tears the fabric. What follows offers no program or method. Instead, it relocates responsibility from procedure to presence.

The task is not to understand these texts correctly, but to notice the conditions under which understanding itself becomes irrelevant. It is an invitation to *Pravās* (divine dissatisfaction)—the refusal to settlement for the "adequacy" of a closed world.

First Meditation

Time's Loom and Literature

The novel, *The Loom of Time*, begins from a refusal of origin myths. Institutions do not arise from revelation, pure reason, or singular acts of will. They are woven. Time functions as a loom, interlacing power, habit, fear, perception, survival strategy, and inherited interpretation into durable structures. What results is not illusion but scaffolding: survival architecture that enables continuity, transmission, and coordination. Scaffolding is not false, but it is not final.

In the book '*Reflections in the River*' Scaffolding's is explicitly written in these terms:

"...all structured thought—be it Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, or modernity—is a self-contained drama rather than reality itself. Dignāga remains firmly within the Buddha's scaffolding, refining perception without ever challenging the fundamental tenets of suffering, impermanence, and non-self."

Similarly, Islamic revelation, Christian salvation, and scientific materialism all presuppose their own foundational assumptions, building self-reinforcing loops that never step outside their conceptual frameworks. For instance, Christianity centers on sin, failing to perceive a purity that requires no redemption.

The idea is that they operate as self-contained loops, interpreting everything through their core tenets, with the initial framework shaping all that follows. It's a kind of drama—a play—where each system has its own stage, its own script, its own characters and assumptions. They function within that framework and risk becoming performances: a mental theater that pulls us away from what is lived, whole, and direct.”

Mudgal insists that:

“reality requires no system at all—when I feel wind as a nourishing breath rather than merely as measurable air pressure, I encounter its unframed, immediate essence.”

For Mudgal:

“Dignāga’s epistemology is only possible within the structure that the Buddha established. Although he refines the processes of perception and inference, he never questions the core Buddhist view that suffering, impermanence, and non-self define reality. In this sense, Dignāga’s philosophy never steps outside the Buddha’s scaffolding—it merely reinforces it through logical refinement.

Likewise, Islamic scholars remain confined to the framework of revelation and submission, just as Christian theologians remain within the framework of salvation and sin, and modern scientists operate within the confines of materialism and empirical measurement.

Each system assumes its own foundation is absolute and builds upon it without questioning whether that foundation might itself be merely a conceptual loop. Islam and Christianity structure reality around salvation—focusing on sin, obedience, and divine authority—while modernity creates a framework where progress is paramount, forcing continuous movement even when it leads to destruction and devastation.”

Post-Independence Hindi literary seriousness is one such weave. After 1947, a particular pattern hardened into legitimacy. Progressive and post-progressive realism became moral anchors. Sociological diagnosis replaced metaphysical danger. Institutions could be critiqued, but only from within their own logic. Myth was historicized into background texture. Transcendence was acknowledged cautiously and neutralized. Violence became narratable through linear history and ethical accounting. Meaning could erode, but it could not rupture.

This weave did not persist through conspiracy. His novel *'The Loom of Time'* is precise on this point. Structures endure because they reward refinement within the frame and penalize accusation of the frame itself. University syllabi, state journals, establishment publishers, prizes, and pedagogy trained perception over decades. Writers internalized seriousness as restraint, legibility, and diagnosis. Risk was permitted only when it remained interpretable within inherited coordinates. It assumes we can find truth by fixing propositions within the system.

While Mudgal's *Kul Pralay* invokes, restores, and refutes, Kashinath Singh exemplifies mastery within this loom. His institutional position was complete and earned: professor at

Banaras Hindu University, chronicler of Varanasi's social world, Rajkamal author, Sahitya Akademi awardee for realist craft. He refined the dominant weave without straining it. *Upsanhar* is exemplary precisely because it never breaks the loom. It diagnoses institutional entropy and cultural exhaustion with discipline and control. Puranic material functions as scaffolding rather than force. Myth is acknowledged for continuity but never allowed to become an epistemic threat. Divinity is humanized and contextualized. Violence unfolds linearly. Consequence concludes. Decay is legible and contained.

This containment was not cowardice. It was cultural survival architecture. A society emerging from colonial rupture required stabilizing seriousness. Singh's achievement lies in perfecting that necessity. His work stabilizes meaning even as it mourns exhaustion. It completes a historical task.

The comparison with Dignāga from Mudgal's *Reflections in the River* is exact. Dignāga refined perception and inference with extraordinary rigor while leaving Buddhist axioms untouched. He perfected epistemology within closure. Singh refines diagnostic realism while leaving its premises uninterrogated. History remains intelligible. Institutions

remain diagnosable from within. Myth remains background. The loom holds.

Where *The Loom of Time* explains how closure forms and persists, Mudgal's *The Light of Light* introduces sight as the site of rupture. It does not argue against scaffolding. It refuses to absolutize it. All systems orbit something prior to themselves. When they lose contact with that inner pole, they continue to function but no longer illuminate. Ritual persists without radiance. Progress continues without nourishment. Institutions orbit cold fire.

This is not mysticism opposed to reason. It is a hierarchy of immediacy. Wind is first encountered as breath, not as air pressure. Measurement arrives late. Systems interpose after lived contact. Reality requires no system to be real. Systems arise to manage and transmit contact with reality, but they always come second.

Scaffolding is therefore not illusion. People endure and transmit through it. The failure occurs when scaffolding is mistaken for reality itself, when internal coherence is confused with unframed truth.

This is where *Kul Pralay* enters as a literary enactment of *The Light of Light*. It does not critique institutions from

within their logic. It allows myth to accuse the loom itself. Violence is no longer an event but a migrating substance. Consequence is not exhausted by justice, liberation, or narrative closure. Collapse occurs not as punishment but as saturation, when residue exceeds the system's capacity to absorb it.

Shishupal's liberation is the decisive pivot. The metaphysical ledger closes, yet the shadow does not vanish. It migrates. Shalva becomes carrier rather than villain. His tapasya is radicalization. Shiva's gift of *māyā* enables perception warfare. *Saubha* is grievance condensed into form. The attack on Dwarka targets meaning itself: faith, psychic stability, narrative coherence. This is violence after the exhaustion of moral economies.

Krishna's divinity is redefined accordingly. He is not absolved by righteousness. He is burdened by consequence without the right to disavow it. Justice can be executed. *Moksha* can be granted. Residue cannot be recalled. Every necessary war leaves debris. Proximity to divinity accelerates history faster than consequence can be metabolized. The rishis' curse, the iron grass, and Yadava fratricide are delayed accounting, not moral failure. Dwarka collapses through

saturation. Krishna's non-intervention is recognition, not withdrawal.

The contrast with *Upsanhar* is temporal, not ethical. *Upsanhar* inhabits historical time, the *longue durée* of institutional fatigue. Its restraint mirrors arrested development because arrest was once necessary. *Kul Pralay* stages time itself as violence. Effects outlive actors. Moral accounting fails to exhaust reality. Singh diagnoses erosion. Mudgal stages reckoning without terminus.

Retelling Krishna's final years is therefore not plagiarism but corollary. Literature punishes theft from the living, not borrowing from the dead. Both works draw from a shared public-domain source. The divergence lies not in ownership but in ontology. Singh chooses restraint. Mudgal chooses amplification. Each carries risk. Only one confronts closure itself.

Kul Pralay rejects the classical moral economy. In epics and their modern heirs, violence is metabolized and cycles absorb residue. Here, violence displaces rather than resolves. Even *moksha* transfers consequence rather than terminating it.

Mudgal is correct to call the work transitional. It grasps asymmetry, ontological rage, and psychic debris, yet still

carries epic habits of proclamation and symbolic closure. A stricter twenty-first-century epic would go further still, interrupting causality rather than tracing it, permitting banality, misfire, thin interiority, and moral opacity without compensatory grandeur. It would trust silence and fracture over insistence.

The Loom of Time explains why the old seriousness stabilized meaning. *The Light of Light* explains why that stabilization now fails. *Upanhar* completes a historical weave. *Kul Pralay* exposes its exhaustion.

The decisive question is no longer whether Krishna was right, but what survives even when one is right.

End Notes

Note 1] The Fraying Loom and the Politics of Refinement

The Architecture of the Weave: Post-independence Hindi literary seriousness is a specific kind of "weave" that hardened into legitimacy after 1947. Institutions like university syllabi and state journals trained perception to see history as a linear, diagnostic process. However, the

Notebook Entries (**Exhibit F**) reveal that the loom is far more delicate than it appears. While the loom interlaces habit, fear, and survival strategy into "scaffolding," this architecture is never final; it is merely a survival strategy mistaken for reality.

Note 2] Fraying, Knotting, and Tearing: The Real History

The decisive departure in this meditation comes from the realization that history does not move in clean lines. According to the Notebook Entries (**Exhibit F**), the loom of history "frays, knots, and tears".

Fraying: Occurs when the shared meanings and "procedural ethics" of a system begin to wear thin through exhaustion.

Knotting: Represents the "Event" where the past refuses to stay buried and instead resurfaces as memory or haunting, disrupting the linear flow of time.

Tearing: Every attempt to pull history forcefully in a single direction—whether through political revolution or religious dogma—risks tearing the entire fabric.

Note 3] Mastery of the Loom vs. The Accusation

The comparison between Kashinath Singh and Rajiv Mudgal hinges on their relationship to these "frayed" threads.

Singh's contained weave: Singh is a master of the loom who refines the dominant weave without straining it. His work, specifically *Upsanbar*, inhabits "historical time" and treats cultural exhaustion as something that can be disciplined and controlled. He perfecting epistemology within closure, leaving the fundamental axioms of history uninterrogated.

Mudgal's Accusation: In contrast, Mudgal's *Kul Pralay* allows the mythic force to "accuse the loom itself". It does not see violence as an event within history, but as a "migrating substance" that saturates and eventually collapses the system.

Note 4] The Loom as Place: Acausal Gathering

Finally, the loom is redefined from a mechanical metaphor to a place of gathering. In the ruined temple courtyard described in the *Notebooks (Exhibit F)*, the shared silence and "stubborn presence" of broken lives become the loom itself. Meaning is not "added" to these lives through analysis; it arises acausally from the gathering. The tragedy of the *Langda* (the Lame) is that his "seductive questions" and

analytical gaze loosen these threads, leading to "Total Devastation"—the destruction of the gathering itself.

Second Meditation

The Burden of Clarity

Chapter 1: The Etymology of the Sinister and Epistemic Dislocation

Is Mudgal sinister? Does he want to capture, interrogate and destroy the value that measures modernity, which gives all reasoning, literature, and religion the moral ground where they can operate, including Kashinath Singh? What “sinister” means in its original sense: The word sinister comes from Latin sinistra, meaning left. Not evil. Not malicious. Leftward. In Roman and Greek augury, the left was the side from which omens came that broke continuity. The right confirmed order. The left disrupted it. A sinister sign was one that unseated the ground on which meaning stood. So, in its original sense, sinister means that which withdraws the ground, that which reverses orientation, and that which makes existing practices lose legitimacy without

replacing them safely. In short: epistemic dislocation. Under this definition, the use of the word is accurate. **Mudgal is sinister in the original sense because he turns us leftward, away from modernity as a moral commons.** He is not asking to reform the house. He is asking to step outside it entirely, and then burn the map that led there.

Chapter 2: The Abolition of Modernity's Moral Jurisdiction

Why Mudgal is sinister in this precise sense: Across Rajiv Mudgal's work, especially when you read *Kul Pralay, The Gods Have Gone Silent (Devtaon ka Maun)*, *Reflections in the River*, and *The Light of Light* together, one thing becomes clear: Mudgal is not critiquing modernity from within. He is attempting to abolish modernity's moral jurisdiction altogether. Modernity provides a procedural moral ground: reason adjudicates truth; literature critiques power; religion is symbolically contained; and ethics operates through debate, justification, and accountability. Even Kashinath Singh, for all his skepticism, depends on this ground. His irony presupposes that exposure is meaningful. His realism presupposes that language can still diagnose. Mudgal wants to pull that floor out. Mudgal is not primarily doing *environmental* ethics, AI risk discourse, social justice critique, political reform, or civilizational nostalgia. Those are decoys for readers trained in modern frameworks. His real target is deeper. Mudgal wants to destroy the idea that meaning must be justified, truth must be argued, ethics must be reasoned, violence must be morally accounted for, and literature must explain itself. This is why, in *Reflections*

in the River, logic is not merely insufficient but corrupting. This is why Buddhism is treated not as liberation but as a closed loop, and why science and democracy appear as momentum machines. Modernity's core claim is this: *We may disagree, but we share the same ground of reason.* Mudgal rejects that ground.

Once you abolish modernity's moral ground, you also abolish the basis on which violence can be criticized, the basis on which power can be interrogated, and the basis on which literature can resist authority. Mudgal tries to prevent this collapse by insisting on *poetic sight*, but *poetic sight* itself cannot be held accountable. It cannot be argued with. It cannot be cross-examined. That is why he feels *sinister*. Not because it is reactionary. Not because it is religious. Not because it is anti-science. But because it removes the shared ground on which disagreement is possible. His philosophical works are more troubling because they replace the ground rather than leave us groundless. A concept explains. An anchor arrests motion. Mudgal abolishes the modern moral commons where reason, critique, literature, and ethics negotiate meaning. But once that commons is gone, he does not build a new system. He drops charged names into the void and expects them to hold.

Mudgal succeeds brilliantly at destroying the moral ground of modernity. But from a modern perspective, he leaves us after modernity but before responsibility can be rebuilt. That gap is not mystical. It is lethal to ethics, literature, and politics alike.

Chapter 3: The Light of Light as Pre-Reflective Awareness

That is the sinister move. What replaces modernity's light: He does not replace it with darkness. He replaces it with something pre-ethical and pre-justificatory, the 'is' of isness, and then names it *The Light of Light*. This "light" is not illumination in the modern sense. It does not clarify. It overwhelms. It is recognition without argument, truth without explanation, authority without justification, and meaning without debate. That is why it feels dark. Not because it is violent, but because in its *showing, sighting* and *gathering*, nothing can question it once it appears. Darkness, here, does not mean absence of light. It means absence of appeal. What Mudgal is trying to save: Mudgal is trying to save the recovery of *Brahman*, but not as theology. In the "Temple is a Song of Brahman" chapter in *Devtaon ka Maun*, Brahman is not a god, belief, or doctrine. It is the undeniable pre-differentiated presence, a world before explanation, before subject and object, before ethics as calculation, and before politics as negotiation.

What replaces modernity does make internal sense, but only if we read it on its own terms, not as a political or ethical

system. Mudgal is not replacing modernity with the twin sisters *Kashi-Varanasi*, *Indra-Virochana*, *Rajdharmā*, or *Viśhvās-Pravās* grounding *Vās* as concepts. He is replacing ground with orientation. The opening invocation of *The Gods Have Gone Silent*: The book does not begin with an argument, a claim, or a doctrine. It begins with an address to that which cannot be spoken, yet through which all speech arises. Mudgal is not proposing an alternative moral system. He is attacking the idea that morality, literature, religion, or politics can rest on articulated grounds at all. When he says modern science and literature fail, the failure is not ethical. It is ontological. They operate only after the subject–object split. They can describe, critique, and analyze, but they cannot touch the precondition of description itself. So when later terms appear—*Kāshī*, *Viśhvās-Pravās*, *Rajdharmā*—they are not replacements for reason. They are names for orientations toward the precondition. This is why they feel incoherent if read as systems. They are not meant to systematize.

Chapter 4: Metaphysical Geographies and the Site of Kashi

In *The Light of Light*, Kashi, the city of Kashinath Singh, as marked in his *Kashi Ka Assi* is presented not as a historical city, not as a sociological site, nor even as a mythological location, but as a metaphysical remainder. A place where time collapses, where death is already metabolized, and where consequence dissolves into presence. But this creates a problem. If Kashi is outside history, then it cannot guide action within history. If it is inside history, then it is subject to the very moral accounting Mudgal has already rejected. So Kashi oscillates between a metaphysical absolution zone and a symbolic refuge. It is neither fully one nor the other. As a result, it cannot function as an ethical replacement for modernity.

Kashi is not geography, mythology, or politics in *The Light of Light*. It appears almost exclusively as ritual orientation. Shanti Prakash's final instruction is not "believe in Kashi" or "restore Kashi." It is: immerse the ashes there and read aloud the text. That is crucial. Kashi functions as a place where speech returns to silence. *Manikarnika* is not moral purification; it is ontological closure. Death is not explained,

justified, or redeemed. It is absorbed. So Kashi is not a value. It is a site where justification ends. That is why it cannot “make sense” in modern terms. It is designed to terminate sense-making. That is why Mudgal insists: Virochana founds Varanasi. Indra founds Kashi. Same ground. Different orientation, where Varanasi is the city of ritual order and Kashi is the city of liberation. This is not geography. It is the phenomenology of dwelling.

Chapter 5: Confronting the Walls of Western Metaphysics

Mudgal is deliberately operating where most critical vocabularies fail. The problem Mudgal thinks the modern West (under whose dominion Kashinath Singh operates) never solves is this: Mudgal is not asking, “What is truth?” He is asking, “What gives truth the right to appear at all?” Modernity answers this with different grounds: Reason. Subjectivity. History. Language. Power. Mudgal’s claim is that all of these are secondary, and therefore incapable of grounding meaning without circularity. They explain how meaning circulates, but not why it shows up as binding, luminous, or compelling. That is the abyss he keeps returning to.

Mudgal takes Ernst Jünger seriously because Jünger understands something Marx does not: that technology is not a tool but a mode of being. In Jünger’s *The Worker*, technology is not owned by capital or deployed by ideology. It is a total mobilization of reality. Everything becomes a resource, including humans, ideas, war, and art. Mudgal accepts this diagnosis. Where he goes further is this: he argues that Marx still believes in human agency as corrective.

Jünger does not. Heidegger does not. So Mudgal is not attacking Marx from the Right. He is attacking Marx from below, by saying Marx never escaped the metaphysics of mastery. With Martin Heidegger, Mudgal thinks he has finally found someone who sees the real problem: that modernity forgets Being itself. Heidegger dismantles: subject–object metaphysics, instrumental reason, technological enframing, and humanism. Mudgal follows him all the way to this point. And then he stops. Because Heidegger still does one fatal thing. He ‘thinks’. Even when Heidegger says “let Being be,” he still articulates it within language, history, and interpretation. Phenomenology tries to let phenomena show themselves, but it still depends on the clearing that thought prepares. The metaphor of *Bodhidharma* facing the wall is exact here. Phenomenology sits facing appearance, waiting for disclosure. Mudgal says: the wall itself is the problem.

Phenomenology says: Let what appears appear. Deconstruction says: What appears is already structured by difference, absence, and deferral. Mudgal’s critique is brutal and simple. Both assume that appearance is primary. But what if appearance itself is derivative? What if the deepest reality is not what appears, but that by which appearing happens? This is where he introduces *The Light of Light*:

Not as a concept. Not as a belief. Not as an ontology. But as self-luminous awareness, which does not appear as an object, cannot be bracketed, cannot be deferred, and cannot be deconstructed, because it is the condition of all those operations. This is why he thinks phenomenology hits a wall. Because phenomenology still waits for something to show itself. Mudgal says: What if what matters never shows itself, because it is what seeing already is? Further, Mudgal believes the wall cracks because he moves from appearance to the ground of appearance. What actually cracks is philosophical discourse, not the wall. Mudgal exits philosophy. He does not refute phenomenology. He steps outside its jurisdiction. It is a refusal to continue the game. This is why the move feels illegible. He is not doing critique anymore. He is doing invocation, a '*Ram ki Shakti Puja*' before Ravana is terminated. That is why Jünger, Heidegger, Marx, and Derrida all fall silent at the same place. They require argument. Mudgal withdraws the need for argument. Mudgal is trying to remove capital as the ground of value. Remove history as the ground of meaning. Remove language as the ground of truth. Remove critique as the ground of ethics. And replace all of them with pre-reflective luminosity. For him: The temple is not a symbol. The song is not a representation. The light is not illumination. It is that by which anything is ever meaningful.

Chapter 6: The Dialectic of Vishvās and Pravās

Vishvās–Pravās is even more unstable. On the surface, it gestures toward trust, pilgrimage, surrender, and movement without justification. But trust in what, and by whom, and under what conditions? Modernity grounds trust procedurally. Mudgal rejects procedure. What remains is unaccountable trust. Once trust is detached from reason, law, critique, or mutual verification, it becomes indistinguishable from submission, courage, virtue, judgment. Unlike *Subag Ke Nupur* by Amritlal Nagar, *The Light of Light* never resolves this. It assumes that poetic sight will prevent abuse. That is not an argument. It is not even a hope. And Hope for Mudgal is not a moral ground. *Vishvās–Pravās* is not trust vs. journey, but anchoring vs. movement. The temporal focus with *Vishvās–Pravās* dissolves when you read it alongside the *Indra–Virochana* myth in *The Light of Light*. *Virochana* accepts the first explanation of the Self and builds a civilization around it. Indra refuses closure and keeps returning until recognition happens. *Vishvās* is not belief. It is dwelling in what has already been recognized. *Pravās* is not wandering. It is the refusal to settle for explanation. Together, they are not a

moral program. They are a rhythm. Modernity collapses everything into *Pravās* without *Vishvās*. Endless critique, endless motion, no dwelling. Traditionalism collapses everything into *Vishvās* without *Pravās*. Fixed ground, no inquiry. Mudgal is not choosing one. He is insisting on a tension that cannot be stabilized. As "**Indira's** *divine dissatisfaction*," it is the refusal of premature closure.

Mudgal's appeal to the *Indra–Virochana episode* from the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* is not decorative. Virochana accepts the first teaching and operates from within its opening. Indra does not. Virochana thus represents a settled cognition as civic sufficiency, ethical reciprocity, workable order, and completion at the level of appearance. Indra represents the dissatisfaction with adequacy and a refusal to confuse function with truth, persistence beyond explanation, and thus returns again and again. Thus *Pravās* is not transcendence over reason, but dissatisfaction with reason's self-satisfaction. He does not object to: "*Because virtue cannot be guaranteed, we build procedures.*" But when procedures begin to substitute for virtue, someone must be capable of sensing the substitution. That sensing is *Pravās*. *Pravās* is interruption, not authority or governing capacity, override of reason, or meta-rational veto. It is the capacity to wake up inside motion. Divine dissatisfaction is not

superiority. It is the inability to remain hypnotized. Indra's repeated return to Prajāpati is exactly this. He keeps waking up from partial answers. Virochana does not fail morally. He falls asleep intellectually. This is the ground where meaning becomes intelligible. It is not illumination that commands, truth that legislates, or authority that grounds law. It is wakefulness itself. The light by which one notices avidyā, one senses absorption, and one interrupts momentum. Thus *Rājadharmā* for Mudgal is not rule by the awakened. It is guardianship against collective sleep.

Chapter 7: *Rājadharmā* as Custodianship of the Inner Fire

Rājadharmā: This is where incoherence becomes dangerous. *Rājadharmā* presupposes authority, decision, violence, and judgment. But Mudgal has already dismantled every framework by which authority can be justified or challenged. So what does *Rājadharmā* mean in a world without moral arbitration? Either it is symbolic, in which case it does nothing. Or it is operative, in which case it is power without justification. There is no third option. Classical *Rājadharmā* worked because it was embedded in a thick web of ritual, law, cosmology, and social constraint. Mudgal strips away that entire web and retains the word. A word without a system is not meaning. It is residue. *Rājadharmā* is the most misunderstood term for Mudgal. In *The Light of Light*, *Rājadharmā* is defined explicitly as custodianship of ṛta, not rule, law, or policy. This is not governance as command. It is governance as guarding the inner fire that prevents society from becoming procedural noise. That is why Mudgal says democracy without an inner pole becomes “*an orbit without a sun.*” This is not a call to replace modern democracy. It is a claim that democracy is derivative, not foundational. This is not constructive

politics. It is ground withdrawal. Therefore, they must be grounded again in this light.

On a shallow level, it may appear as a category error that "*Light of Light* is the condition of appearance, therefore it should be the ground of reason, law, and politics," or that "what enables reason, therefore, must rule reason." On the surface, that inference may appear as illegitimate. For example: Language is the condition of possibility of law; that does not mean language should govern law. Time is the condition of possibility of politics; that does not mean time legislates policy. Or awareness may be the condition of reason; that does not mean awareness grounds reason normatively. Mudgal invokes Plato but not in its Platonic sense that "Courage cannot be taught, Courage cannot be legislated, Courage cannot be forced, therefore virtue precedes law or illumination governs law," but rather that law appears to compensate for the absence of wisdom. Plato never authorized philosopher-kings because they see the Good. He authorized them because no one else can see it reliably, and even they fail. Mudgal strips Plato of tragedy because, in Plato, philosophy becomes theology in disguise. Because virtue cannot be guaranteed, we build procedures. Because wisdom cannot be trusted, we distribute power. Because light cannot be verified, we argue. The book,

revealed or reasoned, sacred or secular constitutes human governance like a shepherd leading his sheep's.

Nevertheless a predictable charge arises here that needs to be investigated and addressed. Mudgal appears, to a reader trained in modern epistemology, to abandon error correction altogether. Because he rejects external validation, procedural adjudication, and second-order justification, his position is easily misread as a withdrawal into ineffability or unaccountable intuition. Read through a Popperian or broadly modern epistemological lens, the absence of falsification and appeal looks like an exit from correction itself. *The Light of Light* then appears immune to contestation, and Mudgal is taken either as authoritarian or mystical, depending on whether one fears power or obscurity.

This charge rests on a categorical error. In Mudgal, error correction is not external because error is not propositional. There is no tribunal outside light because light is not an object among others. *The Light of Light* is sun, seer, and seen as original clarity. Dimming is not mistake in the logical sense. It is sway, absorption, hypnotic force that absorbs and saturates humans, not trance inducing but Trance with capital 'T'. Capturing both belief and reason as a paradigm

parádoxos. Increasing light is not the addition of information or the application of critique. It is the intensification of clarity by which substitutes fall away on their own. Darkness cannot light itself, but light corrects darkness simply by being present. Correction is therefore intrinsic rather than adjudicated. It happens as re-seeing, not refutation.

The problem is not whether correction exists, but where correction can be contested once it is fully internalized. When correction belongs to light itself, certain consequences follow that cannot be avoided. Correction becomes non-rebuttable. If one says “this is clarity” and another says “this is sway,” there is no shared register in which the disagreement can be decided. Appeal itself belongs to the dimmed register. This is not covert authoritarianism. It is the cost of ontological correction. Responsibility also becomes existential rather than procedural. Mudgal does not dissolve responsibility by externalizing agency to Being, destiny, or history. He radicalizes it. There is no alibi, no exemption, no institutional buffer. One either stays present or one does not. Responsibility can only be borne. It cannot be stabilized. And correction cannot be collectively synchronized. Light does not correct uniformly. *Vishvās*

cushions asymmetry for a time, but when *Viśhvās* fractures unevenly, clarity intensifies difference rather than resolving it. Mudgal accepts this. He refuses substitutes.

What follows is not an epistemic difficulty but a civilizational wager. If correction is intrinsic, non-transferable, and non-procedural, trance reproduces mechanically while clarity reproduces contingently. Fear organizes faster than light. Substitutes scale better than seeing. Mudgal does not deny this. In *Kul Pralay* he accepts it explicitly. History does not accumulate wisdom. It forgets, again and again, punctuated by flashes. Mudgal is not attempting to solve the problem of endurance. He is refusing it. Any solution to endurance that stabilizes itself is already *anṛta*. Clarity must appear when it appears, correct when it corrects, cut when cutting is required, and disappear when disappearance is necessary. This is not confusion. It is a deliberate ontological choice.

At this point, a critique, disagreement or dissatisfaction can no longer claim incoherence or mysticism. It can only ask whether one is willing to accept a world without guarantees, continuity without preservation, and ethics without procedural shelter. Mudgal's answer initially appears to be unambiguous. There is no substitute.

Within this framework, error correction is not an operation performed on propositions or systems. It is the capacity to see error as error before it consolidates. Error does not mean falsity. It means the first moment of closure, the earliest signs of sway, substitution, capture, or borrowed light. Correction occurs at the level of perception, not adjudication. By the time one is arguing, reforming, or critiquing, error has already matured.

This is why language is decisive. Language is the site where closure hardens first. Fear becomes phrase. Orientation becomes slogan. Light becomes borrowed clarity. Long before violence appears in the world, it appears in speech. Mudgal therefore confronts linguistic capture before institutional power. Ghosts speak. Demons appropriate names. *Anṛta* announces itself long before it rules.

To say that people are the custodians is not metaphorical. It is the decisive ethical move that separates Mudgal from Marx and Heidegger. Custodianship unlike Gandhi does not mean authority or expertise. It means answerability. Someone must hold language so that it does not seal. Someone must name closure while it is still forming. Someone must risk clarity without turning it into

command. That someone is not Being, not history, not destiny, not system. It is people, plural, situated, and exposed. This is why *Rājadharmā* cannot be procedural or centralized. Custodianship is a distributed burden. Anyone can fail it. No one can escape it.

This also explains the place of the *Devi*. She is not symbol, allegory, or mythic excess. She is violent intervention carried to completion, and completion includes death. When Mudgal says it is worth dying for, the claim is not devotional or rhetorical. It is ontological. The *Devi* appears only when early correction has failed, when language was not held, when fear hardened into system, when appropriation became total. At that point, announcement no longer works. Custodianship has already been bypassed. Clarity does not argue. It cuts.

The demons Śumbha and Niśumbha are not immoral rulers. They are total capture. They seize light and claim sovereignty over it. They do not negotiate because they cannot see. Once closure reaches that density, any non-violent response is already internal to the demon's logic. Reform becomes optimization. Dialogue becomes absorption. Critique becomes fuel. The *Devi* does not correct. **She terminates.**

What is at stake is not ideology or outcome. It is whether reality remains open at all. If openness collapses completely, life continues biologically and politically, but orientation is gone. Survival itself becomes participation in *anṛta*. Death is therefore accepted because there are conditions worse than death, and total closure is one of them. The *Devi* does not rule after she kills. Violence is terminal, not administrative. It is justified only by the absolute condition that nothing else can interrupt closure.

This architecture collapses if clearing is left to the reader. Modern reading assumes neutrality, interpretation, and plural meaning. Mudgal rejects this assumption. Reading is already downstream. Interpretation is already late. Plurality of meaning is already a symptom of dimming. Without clearing in language, reading itself becomes another vehicle of *anṛta*.

This text therefore does not invite interpretation. It demands attention. It does not offer meanings to be assembled but interruptions to be noticed. When custodial responsibility fails, closure consolidates, announcement becomes impossible, and violent interruption becomes necessary. The sequence is not optional. Language closes,

systems harden, fear governs, and only then does violence become unavoidable.

The task is not to understand this text correctly, but to prevent the conditions under which understanding itself becomes irrelevant.

For Mudgal: *Viśvās* is confidence in the given order. *Pravās* is the capacity to step behind the given order. Not to abolish reason, but to see its ground. He agrees with Plato that because virtue cannot be guaranteed, we build procedures; because wisdom cannot be trusted, we distribute power. Because light cannot be verified, we argue. But he adds: These are second-order solutions. They work only if someone, somewhere, retains the capacity to see when the procedures themselves hollow out. That capacity is *Pravās*. And the custodian, in his view, is precisely the one who can operate within procedure but is not exhausted by it. Who can step behind reason without destroying reason. This is not irrationalism. It is meta-rational custodianship. Mudgal is not misreading Plato accidentally. He is confronting Plato at his most dangerous point. Plato says: The Good is like the sun. It illuminates but cannot itself be looked at directly. Therefore, the philosopher must return to the cave and rule reluctantly. Mudgal says: Plato still externalizes the Good.

He treats it as an object of vision, even if blinding. Therefore, governance remains representational. But what if the Good is not what is seen, but that by which seeing happens at all? Then: Courage cannot be taught. Virtue cannot be legislated. Wisdom cannot be proceduralized. But custodianship is possible, not because one knows the Good, but because one is transparent to its operation. This is why he insists: *Pravās* is not rebellion. It is exposure.

This genuinely challenges Plato's Philosopher Idea. Plato's Sun analogy in *The Republic* still treats the Good as something seen, something approached, something external to seeing itself. Even if blinding, it remains an object. Mudgal revisits: What if the Good is not what one sees, but that by which seeing occurs? Then: courage cannot be taught, virtue cannot be legislated, wisdom cannot be institutionalized. The custodian does not possess the Good. He is unable to mistake adequacy for truth. This is why he calls *Pravās* "divine dissatisfaction." This is not mysticism. This is epistemic vigilance. Mudgal's insight is *Sat*: Reason can mistake adequacy for truth. At the same time, he refuses to turn the refusal of adequacy into a criterion for authority. At the same time, when procedures begin to substitute for virtue, someone must be capable of sensing the substitution. For Mudgal, procedures cover sight, dimming the inner

light. He converts a spiritual posture into a governing capacity. Indra is *indha*, thus the light of the sun itself. Kings and leaders are symbols of intelligence that *lights* justice as in Adigal's *Silappathikaram*. Thus for Mudgal, procedure itself is a symptom of dimming; it is not neutral, it is not second-order, it is already *anṛta* beginning. When procedures substitute for virtue, it is procedures replacing ethics; procedure appears because the inner light has already dimmed. *Rta* is luminous order, *anṛta* is opacity, and procedure is a prosthesis for lost luminosity. So there is no moment where procedure is "working fine but hollowing." Procedure itself is evidence of distance from truth. That is why he does not want to correct procedure. He wants to re-anchor existence prior to it. For him, Indra = *Indha* is not metaphor; it is ontological identity. Indra is not a God in the Western sense, a king of kings, a cosmic ruler, or a mythic example. Indra is *Indha*, the kindling light itself. He is the luminous condition of intelligence, the fire by which seeing sees, the sun by which justice is illuminated. So when Mudgal speaks of kings, leaders, Janaka, or *Rājadharmā*, he does not mean rulers who have insight. He means: rule itself is a function of light. Authority is not delegated. Authority is derivative of luminosity. This is why he believes Plato stops too early. Plato still makes the sun external. For Mudgal the sun as the condition of all seeing.

Unlike the Neo-Platonist for whom “spiritual posture becomes governing capacity,” for Mudgal: There is no posture. There is no capacity. There is only light operating through form. The problem is not that a person claims special insight or a custodian overrides reason. But if rule is a function of light, and light precedes reason, then rule cannot be contested in the register of reason. Thus procedures dim the inner light, articulation obscures immediacy, and argument is already smoke. For Mudgal, Indra is *Indha* is not mythic decoration; he is not a king with insight. Indra is the kindling intelligence itself. Law, ritual, and procedure belong to Virochana; Light belongs to Indra. This is not a hierarchy of persons; it is a hierarchy of modes of being. Mudgal is not saying: “Leaders must rule because they have light.” He is saying: “A society without an inner axis will spin itself into avidyā.” Mudgal does not claim that Light as Law replaces institutions, and insists that forms remain, rituals remain, cities remain, and structures remain. Varanasi is not abolished. Kashi coexists with it. He does not say: “Light organizes plurality.” He says: “Without light, plurality is carried by sway.” Structure without an inner pole becomes hypnotic. He is not saying: “the sun governs the planets.” He is saying: “without the sun, motion becomes meaningless spin.” That is a phenomenological claim, not a

political one. The confusion arises because we expect normative closure. Modern critique asks: Who decides? What happens when they disagree? What is the procedure? Mudgal is not proposing a mystical alternative to politics. He is proposing a phenomenological diagnosis of *avidyā* that precedes politics. Mudgal's anxiety is not plurality. It is the loss of stillness within plurality.

Chapter 8: Anṛta and the Phenomenological Trance

He is not using anṛta in the classical sense of falsehood or moral disorder. In *The Light of Light* and the notebook entries in the novel *The Loom of Time*, anṛta functions phenomenologically as a state of absorption. Anṛta is not “wrong thinking.” It is thinking that has forgotten it is thinking. So anṛta is not darkness. It is over-lit consciousness, flooded; it is seeing unable to step back. The emotions unlocked by anṛta are not crude. They are: Capital, ideology, even critique produce rhythm, repetition, and emotional reinforcement. People move, speak, protest, argue, publish, but remain asleep as when awake. Where responsibility migrates into form, decision becomes execution, ethics becomes compliance, and thought becomes repetition. So procedure is not bad because it is rational. It turns bad because it prevents interruption. But if wakefulness is private and trance is collective: Then the moment wakefulness tries to organize society, it must name trance, diagnose sleep, and interrupt others. This creates hierarchy. Who decides, how conflict is resolved, how error is corrected, and how power is restrained? Those require shared procedures. And procedures are already sleep. That

results in an unresolved paradox. As to how wakefulness can coexist with plurality without becoming domination.

In the imagined “Gen-Z” and the “Kathmandu uprising” passages in *The Light of Light*, there are diagnostic scenes where Mudgal finally shows what he means by *anṛta* as sway, not as error, not as ideology, but as mass affect without an inner axis. He does not accuse Gen-Z of ignorance. He does not accuse Kathmandu protestors of immorality. He does not accuse leaders of bad intention. Instead, he keeps returning to: drift, pull, current, momentum, being “carried.” *Anṛta* is being moved without knowing what moves you. In the Gen-Z critique, Mudgal does something very precise and very uncomfortable. He does not say: “They are shallow,” “They lack values,” “They are manipulated.” He says, in effect: They are hyper-sensitive but pole-less. They feel intensely. They react quickly. They mobilize fast. They collapse just as fast. Why? Because sensation has replaced *orientation*. This is *anṛta* as trance: not numbness, not apathy, but constant stimulation without anchoring. He describes: chants, colors, bodies, music, collective emotion, and righteousness in the air. And then he says, quietly but decisively, that nothing holds. No inner pole. No silence. No center that can withstand time. *Anṛta* here is moral excitement without stillness, justice

without depth, rage without grounding, and togetherness without truth. The crowd is awake emotionally and asleep ontologically. Mudgal is not saying leaders are corrupt. He is not saying they are incompetent. He is not even saying they are cynical. He is saying: They are responsive but not rooted. They react to: polls, optics, pressure, outrage, momentum. But they cannot withstand sway. An inner pole, in his vocabulary, is not ideology. It is not belief. It is not conviction. It is the capacity to remain unmoved while everything moves. Without that pole, leaders amplify trance, they do not interrupt it, and governance becomes a feedback loop. That is *anṛta* at the level of power. Kathmandu, for Mudgal, is not Nepal. It is a pattern. It names the fusion of spiritual affect, political emotion, aesthetic intensity, and moral urgency. All without discipline. At least Capital has structure. Marxism has theory. Kathmandu has feeling without spine. That is the danger. That is why leaders without an inner spiritual pole are dangerous. Not because they are evil. But because they cannot resist in the true sense.

Mudgal is not saying: “Replace reason with light.” He is saying: “Reason, protest, critique, spirituality, activism, and politics all become dangerous when they lose an inner pole.” *Anṛta* is not modernity. It is motion without anchoring, movement unmoored from orientation. It is not about how

trance works, how sway spreads, how leaders amplify it, It names a deeper dislocation of ground or why wakefulness matters.

Nor about how inner poles can be cultivated collectively, how they can be recognized without hierarchy, or how interruption avoids domination. This is why modern democracy, activism, Gen-Z politics, the Kathmandu uprising, and even spirituality are treated together. They share a single phenomenological trait: movement without a pole. Kathmandu is not “wrong politics.” It is politics without an inner light as the pole of polis. And leadership without an inner pole does not steer. It resonates. They amplify sway, mirror momentum, and respond but cannot interrupt; they are instruments of trance. This is why democracy becomes noise, ritual, and smoke when detached from the pole of light. Kashi collapses into Varanasi, the one splits , head fractures into a thousand pieces.

Chapter 9: The Move from Critique to Aesthetic Enclosure

What happens when trance is no longer raw but beautified, sanctified, untouchable. In the Upanishad Gargi is warned, if she is not careful she exposes her inner understanding and and forward push is amplification of mindfulness as *anṛta*. She sees through it, recovers and withdraws. Let's return to "*Temple is a song of Brahman*." One has to be careful with it, as once ethics, politics, and violence are placed inside song, they are removed from contestability. One can resonate or not resonate. That is all. This is not an alternative moral order. It is an aesthetic enclosure. Mudgal is not replacing modernity with a coherent pre-modern system. He is replacing modernity with unexamined sacral residues. These residues feel ancient, profound, and civilizational, but they no longer have clear scope, clear limits, clear mechanisms, or clear accountability. They float. That is why one can say, "none of it makes sense," when pressed. Mudgal is trying to save the possibility that meaning precedes justification. Not Hinduism. Not India. Not Kashi as identity. Not *Rājadharmā* as rule. He is trying to save a mode of being where truth is not argued, ethics is not negotiated, and meaning is not produced by procedure.

That is why he keeps returning to song, ritual, vision, silence, breath, and fire. Mudgal's project feels sinister in the original sense because it removes the shared space where critique can operate. Once meaning precedes justification, you cannot argue with it. You can only recognize it or not. Literature becomes invocation. Politics becomes custodianship. Ethics becomes attunement. This does not collapse into fascism or theocracy. It collapses into uncontestability. That is the danger one senses. And the text does not resolve it. It embraces it. Mudgal is not replacing modernity with nonsense. He is replacing modernity with a non-argumentative ground that precedes it is the very ground itself. It feels incoherent because it refuses to be coherent in modern terms. That refusal is deliberate; it is the project. And that refusal is what makes it genuinely disturbing for both political right or left, if not theatrically dark.

Why this is so hard to accept for one who already lives and dwells within the hypnotic sway. Because from the very condition under whose sway he dwells: Literature has from the very outset lost its critical function. Philosophy has no true argumentative authority. Politics loses its justificatory basis. Ethics loses its procedures. Everything becomes dependent on recognition, not reason. That *The Light of*

Light is not knowledge but that which makes knowing possible, *Rājadharmā* is custodianship of this light, and when this light dims, *anṛta* appears. Modern reason, law, democracy, and critique are downstream phenomena. Plato feared this. That is why he refused to collapse the sun into the eye. Mudgal does not. But it becomes untenable the moment it touches plurality, disagreement, historical conflict, and political action. Does it collapse into a theology, or revolutionary movement of 'either one sees, or one does not'? Because that is not ethics. It is revelation logic. But Mudgal is not smuggling mysticism accidentally. He is making a deliberate ontological wager: For him *anṛta* is the dimming as trance or hypnotic potential, not error. He is not explicitly saying that safeguards for interruption cannot themselves be safeguarded. The moment interruption is stabilized, formalized, or protected, it ceases to interrupt. Cannibalism here does not mean violence. It means self-referential consumption. The moment light becomes a function, it is eaten by function. Safeguards are prosthetics for lost attention. They belong to Virochana's world, not Indra's. Mudgal is not saying: light preserves itself by refusing preservation. What he is saying is closer to: *darkness cannot light itself*. *Anṛta* does not mean falsehood, does not mean evil, does not even mean ignorance. *Anṛta* is self-enclosed cognition. A system, a ritual, a belief, a

critique, or a philosophy that tries to generate illumination from within itself. That is why he rejects Heidegger's "letting be."

End Notes

Meditation II shifts the focus from the structure of history to the methodology of rupture. It explores the "Sinister" turn—not as a moral category, but as an ontological maneuver that withdraws the ground from underneath the feet of modern critique.

The Sinister Turn and the Withdrawal of Ground

Note 1] The Definition of "Sinister" (Sinistra)

In this context, "Sinister" is reclaimed from its Latin root, sinistra (the left hand). It represents a movement that is inherently unsettling because it refuses to walk the "middle path" of consensus, logic, and democratic compromise. While the "Loom" seeks to weave everyone into a shared, predictable pattern, the Sinister turn is a deliberate stepping off the loom.

The Leftward Path: This is the path of the *Aghori* within *Samsara* or the *Risbi* who stands at the "Event Horizon"—the point where the gravity of social habit no longer holds.

The Refusal of Jurisdiction: The Sinister turn argues that modern morality and "human rights" are secondary phenomena. They are the "smoke" *Pitryāna*, not the "fire" *Devayāna*. By focusing on the fire (the *Light of Light*), this turn effectively withdraws the ground of modern moral jurisdiction, declaring it a "useful fiction" that nonetheless obscures the ultimate.

Note 2] Withdrawal of the Ground

Modernity operates on a "shared ground" of reason. We argue, we critique, and we vote because we believe the ground is stable. Meditation II posits that this ground is actually a Closing.

The Trap of Critique: To critique a system from within is to validate its existence. The Sinister turn does not critique; it withdraws. It stops feeding the "Ghost" (the dead institution) with the "luminous attention" it requires to survive.

Ontological Invalidation: When the ground is withdrawn, the questions of the "*Langda*" (the analytical cripple) become irrelevant. You do not answer the analyst; you simply cease to inhabit the space where his questions have meaning.

Note 3] Judgment vs. Vigilance

The book makes a sharp distinction between the "Judge" and the "Custodian."

The Judge (The Prophet/Legislator): Works within the Loom. He creates laws to improve the weave. He relies on "procedural ethics."

The Custodian (The Rishi): Works at the Event Horizon. He does not judge the weave; he maintains Vigilance. He watches for the "Event"—the moment where the Light breaks through the pattern. His responsibility is not to the law, but to the Rupture.

Note 4] The Event Horizon: Life at the Edge

Living at the "Event Horizon" means existing in a state of permanent *Pravās* (divine dissatisfaction).

The Danger: To live here is to be "sinister" to the world. You are seen as a threat to the stability of the Loom.

The Reward: It is the only site where the "Gods" can be heard. As noted in **Exhibit C** (*The Conference of the Ghost*), the noise of the dead (modern ideologies) is loudest in the center of the Loom. Only at the edge, where the threads are thin and the ground is gone, does the "Silence of the Gods" transform into an Announcement.

Third Meditation

THE ARCHITECTURE OF AWAKENING A Critique of Ontological Abandonment and the Recovery of Responsibility

Chapter 1: *The Illusion of Passive Releasement*

The philosophical departure begins with a decisive rejection of Martin Heidegger's concept of letting-be. While the Heideggerian tradition suggests that we must step back and allow beings to show themselves without imposition, Rajiv Mudgal identifies a fatal structural gap in this posture. He argues that one can only truly let something be if there is an existing illumination by which that being can manifest. Without an inner pole of light, letting-be does not result in freedom but in an abandonment to drift. In this framework, silence without luminosity is merely a precursor to trance, and withdrawal without light becomes a state of possession rather than presence. This critique suggests that Heidegger's

releasement permits an ethical disappearance where silence or even collaboration can masquerade as piety. To counter this, Mudgal insists on a situated presence that refuses to allow the subject to vanish into a metaphysical abstraction.

Why does Mudgal reject Heidegger's letting-be?

Heidegger says: let beings be. Step back. Do not impose. Do not dominate through calculation or will. The gesture is one of restraint. Step back. Allow disclosure.

Mudgal's objection is not polemical but structural. Letting-be presupposes illumination. A being can only "show itself" if there is already a light by which appearing-seeing is possible. Without that inner pole, restraint collapses into drift. Silence without luminosity becomes vacancy. Withdrawal without orientation becomes absorption.

What appears as humility can become abdication.

In Mudgal's vocabulary, letting-be without light becomes *anṛta*: an *ontological misattunement* that manifests as *noetic dulling*, a failure of being's self-disclosure within which *avidyā* operates. Withdrawal without orientation becomes possession. Silence without luminosity becomes Menon's

silence. For simplicity, I will refer to this condition as *trance*, though strictly speaking it names the interior mode of *anṛta*.

This is not a rejection of silence as such. It is a rejection of self-sufficient silence. Silence that assumes its own purity is already closed.

The Menon episode in *Devtaon ka Maun* is the clearest dramatization of *anṛta*. Menon performs ritual, accumulates knowledge, exhausts scripture, disciplines himself. At the end, he encounters silence. Yet this silence is inert. It does not open. It does not illuminate. It is saturated with self-reference.

1. Menon mistakes exhaustion for truth.

But this silence is not luminous. It is not creative. It does not open. His practice becomes a closed circuit. Darkness attempting to generate light through repetition. When ritual fails to produce confirmation, he denies God. The Bengali babu does the opposite. He affirms God without seeing. Both positions are mirror closures. One rejects after fatigue. The other affirms through inheritance. Neither listens.

Mudgal's rebuke is precise: the world is already luminous. The train, the engine, the seat, the journey are not mute.

The failure is not absence of divinity but absence of attunement.

This marks the decisive break from Heidegger. Restraint alone does not open a clearing. Language no longer orients. Without light, letting-be preserves drift.

In Menon we glimpse the first hint of *anṛta*. Darkness attempting to generate light through repetition. Light is not produced by ritual. It is not manufactured by belief. It is already operative.

Silence must be lit. Withdrawal must be oriented. Otherwise, *avidyā* governs.

This is the decisive difference from Heidegger's letting-be. In Menon and Babu what is preserved is not being but drift.

Letting-be is safe only if there is light. Without light, letting-be becomes surrender to *anṛta*. That is why Mudgal refuses self-sufficient silence. He does not reject stillness. He rejects stillness that does not see.

The failure is not absence. It is non-attunement.

Chapter 2: The Enclosure of Exhausted Knowledge

The tragedy of the modern seeker is best exemplified through the figure of Menon in the story of Devtaon ka Maun. Menon represents the exhaustion of ritual, scripture, and accumulated knowledge. At the end of his disciplined path, he encounters a silence that is not fecund or alive, but dead and oppressive. This state, defined as anṛta, is not simply an error but a form of self-enclosure where one mistakes the exhaustion of the mind for the arrival of truth. Menon remains trapped in a self-referential practice, attempting to generate light through the repetition of darkness. Mudgal's response to this condition is surgical, suggesting that the seeker is too occupied with acquired knowledge to listen to the pre-conditions of existence that speak at all times. The failure here is not an absence of divinity but a non-attunement to a light that is already operative.

Anṛta is not falsity. It is self-enclosed cognition.

Menon exemplifies the modern seeker who confuses exhaustion with insight. His knowledge is not false. It is self-referential. Ritual feeds on ritual. Thought feeds on

thought. A system circulates its own outputs and mistakes circulation for vitality. This is what Mudgal calls cannibalism.

Darkness cannot light itself.

Ritual cannot sanctify itself.

Language cannot ground itself.

Reason cannot justify itself.

Critique cannot awaken itself.

Silence cannot illuminate itself.

Each closed loop generates substitutes. Substitutes are not malicious. They are repetitions.

When asked how do you know, how can you be sure, Mudgal's answer to the Bangali Babu is , "*You know when you know*". "You know" does not authorize private revelation. It names cessation of substitution. Recognition reorganizes attention. Borrowed language falls silent. The compulsion to confirm dissolves. Doubt is not defeated. It becomes irrelevant because the mechanism sustaining it collapses.

For Mudgal, any external marker would become imitated and ritualized. That is why the sentence refuses criteria. Criteria belong to assembly. Recognition abolishes assembly.

This is not mysticism. It is a phenomenological claim. Knowing is a shift in mode, not accumulation of content.

This line, “*You know when you know*,” is often flattened into something it is not. It does not mean private revelation. It does not mean ineffable authority. It does not mean insight beyond question. It means knowing that does not depend on repetition of someone else’s knowing.

From this, the critique of *Brahmarākṣasa* in Chapter 2 follows naturally. *Brahmarākṣasa* is not false knowledge. It is a borrowed voice. *Anṛta*, which we previously defined, for lack of a better term, as an *ontological misattunement* that manifests as *noetic dulling*, is a failure of being’s self-disclosure within which *avidyā* operates. From now on, we will call it ‘*trance*,’ because it is possession by echoes. One speaks, but the speech carries an inherited cadence. One believes, but the belief is already prescribed.

Why “*trance*” and not “*veiling*”?

Truth is self-luminous (*svayamprakāśa*). However, *Anṛta* acts as a barrier to this luminosity. It is a condition in which reality appears to refuse to show itself, or rather, in which the subject is so misaligned that reality cannot disclose itself to them. If *avidyā* is the active misinterpretation of reality,

Anṛta is the structural collapse of order that makes that misinterpretation inevitable. One cannot have right knowledge (*vidyā*) while standing in a field of wrong being (*Anṛta*).

Further, *avidyā* is often treated as a specific epistemic error, or as superimposition (*adhyāsa*), the false projected upon the true, as in mistaking a rope for a snake. *Anṛta* is the darkness in the room that makes the rope-snake error possible.

Anything that attempts self-generation becomes cannibalistic. Not violent, not oppressive, but self-consuming. A system feeding on its own outputs. That is what he calls cannibalism. A closed loop mistaking circulation for life.

In the Menon episode, the train, the engine, the seat, the journey are already luminous. The world is not mute. Menon cannot see because he is busy interpreting. He is looking for confirmation of attainment. Mudgal's tone is playful because explanation would reintroduce *anṛta*. To define God would be to substitute a concept for seeing.

Heidegger's danger is passive enframing. Mudgal's danger is hypnotic *enframing*. Letting-be without illumination allows *trance* to rule.

Anrta is not error. It is self-enclosure.

Trance is not ignorance. It is absorption.

Silence is not truth unless it is luminous.

Darkness cannot light itself.

Menon is the individual case. Kathmandu is the collective case. Gen-Z is the generational case. Heidegger is the philosophical case. Different registers, same structural pattern: absorption mistaken for clarity.

Mudgal is not saying that knowledge is private, truth is subjective, insight is unquestionable, authority belongs to the awakened, or argument is irrelevant. If that were his position, the entire framework would collapse into mysticism. It does not.

Menon wants proof, method, verification, assurance that knowing has occurred. Mudgal refuses because knowing is not acquisition of content. It is a shift in mode. When knowing happens, attention reorganizes. Repetition drops away. Borrowed language falls silent. Urgency dissipates. Justification becomes unnecessary. Noise disappears, not

because something spectacular appears, but because the mechanism of substitution ceases.

These are phenomenological shifts, not beliefs.

“You know when you know” then means that you cannot confuse information with wakefulness once the shift occurs. Not because the experience is dramatic, but because the compulsion to confirm evaporates. Any external marker would become ritualized, imitated, repeated, and therefore cannibalized. That is why darkness cannot light itself. A closed system can only generate substitutes.

Menon’s rituals were substitutes. The Bengali babu’s beliefs were substitutes. Even philosophical skepticism could become a substitute. Knowing is cessation of substitution. When substitution stops, the need for confirmation stops with it.

A guru says, “Trust me, I know.” Mudgal says, in effect, “I cannot describe knowing, because you would imitate the description.” He leaves Menon alone with his own seeing. That solitude is not cruelty. It is structural necessity.

“*You know when you know*” offers no guarantees, no protections, no communal validation. Any safety net would belong to *anṛta*.

The sentence cuts off the wrong question rather than answering it. It refuses the demand for criteria because criteria belong to assembly. Recognition abolishes assembly.

In *Reflections in the River*, this is called *poetic sight*. Duṣyanta’s recognition of Śakuntalā is immediate, instantaneous, beyond doubt. The question of verification does not arise because the fog collapses completely.

“*You know when you know*” in *The Gods Have Gone Silent* and “*poetic sight*” in *Reflections in the River* name the same epistemic event. The interlocutors differ. Menon is a modern seeker trapped in exhaustion. Duṣyanta is a king trapped in forgetfulness. The structure of recognition is identical.

Once illumination occurs, it is unmistakable because the mechanisms of mistaking fall away. Not because something extraordinary appears, but because repetition ceases. Explanation would reintroduce the very machinery that recognition dissolves. That is why the line feels blunt. It is

meant to close the door on substitution, not to sanctify subjectivity.

Chapter 3: The Epistemology of Recognition

True knowing is presented as a cessation of substitution. In his later works, Mudgal contrasts the slow, procedural sight of Rāma with the immediate recognition experienced by Duṣyanta. This is the transition from inferential sight to poetic sight, or pratyabhijñā. It is an epistemological claim that knowledge arrives as a single, indivisible act rather than a sequence of logical steps. In this state, doubt is not overcome through argument; it is rendered irrelevant because the machinery of uncertainty has nothing left to operate upon. Recognition is seen as an ontological completion that collapses the fog of forgetfulness in a single instant. Unlike information, which can be transferred and imitated, this wakeful recognition is non-transferable and possesses a specific phenomenological signature that stills the motion of the mind.

What Mudgal calls *poetic sight* in *Reflections in the River* is not an aesthetic flourish. It is an epistemological claim.

Poetic sight is explicitly opposed to inference, proof, recollection by assembly, or gradual certainty. It is defined by three recurring features: immediacy, wholeness, absence of

doubt. Knowledge does not accumulate. It does not move step by step. It arrives as a single, indivisible act. Mudgal invokes the logic of *pratyabhijñā* without naming it directly. Recognition, not cognition. Completion, not construction.

Duṣyanta does not reason his way back to Śakuntalā. He does not evaluate testimony or reconstruct memory. When the ring appears, memory does not return as content. It erupts as certainty. Mudgal insists this is not psychological confidence. It is ontological completion. The fog does not thin gradually. It collapses at once.

This is why Mudgal contrasts Kālidāsa's Duṣyanta with Rāma in Dignāga's *Kuṇḍamālā*. Rāma's recognition is procedural, public, justified. It moves through doubt and proof. It is accountable in the inferential register. Duṣyanta's recognition is immediate and private. One belongs to inferential sight. The other to poetic sight.

"*You know when you know*" is not mystical shorthand. It is a negative formulation. It indicates that when recognition happens, doubt is not defeated. It becomes irrelevant. The mechanism that asks, "How do I know?" presupposes fragmentation. After recognition, that mechanism has nothing to operate on. It falls silent not because it is

suppressed but because the condition that sustained it has dissolved.

This is why Mudgal insists *poetic sight* cannot be safeguarded, taught, or systematized. In Reflections, the contrast with Dignāga makes this explicit. Dignāga seeks criteria because he assumes knowledge is assembled from parts. Kālidāsa refuses criteria because criteria presuppose that wholeness has already fractured.

Meaning does not emerge. It arrives. Like the ring. As *Rishi*, *Devata*, *Chandas*. The seer, the structure of knowing, and the rhythm of manifestation are not separate operations. They are one field in act.

The arrival is unmistakable not because it is emotionally intense but because it is complete. Nothing remains outside it demanding verification. There is no remainder to check against.

And this is precisely where the tension intensifies. If knowledge arrives as indivisible completion, then verification becomes secondary. Criteria appear as afterthought. But once poetic sight claims epistemic authority, the question returns: how is this recognition distinguished from illusion? Mudgal's answer remains

internal. Recognition carries its own clarity. There is no external test. That is both the strength and the vulnerability of the position.

The classical rope and snake example clarifies what he has in mind. In dim light, a rope is mistaken for a snake. Fear arises. The body reacts. Inference may try to intervene. One may reason, inspect, debate possibilities. But when light falls properly and the rope is seen as rope, the error does not require refutation. It dissolves instantly. The snake does not need to be disproved. It vanishes because it never existed as object. Recognition corrects itself by its own illumination.

This is what Mudgal calls the self-correcting nature of *poetic sight*. Illusion persists only in partial seeing. When recognition occurs, doubt does not gradually recede. It becomes structurally irrelevant. The clarity is not added to prior confusion. It replaces it entirely.

For Mudgal, genuine recognition carries this rope-snake structure. It is not validated by criteria. It invalidates the need for criteria. The clarity is intrinsic. The correction is simultaneous with the seeing.

The strength of this model is evident. It avoids regress. It avoids endless verification. It locates truth in illumination

rather than procedure. The vulnerability is equally evident. In lived life, not every conviction is rope correctly seen. Some are snakes still mistaken for rope. Without shared criteria, distinguishing between illumination and intensified illusion becomes difficult at scale.

Mudgal accepts that risk. He trusts the structure of recognition itself. Whether that trust can survive historical asymmetry remains the open question.

If *Poetic sight* restores unity to knowing. It does so by refusing fragmentation at the outset. The cost is that it cannot easily translate itself into shared adjudication without betraying its own structure.

In the *Reflections in the River*, Mudgal opens up *poetic sight* with these lines. “*The Rishi (seer) perceives truth directly, without the mediation of analysis.*” He the “*The Rishi is not a thinker, someone who analyzes truth, but someone who sees it—without fragmentation, without calculation,*” In Letter 33 addressed to Dignāga, Kālidāsa explains: “*Here, the Rishi (knower) is not an external observer of knowledge; rather, knowledge unfolds from within. The Devata (structure of knowing) is not an external force, god or deity but the very framework, the inner architecture of awareness—the intrinsic pattern that shapes perception itself and grants us our*

experience, while the Chandas (revealed knowledge) is the rhythm in which this truth becomes manifest. Like a wave that is never separate from the ocean, the act of knowing is inseparable from what is known. These three—seer, structure, and song—are not separate but intertwined, expressions of a single unified field where seeing, knowing, and being are one seamless experience.”

This is not subjectivism. Mudgal is not claiming that whatever feels immediate is therefore true. He is identifying a specific phenomenological signature of recognition. Recognition abolishes assembly, justification, and verification in a single stroke. It does not intensify mental movement. It terminates it.

Trance also feels immediate. That is precisely why confusion is possible. But *trance* multiplies motion. It produces restlessness, repetition, compulsion, explanation, defense. Recognition stills motion. It does not manage doubt. It renders doubt inoperative. That distinction runs through Mudgal’s work and is decisive.

This is why Menon fails. Menon mistakes exhaustion, silence, ritual saturation, even intellectual refinement for recognition. But Menon still wants confirmation. He still asks whether he has arrived. He still seeks assurance. That

desire for validation reveals the absence of sight. If recognition had occurred, the question would not arise.

Duṣyanta, by contrast, does not ask whether Śakuntalā is real once recognition happens. The moment the ring appears and memory erupts, the question collapses. He does not seek corroboration. The structure of doubt itself disappears.

“*You know when you know*” means that once poetic sight occurs, information, belief, ritual, and inference cannot masquerade as recognition. Not because the Rishi refuses dialogue, but because poetic sight terminates doubt rather than organizing it.

This is what makes Mudgal’s position both dangerous and uncompromising. There is no fallback. No external validator. No second-order check. Either recognition happens or it does not. Nothing within *anṛta* can manufacture it. Procedure cannot produce it. Technique cannot simulate it. Exhaustion cannot substitute for it.

This is the throughline from Menon to Duṣyanta to Kālidāsa to the critique of phenomenology and logic. Different narrative scenes, one epistemic claim.

But the tension deepens. If trance is contagious, systems preserve trance, history amplifies trance, and wakefulness cannot be preserved mechanically, then over time anṛta will tend to dominate. If so, recognition remains episodic and structurally fragile.

A state of affairs in which recognition cannot be preserved raises severe questions. Can it inform sustained action? Can it guide responsibility? Can it distinguish vigilance from futility? Can it ground the obligation to try, to transmit, to repair?

Mudgal insists that recognition itself is sufficient for clarity. The open question is whether clarity without transmissible safeguards can endure in a world where trance is socially reinforced. That is not a refutation of poetic sight. It is the point at which its civilizational implications become unavoidable.

Mudgal criticizes Heidegger's letting-be because it risks drift. Waiting without bearer can become abdication. But once seeing happens, Mudgal would argue, it does not require preservation. It orients. The *pole of the polis* in *The Light of Light* is not a structure, not a safeguard, not a mechanism of transmission. It is an axis that appears wherever seeing appears.

Plato understood the tension. That is why the philosopher-king in *The Republic* is reluctant, constrained, temporary, and tragic. Plato does not assume that seeing alone secures the city. He insists on *paideia*, law, noble myth, institutional design, distributed offices. Seeing is rare and unstable. It must be mediated because it cannot be relied upon to reproduce itself. Plato's architecture compensates for the fragility of vision.

Mudgal rejects this compensatory layer as dimming. For him, mediation easily becomes substitution. Yet without mediation, does orientation not float on hope?

Mudgal's counterexample is Duṣyanta. Duṣyanta's recognition of Śakuntalā is not merely interior illumination. It brings *Bharata* into being. Recognition is generative. It finds lineage, polity, continuity. *Bharata* is not preserved wakefulness but born wakefulness. Not transmission as doctrine, but birth as consequence. The light does not establish a system. It incarnates.

Continuity, in this model, is genealogical, poetic, civilizational. Not safeguard but offspring. Not procedure but emergence. Recognition does not create an institution that carries sight. It gives rise to a world in which sight has already acted.

Yet this does not resolve the deeper issue. If *Bharata* is a person and not the perpetual inner light of a people, then recognition does not automatically transmit itself. *Bharata* is born from recognition kindled by light, but he does not carry recognition as a guaranteed inheritance. Nothing ensures that he will see. Nothing ensures that his descendants will.

Recognition creates consequence. It does not guarantee continuity of seeing.

If recognition can found lineage and birth polity, light can incarnate. But *anṛta* reproduces mechanically. Wakefulness reproduces contingently. Systems, fear, imitation, drift propagate automatically. Recognition does not.

Mudgal does not deny this. In *Kul Pralay*, he accepts it. Civilization is born in flashes. It is not sustained by vigilance alone. It is not protected by memory. It is not corrected cumulatively by learning. Forgetting is guaranteed. *Trance* is structural. Drift is inevitable.

This is more than tragic realism. It is anti-historical metaphysics. History does not accumulate wisdom. It re-enacts loss punctuated by moments of grace. Each recognition interrupts. It does not secure.

So what comes after *Kul Pralay*?

Bharata is born. But *Bharata* does not solve history. He interrupts it. The Mahābhārata still happens. War still erupts. *Anṛta* still returns. Recognition founds worlds. It does not abolish entropy.

The unresolved tension is stark. If seeing orients but does not preserve itself, and if forgetting always regains ground, then civilization oscillates between illumination and collapse. Mudgal's wager is that orientation must not be replaced by guarantees. Plato's wager is that guarantees are necessary because orientation fades.

Mudgal chooses fragility over ossification. Plato chooses structure over drift. The cost of Mudgal's choice is historical instability. The cost of Plato's is potential dimming.

That is the real tension. Not mysticism versus politics. Not light versus law. But whether light can remain non-appropriable and still bear the weight of time.

When Mudgal says "*the task is to keep open*," he is not invoking liberal tolerance, pluralism, or procedural flexibility. He is naming ontological non-closure. Openness is not policy. It is the refusal of trance.

This is why “*A Temple is the Song of Brahman*” in *Devtaon ka Maun* is not about architecture or religion. It is an allegory of polity itself. The temple is not a building. The *murti* is not an idol. The people are not worshippers. Temple names a field of attunement kept open. *Murti* names the orienting axis, not a sovereign. The people are light recognizing itself, paying homage to itself. When orientation occurs, the temple vanishes. Its disappearance is decisive. It does not consolidate power. It dissolves once its function is fulfilled.

Keeping open, then, does not mean preserving institutions. It means preventing closure into trance.

This is not covert political theology. It is a claim about sight as such. A shallow reading would treat it as metaphor for a Hindu state. It is not. It is the vanishing of structure into custodianship. The *murti* does not govern the people. It points them back to their own capacity for illumination. Democracy fails when it becomes procedural trance. Kings fail when they mistake force for light. Gurus fail when they become objects rather than reminders. Mudgal refuses to replace living openness with dead continuity.

Bharata, temple, *yajna*, language, ritual, literature, science are not preservative structures. They are events of opening.

Once they harden, they must disappear. The task is not to preserve light. The task is to keep clearing space for its reappearance. The one who does this is a Rishi.

Yet here the pressure returns.

Mudgal relies on continuous clearing. Clearing is not passive. It is activity. Activity accumulates momentum. At what point does keeping open become a practice, then habit, then ritual, then another trance? How does openness resist entropy without congealing into form?

Mudgal answers poetically. The temple vanishes. The *murti* dissolves. The Rishi does not found succession. But he does not provide a systematic account of how non-closure remains non-institutional while enduring time.

After the temple vanishes, what prevents the field from collapsing again into noise or domination? For Mudgal, recognition is a done event. Seer, seeing, sight are one clarity. It is from that clarity that decisions and judgments arise. This is *Bharata*, not as empire but as awakened consequence.

He is not proposing a hidden theocracy. He is making a radical wager. Reality, if kept open, will reorient often

enough. Light does not require protection. It requires space. Fear, guilt, and separation dissolve when knowing happens.

The wager is metaphysical and historical at once. It assumes that illumination recurs with sufficient force to interrupt domination. It assumes that clearing can be renewed without being captured by its own repetition.

The vulnerability is evident. Entropy favors closure. Power favors consolidation. *Trance* reproduces automatically. Openness must be enacted again and again without becoming enactment-as-form.

Mudgal chooses this fragility consciously. He prefers recurrent illumination to stabilized control. Whether recurrence is enough to sustain a world is the unresolved tension that remains.

That reality, if kept open, will re-orient itself often enough.
That light does not need protection, only space, the site.
That fear, guilt, and separation dissolve when knowing happens.

Chapter 4: The Gathering of Borrowed Light

The "Conference of the Ghost" serves as a diagnosis of modern social consciousness. A ghost, in this lexicon, is a belief system animated by borrowed light—philosophies like Marxism or Hegelianism that speak fluently but remain disconnected from their own source of seeing. These ghosts gather because nothing has been resolved, existing only collectively as an echo chamber of second-hand knowing. Mudgal situates this critique in Calcutta in 1988, a site where colonial reason and revolutionary ideology overlap without resolution. He portrays the "socialist saints" not as villains, but as figures of ideological possession who lack inner alignment. The danger here is that literature, which once served as an ignition point for recognition, has been replaced by ideology, which has forgotten its source.

The "ghosts" are not dead people. They are: residual forms, exhausted ideas, institutions that have lost light, philosophies that still speak after meaning has gone
They gather because nothing has been resolved.

Openness is not maintained by memory or structure, but by recurring confrontation with what has died but not disappeared.

Ghosts are what remains when light leaves but form persists. Institutions, ideologies, rituals, even critiques do not vanish. They haunt.

In *The Loom of Time*, the dead speak through the loom ordering the present as Event. Mudgal does not withdraw from history. In the notebook entries he forces history to confess its being. Time is not background. It is interrogated.

Ghosts in his work are not honored, not exorcised, not redeemed. They are kept visible. Visibility is his mechanism against closure. He does not fear decay. He fears unexamined survival. Forms that persist without light become silent domination. The danger is not death of forms but their continuation without interrogation.

Chapter 14, "*The Conference of the Ghost*," only makes sense when read against Chapter 1 and the Menon scene. The arc is long. The silence in Chapter 1 is fear. Menon shivers. "*I'm afraid of what you're saying.*" That fear becomes the phenomenological key. The ghost is not primarily the past. The ghost is fear speaking when openness collapses.

In "*Conference of the Ghost*," the assembly does not remember. It projects. Voices from different civilizational grammars speak. German, Chinese, English, Arabic inheritances surface. But what animates them is not fidelity to the past. It is fear of loss. Fear of death. Fear of meaninglessness. Fear of isolation. Fear that continuity of literature, tradition, or world will dissolve.

Each ghost demands guarantees. Permanence. Doctrine. Intervening gods. Fixed order. Even saviors. Kalki in another register. The demand is the same. Stabilize us. Protect us. Assure us.

Mudgal does not allow them to rule. But he does not silence them. He lets them speak until their language exhausts itself. This is not reckoning with history in the moral sense. It is phenomenological exposure of fear-based cognition. The ghost is anxiety crystallized into narrative.

Openness is preserved not by preserving memory but by refusing to let fear harden into structure. Even when ghosts demand fixed gods, permanent temples, unchanging meanings, saviors, the answer is blunt: no one is coming. No one will save you.

Polity in this frame is not organized by light as administrative principle. It is de-ghosted. Structures are not illuminated from above. They are stripped of fear-based authority.

The unresolved question is sharper. How does fear cease demanding gods, systems, saviors, guarantees? How does a mass polity resist re-ghosting without some shared symbolic memory that itself does not congeal?

This is not a partisan political objection. It is a temporal scalability problem. Fear is collective and contagious. Exposure may exhaust individual ghosts. But at scale, new ghosts regenerate.

Mudgal's method keeps fear visible and refuses closure. Whether that refusal can operate across time without shared stabilizing forms remains the open tension.

The Conference of the Ghost Opens in Calcutta

But Why Calcutta, and why 1988

Calcutta and 1988 are not decorative coordinates. Calcutta is never merely a city. It is the precise site of colonial intervention; the Asiatic Society library is the lens through

which the past is archived and the future already appears stained.

It remains the intellectual capital of reformist modern India: Bengal Renaissance, Marxist ferment, *bhadralok* rationalism, revolutionary politics, literary seriousness. The place where critique first institutionalized itself. Where colonial modernity collided with Indian self-consciousness and produced argument, reform, ideology, theory.

Opening *The Conference of the Ghost* here is deliberate. The ghost refuses temple, forest, battlefield. It materializes in the archive. In the library. In the Asiatic Society—supreme symbol of classification, translation, preservation, civilizational cataloguing.

The ghost is born exactly where knowledge survives in its mutated hybrid form: half Baul, half revolutionary, half intellectual, costumed in the 1988 uniform of anger and neglect.

The Asiatic Society is never just archival impulse. It is the modern compulsion to gather, preserve, interpret, stabilize civilizational memory as past, as history, as shelved inheritance. Mudgal stages the ghost not in superstition but

in scholarship. The target is never ignorance. It is inherited authority.

The ghost speaks in the archive because *anṛta* reproduces most efficiently through institutional memory.

Mudgal finds himself one among the many in Calcutta and the year 1988 is never random. It arrives late enough for disillusionment, early enough for ideological exhaustion to have fully settled. Post-Emergency India. Post-Naxalite romanticism. Marxism is still institutionally alive in Bengal, but already tired. Secular nationalism intact, yet thinning. Reformist optimism visibly aging. A precise mood of intellectual fatigue masquerading as seriousness.

Menon embodies exhaustion at the individual scale; Calcutta 1988 enacts it at the civilizational scale. That is why the ghost conference convenes there. Not crude fear, but afterlife. Ideas hardened into residue. Insight congealed into inheritance. Illumination turned institutional.

Calcutta 1988 is decisive because the colonial archive now meets postcolonial self-consciousness, Marxist critique has sedimented into state culture, reform has calcified into bureaucracy, seriousness into repetition. The ghost speaks where critique has become habit.

The Asiatic Society is never simply a library. It is the archive where Indianness was translated into object: classified, preserved, displaced. Living orientation frozen into text, extracted from practice, reorganized as knowledge, returned as civilizational heritage. Preservation here is not neutral. It is subtler obliteration: displacement disguised as care.

Once archived, Indianness becomes studiable, referenceable, citable, debatable, defensible. It ceases to be luminous ground. It becomes material.

The ghost therefore appears precisely where living memory has been converted into stored identity.

By 1988 the archive is no longer merely colonial. It has been internalized, defended, inhabited. Marxism now operates inside inherited categories. National self-understanding circulates through the same textual machinery that first translated it. Critique itself has sedimented into archival repetition.

The ghost does not speak from superstition. It speaks from inherited authority. From luminosity that has been objectified and catalogued.

The question remains: is the ghost merely colonial residue, or is it what every civilization becomes once it archives itself?

The Asiatic Society matters not because it is English, but because it is an archive. Colonial power accelerates the process, yet the deeper operation is epistemic. The instant living orientation is translated into text, indexed, stabilized as knowledge, something irreversible occurs: it becomes available for citation rather than lived as ground. It can be critiqued, mobilized, defended. It can no longer interrupt.

That is the exact condition in which ghosts appear.

The ghost is archived luminosity speaking after objectification. The English archive hastens the mutation, but the mutation is not uniquely English. Every civilization that preserves itself as memory risks the same displacement. Preservation freezes what once oriented.

Calcutta 1988 intensifies the convergence: archive internalized, seriousness habitual, sacred *ghat* signaling exhaustion rather than innocence. The ghost appears where illumination has become inheritance—not erased, not denied, but stored. And once stored, it speaks without living.

This is what occurs when orientation becomes object, object becomes identity, and the archive becomes the afterlife of light.

When a civilization mistakes preservation for awakening, Calcutta becomes universal. The return to Calcutta, 1988, the Asiatic Society library, is not incidental staging. It is a diagnostic setting. Calcutta stands simultaneously as the birthplace of Indian modern political consciousness, the site where Marxism, nationalism, and bhakti aesthetics historically fused, and the city where colonial rationality, revolutionary ideology, and spiritual symbolism overlap without resolution.

Mudgal does not choose Banaras. He chooses Calcutta because this is where modern India learned to speak in the idiom of “social consciousness.” The opening question is precise and surgical: Where and when did this word originate? The inquiry is genealogical, not rhetorical. He is probing the source of a category that now functions as unquestioned moral currency.

The so called “socialist saints” are not caricatures. The sadhus he encounters are rendered carefully. Inwardly Marxist, Leninist, Maoist. Outwardly *Vaishnavi*, *Tantrik*, cannabis smoking, revolutionary, correct. They embody

ideological possession without inner alignment. This is the first appearance of the ghost in the chapter, though the term is not yet named. A ghost, for Mudgal, is not falsehood. It is belief animated by borrowed light.

They speak fluently of Hegel, Marx, social consciousness. But they do not know where their own seeing comes from. When one of them dismisses the *Vedas* as smoke from a tobacco pipe and asks where social consciousness lies in them, Mudgal does not defend scripture. He does not assert authority. He replies, what if I prove otherwise? The move is strategic. The conference is not a debate. It is a provocation designed to induce collapse.

The turn to *Anandmath* is decisive. Literature precedes ideology. Before system, there is ignition. Before social consciousness as doctrine, there is recognition. Literature mattered because it still pointed to its source. Ideology matters because it has forgotten its source.

Mudgal claims that modern India as a people emerges through literature. Social consciousness and self knowledge are inseparable. The Ramayana and Mahabharata are not myth in the trivial sense. They are social literature. *Anandmath* is invoked not as nationalist slogan but as

ignition event. A moment where language still carried orientation.

This subtlety is easily missed. The conference is not formal. It unfolds in conversation, unfinished sentences, laughter, provocation. Gradually, the ideological confidence of the socialist saints begins to wobble. That wobble is the ghost revealing itself.

Here the ghost is not the past, not dead institutions, not memory. It is consciousness speaking without seeing its own source. Marxism is not attacked as politics. Hegel is not attacked as philosophy. They are shown as borrowed lamps. Mudgal does not refute them. He allows them to speak until their derivative nature becomes visible.

It is called a conference because ghosts exist collectively. An individual can awaken. A collective tends to echo. The conference is the echo chamber of second hand knowing. The chapter does not conclude with conversion. It ends with exposure.

Mudgal is not advocating preservation of light through structure. He is warning against borrowed consciousness solidifying into authority. Keeping open means preventing

language from forgetting its source. When language forgets, it becomes ghost speech.

Calcutta at the end is not healed. The saints are not transformed. No doctrine replaces another. Modernity is not solved. It is diagnosed. The absence of closure is deliberate. Closure would be repetition of the error.

A society does not fall because it lacks ideals. It falls because its ideals continue to speak after light has left them.

At the end of "*The Conference of the Ghost*," Mudgal shifts register abruptly. He invokes the third eye, insect navigation, orientation without maps, theories, or representation. The point is not mystification. It is structural. Bodily Orientation can occur without explicit conceptual mediation. Life navigates before it theorizes navigation. Seeing precedes system.

This final move returns to the core claim. Social consciousness as doctrine is secondary. Orientation as lived attunement is primary. When doctrine replaces orientation, ghost speech proliferates. When orientation returns, doctrine is unnecessary.