Composition for temple speakers: some notes on devotional music and noise
By Sindhu Thirumalaisamy

Abstract

Composition for Temple Speakers is part of a series of site specific sound works and associative writings that explore multiple valences of contemporary devotional practices. It was made for a Shiva/Sai Baba temple in Bangalore, India. This essay reflects on the ways in which this composition responds to a contested social and spatial context from a position of being with/in. It also reflects on the ways in which this composition relates to tacit notions about noise and listening in acoustic ecology and noise music.

Keywords

Noise, devotional, secularism, with/in, imperceptibility, desiring-listening

Introduction

Composition for Temple Speakers (CFTS) is part of an ongoing series of site specific sound works and associative writings that explore multiple valences of contemporary devotional practices. They include local sonic interventions in temple sound systems and a discursive practice that begins from listening to those interventions. In the context of rising religious fundamentalism and nationalism, it becomes easy to conflate religion and ideology, and the work of artists and intellectuals is seen as needing to remain removed from religious practices. Nevertheless, there is a vacuum in the understandings that are possible with strictly secular approaches to life and living (Nandy, 1988). *CFTS* is an attempt to find modes of engagement with/in such contested spheres. With/in here connotes a mode of relation that can flow between acting 'with' and 'from inside' something.

CFTS began as a devotional song made for a Shiva/Sai Baba temple in Bangalore. It was made in 2014 in collaboration with Prerna Bishnoi and Ishan Gupta (Banana Apparatus) and was played from the temple sound system [1] on two evenings. This essay elaborates on some of the contextual conditions in which we worked, particularly the relationship between religion and the liberal/left in India. It also reflects on the ways in which this work relates to some key ideas about noise and listening in the fields of acoustic ecology and noise music. These analyses are interspersed with anecdotes from the production process. Recordings of the work accompany this essay in the form of a specially designed audio player, to be heard and read together.[2]

Figure 1
Kere Muneshwara Sai Baba Temple, Richmond Town, Bangalore. Photo: Ishan Gupta

Perumai

It is 4:30 am in Richmond Town, Bangalore. At 4:30 am, the caretaker wakes up in his room within the compound of the Kere Muneshwara Sai Baba Temple.[3] One of his duties is to play music on the temple sound system during the prayer times around sunrise and sunset. Across the street from him, in our shared studio-residence on Rhenius street, Prerna Bishnoi and I are in deep sleep after a long night.[4] As the speakers are cranked up, the cymbals start chiming to the beat, the sitar and the voice eventually mix in. Few things (can) compete with the temple sound system at this hour, making it one of the most distinct listening experiences of our day. We are reluctantly pulled out of our sleep and, just like that, find ourselves within a sonic territory established by the temple. It is a moment that makes me sympathise with R. Murray Schafer's statement that "we have no earlids" (1994, p.11).

Stirring from our sleep, we think about the temple caretaker whose job it is to play this music every day. We wonder if he sometimes brushes his teeth as he switches on the music. On rushed mornings we run around the house, toothbrush in mouth– maybe he does this too? Does he think of the temple as home? Does he think of playing the music as work? Does he like the music he plays? Our way of coping with the sounds that meet us is to travel to their source and think about the person playing them. Somehow, we accept the temple as being our loud neighbour. Somewhere, we feel we don't have much have a choice but to accept it.

The music from the temple is certainly louder than the legal limit for residential areas in Bangalore, 55dB. In subjective terms, it is very loud. If sounding is a way of making-present, loudness is a way of creating something more than mere presence. There is a strong affinity between loudness, density and *perumai* (Tamil/Malayalam: roughly translating to "bigness", "greatness", "pride") in the way things are expressed in this part of the world (Karel, 2003, p.33). The louder, the denser, the grander. This affinity becomes most prominent in moments of festivity and group religious practices, and temple loudspeaker culture can be seen as deriving from this impulse (Karel, 2003, p.33). The fact that speakers are placed facing the street rather than inwards towards temple visitors says something about their function. They are there to call out to potential listeners with pride and *perumai*.

Multiple listenings

Our relationship to the temple was not overtly antagonistic. But we had quite a few neighbours who did object to it. Richmond Town is a multi-religious neighbourhood that has historically been home to several minority communities. Its diversity is inscribed in its many names: Ismail Pasha Nagar, Shanthi Nagar and Richmond Town. In such a context the sounds from the temple can and do produce a number of sonic and spatial relations depending on who is listening. While many people may hear temple broadcasts as sacred sounds that create a sacred environment in the home, others, regardless of religious identity, have expressed experiencing them as an intrusion of privacy, as noise (and thereby, pollution).[5]

There are multiple (sometimes overlapping) listenings and meanings that are made in relation to these sounds. Nevertheless, the cultural tensions that are amplified by religious broadcasts in public spaces are hard to ignore. Coeval with the many surges in Hindu nationalism since the colonial era, public displays of devotion in India have become entangled with displays of religious and political superiority. When we began listening to the temple in 2014, the BJP (a political party known for its right-wing Hindu ideology) had not yet won the national elections. But it was gaining popularity amongst several groups, partly through the promise of a Hindu nation. Given this political climate in which religion and politics were, and increasingly are, overtly conflated, the temple could be heard as a hegemonic presence. The loudness of the music could be heard as producing a spatial and temporal ordering that prioritises Hindu ritual practices.

If space is produced in part through social relations and interactions (Lefebvre, 1991), it remains open to be transformed through new interactions (Massey, 2005). Whilst working in our studio, on walks in the adjoining park and our daily crossings of Rhenius street for autos, idlis and watermelons, Prerna and I continued to listen to our neighborhood. Every morning and evening we would hear temple music. We became interested in composing something for this sound system and for the plurality of listening experiences that met it. The possibility to work with/in our daily sonic environment excited us. On a sunny afternoon, we approached the temple caretakers to ask if we could play some of our music from the speakers. In the cool shade of the temple, much to our surprise, they agreed with a nod and a condition: "Any song is fine with us as long as it is devotional. We don't discriminate between gods. We play all devotional songs." Devotional music

It is possible to think about devotion as an inclusive category. Devotion, as approached through several philosophies, is a notion inspired by love.[6] It is about attractions to gods, ideas, places or people. By extension, devotional music has the potential to be a very inclusive genre. Regional movements such as Bhakti and Sufi have famously vocalised for the removal of religious barriers that get in the way of love for the divine.[7] Saints born into Muslim families have sung for Hindu gods, and vice versa.[8] Such hybrid expressions are testimonies to the openness of devotional practices over centuries. Over time, devotional music in India has come to include a range of production styles from studio recordings of professional classical musicians, to Bollywood film songs, to a cappella home recordings (Manuel, 1993, p.106-110). It is thus through the supple vibrancy of devotional music that we recognise the potential openness of the word devotion. However, today the word *bhakt* (Sanskrit: "devotee")*,* has come to have a singular connotation– right-wing Hindu nationalist. Despite its conceptual openness, devotion has come to represent ideology for many left leaning, liberal and secular people (even though the very idea of secular tolerance in India is modeled on Hindu pluralist ideals). This warns that there is lack of imagination (from both the right and left) about what devotion can

be.

Figure 2
Living, working and playing at the temple. Photo: Tara Kelton

Returning to the requirement of the temple caretakers: "Any song is fine as long as it is

devotional". It was hard to say what exactly they meant by the word devotional. Perhaps their openness was backed by Sai Baba's trans-religious philosophies. Whatever the case, we were met with trust and given an opportunity we didn't fully expect to receive. We wanted to respond to it by gesturing towards devotion's inclusive potentialities rather than its exclusive ones.

Note: <u>Full size audio player here</u>

Listening to CFTS, 2017, Sindhu Thirumalaisamy with John Burnett and Ashwin Kulkarni, multi-track audio player with recordings of *Composition for Temple Speakers*. Move the dog to listen to the composition from different parts of the neighbourhood.

Sacred/Secular

> "The idea of secularism, an import from 19th-century Europe into South Asia, has acquired immense potency in the middle-class cultures and 'state sectors' of South Asia, thanks to its connection with and response to religion-as-ideology. Secularism has little to say about cultures– it is definitionally ethnophobic and frequently ethnocidal, unless of course cultures and those living by cultures are willing to show total subservience to the modern nation-state and become ornaments or adjuncts to modern living– and the orthodox secularists have no clue to the way a religion can link up different faiths or ways of life according to its own configurative principles" (Nandy, 1988, p.179).

One of the things that *CFTS* calls into question is the belief that sacred and secular expressions are mutually exclusive. For example, the form of secularism that is championed by the Indian state aligns with ideals of religious pluralism in that it claims equal rights for people of all religions. However, of late, the opposition to Hindu fundamentalism has become a form of secularism that calls for the removal, rather than equal participation, of religious sentiment from politics and public life. The reasoning, which is iterated endlessly on social media, is that religion must carefully be contained in the private realm because it is too dangerous to circulate in the public sphere; a refusal to distinguish between faith and ideology (Nandy, 1988). One of the problems with this kind of exclusionary secularism is that it is too easily mapped to the sovereignty of private property. It fits conveniently with a liberal politics that renders ever more spaces privatised and homogenised in the hope of a zero-conflict society. Is this kind of demand for secularism even viable in a deeply multi-religious society? What alternatives exist from the "religious means intolerant / secularism is tolerant" mode of thinking?

The problem is partly in the way religion is conceptualised. Religion, as Nandy notes, has been expected to remain frozen in a status quo, while modernity is allowed to change over time. We

often compare the ideals of modernity with the worst in religion and vice versa (Nandy, 1989, p.38). These kinds of sedimented logics make a convenient divide between the sacred and the secular. While the liberal secular is fashionably aligned with notions of progress and development, the issues that religion makes us confront can be seen as ancient, dogmatic or in need of total (impossible) removal. But this kind of segregation "only ensures that religion enters politics by a different route" (Nandy, 1989, p.39): fundamentalism. The liberal flight towards secularism strengthens the right's power to claim religion for its own agendas. If we do not enter into the discussion of what the devotional could mean today, we concede to the idea that religion has a 'pure' form which is neither worth engaging nor negotiating and re-interpreting.

Undoing these false divides involves re-negotiating a lot of Enlightenment and colonial thought that has remained bound to Christian frameworks (Balagangadhara, 2013). Perhaps this is why much contemporary art in India remains aloof from engaging the subject of religion even as right-wing fundamentalists continue to reconceptualise it to suit their political goals. Institutions of art borrow so much from Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment thought in which certain untranslatable concepts, like 'religion' and the 'sacred', persist as taboo subjects. For example, in a 2014 volume of the contemporary art magazine *TAKE on Art* titled *Sacred*,[9] the editor admits that, "addressing the sacred, has probably been the most challenging task TAKE has been faced within the last five years of its trajectory" (Kakar, 2014). In the same volume of the magazine, art historian Nancy Adajania notes that,

> "In liberal circles, and especially in the art field, the sacred is looked upon with a measure of healthy scepticism and bracketed within forbidding connotations. Often, it is relegated to the domain of ancient or traditional art or Indological research, where it can be domesticated within a tradition of pedagogy and interpretation" (Adajania, 2014).

Most contemporary art bypasses an empathetic engagement with religious practices by either moving towards a critique of their ideological manifestations, or approaching them as symbols that can be "tamed within the discourse of a self-reflexive modernism" (Adajania, 2014). Rarely do artists work with/in religious spaces or practices in modes that are based on dialogue or negotiation. Devotional musical practices like Bhakti and Sufi remain some of the few spaces that connect art and religion in this way.

The term 'sacredsecular' expresses the inseparability of sacred and secular experiences (Mani, 2009, pp.1-2). It affirms that one need not think of the two frameworks as self-contained or incompatible. *CFTS* is an attempt to test the sacred/secular divide, to see what these intimacies do to art and vice versa.

Figure 3
Documentation still from the 2014 performance of CFTS. Photo: Ishan Gupta

Composition for Temple Speakers

Burnt onto a generic audio CD, we took our music to the caretaker to play on the temple sound system. He did not ask us many questions and we did not give him any disclaimers. In order to acknowledge and invite temple-goers to listen as they regularly would, the composition begins with that which is recognizable. We appropriate a popular Sai Baba *bhajan* (a style of devotional song; Sanskrit: "sharing"), keeping the rhythmic and melodic structures of the original song. We layer on top the sounds of digitally rendered bird calls, and electronic instruments. Within the first few minutes of the piece, wafting hints of traffic sounds start to appear, beginning to blur distinctions between the 'natural' and the constructed.

Sounds from the surrounding street gradually make up more and more of the composition. The song slows down in tempo, unravelling the layered instruments. Eventually, the chanting becomes less rhythmic and only the cymbals continue to chime faintly as shrieking modulations take over. The second part of the composition (starting at around 5 minutes) includes the sounds from sewers, drainpipes and basement architectures. The harmonium peaks with screeches that resemble the traffic on the streets, that resemble the calls of the birds above. Moving slowly from the recognizable sounds of Hindu devotional chanting, slipping in mud, wandering down drains, through kitchens and balconies, this section has the effect of slowing down the passing of time, of inviting the birds to respond to it (which they did), and eventually becoming barely perceptible from all that surrounds it.

The last section of the composition (after 10 minutes) consists of more or less untreated field recordings from the street and park adjacent to the temple. As the temple played back the sounds of the street it was unclear which sounds were coming from where. This created a sonic

camouflage [10] that momentarily collapsed the sonic territories that the temple was establishing.

Through the process of making *CFTS* it became clear that the term composition not only referred to the music that we produced and burnt onto a CD. It also included the sonic system and environment with/in which they played. Together, these sonic and spatial relations formed the composition, allowing it to be recognizable as both noise music and a work of acoustic ecology. The music on the CD can be quite loud and noisy when heard in isolation. But when played from the temple sound system, it had the opposite effect– of quietly collapsing sonic territories. I will now focus on some ways in which this composition relates to some tacit notions about noise and listening from both acoustic ecology and noise music, fields that have deeply informed this work.

*Kaka*phony

> "In the hi-fi soundscape, sounds overlap less frequently; there is perspective–foreground and background … In a low-fi soundscape individual acoustic signals are obscured in an overdense population of sounds … Perspective is lost … there is no distance; only presence. There is cross-talk on all the channels, and in order for the most ordinary sounds to be heard they have to be increasingly amplified" (Schafer, 1994, p.43).

Bangalore is noisy.[11] It is noisy because of the two-wheelers, three-wheelers, four-wheelers, six-wheelers (not so many eight-wheelers yet) on its uneven roads, the honking of hurry, the rattling of breaking down buses, the crisscrossing of jet planes... It is also noisy because azan is called five times a day, the Church bells ring to tell the time, and the temples have new CDs to play. We love watching TV, pressure cookers cook rice faster, some children are just learning the drums and we all live so close to each other. The white-cheeked barbets refuse to be drowned out by the traffic and the rain falls hard on tin roofs. It is noisy because this plurality of sounds is freely made and listened to. Here, noise is heterogenous. What Schafer hears as the lack of perspective can be heard as multiple perspectives. What he laments as a lack of (critical) distance can also be a space of intense intimacies. Loudness is more than mere presence, especially when we consider *perumai* ("pride", "greatness"). What the lo-fi soundscape of Richmond Town allows for is an understanding that we live with/in everyone's world all at once.

Schafer calls noisy cities *sonic sewers* (1969)– sewers that contain this impure material that has nowhere to go and is everywhere at once. Seen as a form of excess, it is no coincidence that noise has affinity to the word pollution, or that it has its roots in nausea, alluding to the urge to vomit. Cacophony (from Greek: *kakos* 'bad' + *phōnē* 'sound') is *kaka*phony (*kaka* translates to "feces" in Hindi). That which is internal exceeds, threatens, to spill outwards. It is too much to handle. When considered in this way, noise threatens the neat division of seemingly self-contained worlds. Seen within a set of social and spatial relations, the excluded become noise ("The rest is noise..."). When the voices of slaves and women were ignored as noise (Rancière, 2001), or when religious sounds are deemed an intrusion of privacy, they are socially categorised as unwanted even as they are perceived as noise.

Acoustic ecology's descriptions of 'clean' soundscapes and the secular liberal demands to remove religion from the public sphere have an uncanny similarity. This is why, though we recognised that both the temple and the city are loud, and sometimes unbearably so, we were not interested in silencing them. But the opposite approach, a futurist celebration of the loud and noisy that is characteristic of much noise music, was also untenable. What could it mean to

make noise music in Bangalore, where everything is already noisy? Surely, it is not about being louder. And disruption is hardly possible. Instead, we wanted to think about affective ways of approaching the *kaka* in cacophony– about noise as that which is banished from contemplation (Attali, 1985). We wanted to see whether the sonic sewer could be an acceptable part of a devotional song [12] by replaying the sounds of the city through the temple speakers.

Noise music and acoustic ecology often presuppose a listener who is willing to be in a state of heightened receptivity. Both fields have an investment in proposing that listening has the emancipatory power to decode and make new sense of the world (Goodman, 2010). Though they diverge in their response to noise, they both ask/teach audiences to be aware of themselves, to be rapt in their attention to details, to be ever more open and virtuosic in their listening. In *CFTS,* such demands were not made. We felt that conflicting desires that are woven in dense physical intimacy cannot be resolved through heightened receptivity. Rather, in this 'lo-fi soundscape', listening remained distracted from this or that auratic presence (Benjamin, 1968).[13]

Lo-fi listening and desiring-listening

At this point, I would like to make some notes on the physical parts of the sound system. It consists of an amplifier connected to PA speakers through a number of patched up cables. The system sounds similar to the way it looks: boxy, old, tinny, cheap. The speakers are aimed at the street. They seem worn out from years of use and exposure to sun, dust and heat. To compete with the loudness of the street, the sounds that they play are amplified beyond the point of distortion. Their sounding abilities affect the kinds of listening that are possible around them. For temple-goers, this is a kind of listening that cannot be too concerned with high fidelity (it would be too frustrating an experience if it were). In order to enjoy the available sound system, their listening has to be suffused with remembrance and familiarity– an associative, devotional listening that is, in a way, forgiving and inclusive.

In some ways this lo-fi sound system protected us from getting into trouble. The priests and temple caretakers did not seem to mind our devotional noise music. They shrugged off the loud shrieks and gurgles as coming from a scratched CD. Only those who came specifically to listen to our work, a handful friends walking in the park, were trying to listen carefully. Ironically for them, the wiring for the speakers was loose at certain points in the performance bringing even more uncertainty to a composition that was already becoming imperceptible.

In a way this was what he had hoped for. Our confidence that this gesture would be able to wedge into the sonic protocols of the temple came from knowing that this is not a work *about* the devotional; it *is* a devotional song. It also came from understanding the power of that desiring-listening (Bonnet, 2016) that takes place in and around the temple. As Bonnet puts it, "desiring-listening is the listening that perceives in the object that it targets a certain promise" (2016, p.135). If one is listening for the devotional, devotional sounds find them. If one listens for noise, the noise will find a way to surface to the top. Bonnet claims that, ultimately, discourse cannot fully explain what listening does (2016). We neither asked the temple goers what they heard, nor did they question why we made a song the way we did. They simply asked if we could give them a copy of the CD to play later.

> "There can be no doubt: the listening that understands, reads, hears, the listening that explains itself and explains the world, has had its day... Listening must no longer exclusively provide solace, read, and decode" (Bonnet, 2016, pp.331-332).

> "By definition, listening was applied; today we ask listening to release" (Barthes, 1985,

p.258).

Conclusion

In the years after our interactions with the Kere Muneshwara temple, religious tensions and exclusionary politics have gotten worse in the region. We could not predict the sharpness of the rise of private religious organizations, religious fanaticism and violence against minority groups. At present, the 'sickular anti-national' has become the self-appointed title of the vanguard figure who opposes the *bhakt* ("devotee" of the Hindu nation). As such antagonisms become ever stronger, there seems to be little room for inclusive gestures and sacredsecular exchanges that question these seemingly stable subject positions. *CFTS* offered the possibility to be with/in multiple territories at once. We now listen to it as recordings of possible devotional music.

Footnotes

1   I approach the term sound system in the way that Steve Goodman uses it in *Sonic Warfare: Sound, Affect, and the Ecology of Fear:* "sound systems (consisting of bodies, technologies, and acoustic vibrations, all in rhythmic sympathy)" (Goodman, 2010, p.5).

2   This paper draws from a zine co-produced with Prerna Bishnoi in 2016, also titled *Composition For Temple Speakers*.

3   The temple is devoted to or built around an idol of Kere Muneshwara, an avatar of Shiva and a deity associated with an erstwhile *kere* (Kannada: "tank, lake"). The *kere* has been filled up and built over but the temple still remains. The temple is also devoted to Satya Sai Baba (died 2011), a guru who started a global trans-religious faith movement. Satya Sai Baba has claimed that he was a reincarnation of Sai Baba of Shirdi (died 1918), as well Shiva.

4   Between 2013-14, Prerna Bishnoi and I were residents at Taj Residency and SKE Projects. We shared a studio/living space for two months in Richmond Town, Bangalore.

5   On social media forums one can hear the distress of citizens who venture into making noise pollution complaints against temples. They are often met with the impasse of corrupt bureaucracy.

6   Bhakti, which translates from Sanskrit to mean "devotion", is understood as a path of love and sharing. Bhakti may refer to an inner devotional impulse or to a social movement in India.

7   For example, Sant Tukaram; Bulleh Shah's poetry often undermines temples and mosques as places to seek enlightenment.

8   For example, Kabir and Shirdi Sai Baba are said to be born to Muslims but raised by Hindus.

9   *Take on art* is a contemporary art magazine that is primarily based in India with international contributions. The magazine publishes work by prominent artists, art historians, critics and theorists. Each edition is considers a specific theme. This was one of the few widely circulated art publications to address the sacred/secular divide in the Modi era.

10   The cinematic trope of the invisibility cloak is a good metaphor for the effect of sonic camouflage. The work of the invisibility cloak (or the invisible car) is not to make something totally imperceptible. Rather, the cloaked object remains partially traceable, especially for members of the audience who know to look out for it. For other characters (in the film), cloaked objects become totally invisible.

11   One of the most vivid first impressions of Richmond Town's noises came from a previous resident of the studio, Nate Heiges: "Ranging from Hello-Kitty-hallooing-through-a-trumpet-mute-cute moped buzzers to augmented truck horns set to 'Deafen', the auto calls match the birds in range and vigor." Available at: http://theselectioncommittee.blogspot.no/2013/09/

12   One of the historically documented uses of temple music was to warn those marked as lower castes to stay away from the festivities reserved for higher castes (Karel, 2003, p.63) in 'fear' that they may 'contaminate' the site of celebration. The affinities between caste hierarchies, waste work and notions of the impure have been maintained for too long.

13   "Distraction and concentration form polar opposites which may be stated as follows: A man who concentrates before a work of art is absorbed by it. He enters into this work of art the way legend tells of the Chinese painter when he viewed his finished painting. In contrast, the distracted mass absorbs the work of art. This is most obvious with regard to buildings. Architecture has always represented the prototype of a work of art the reception of which is consummated by a collectivity in a state of distraction. The laws of its reception are most instructive" (Benjamin, 1968, p.239).

References

Adajania, N. (2014) 'Sacred/scared: a lexicon of what it's about and what it's not', *TAKE on Art,* 13 [online]. Available at: http://takeonartmagazine.com/article-details/256

Attali, J. (1985) *Noise: a political economy of music.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Barthes, R. (1985) *The responsibility of forms: critical essays on music, art and representation.* New York: Hill and Wang.

Balagangadhara. S.N. (2013) 'Dark hour of secularism: Hindu fundamentalism and colonial liberalism in India' in Ranjan Ghosh (ed.) *Making sense of the secular: critical perspectives from Europe to Asia.* London: Routledge, pp. 111-130.

Benjamin, W. (1968) 'The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction' in Arendt, H. (ed.) *Illuminations.* New York: Harcourt, pp. 217-252.

Bonnet, F.J. (2016) *The order of sounds: a sonorous archipelago.* Falmouth: Urbanomic.

Goodman, S. (2010) *Sonic warfare: sound, affect, and the ecology of fear.* Massachusetts: MIT Press.

Heiges, N. (2013) *The loud family* [online]. Available at: http://theselectioncommittee.blogspot.no/2013/09/ Kakar, B. (2014) 'Editor's Note', *TAKE on art,* 13 [online]. Available at: http://takeonartmagazine.com/article-details/256

Karel, E.K. (2003) *Kerala sound electricals: amplified sound and cultural meaning in South India*, PhD diss., University of Chicago.

Lefebvre, H. (1991) *The production of space.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Mani, L. (2009) *SacredSecular: contemplative cultural critique.* London: Routledge.

Manuel, P. (1993) *Cassette culture: popular music and technology in North India.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Massey, D.B. (2005) *For space.* London: SAGE.

Nandy, A. (1988) 'The politics of secularism and the recovery of religious tolerance', *Alternatives,* 13, pp. 177-194.

Nandy, A. (1989) 'An anti-secularist manifesto', *India International Center Quarterly,* 22(1), pp. 35-64.

Rancière, J. (1994) *The soundscape: our sonic environment and the tuning of the world.* Rochester: Destiny Books.

Rancière, J. (2001) 'Ten Thesis on Politics', *Theory & Event,* 5(3) [online]. Available at: https://muse.jhu.edu/article/32639

Schafer, R.M. (1969) 'The city as a sonic sewer', *The Vancouver Sun,* 11 March, p. 61.

Acknowledgements

Bio

Following the ways in which sound challenges scopic regimes, Sindhu's work engages a poetics of uncontainability across different sites, cultures, and borders. She regularly works with other artists and activists, taking on roles of researcher, recordist, editor, and performer. Sindhu is currently an MFA student at the University of California, San Diego. Some recent exhibitions/screenings include programs at Artists' Television Access (San Francisco), SOMA Summer (Mexico City), University of Oslo, Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival, Edinburgh Festival of Art, Kunsthaus Langenthal, Khoj International Artists' Association (New Delhi), and Dharamshala International Film Festival.