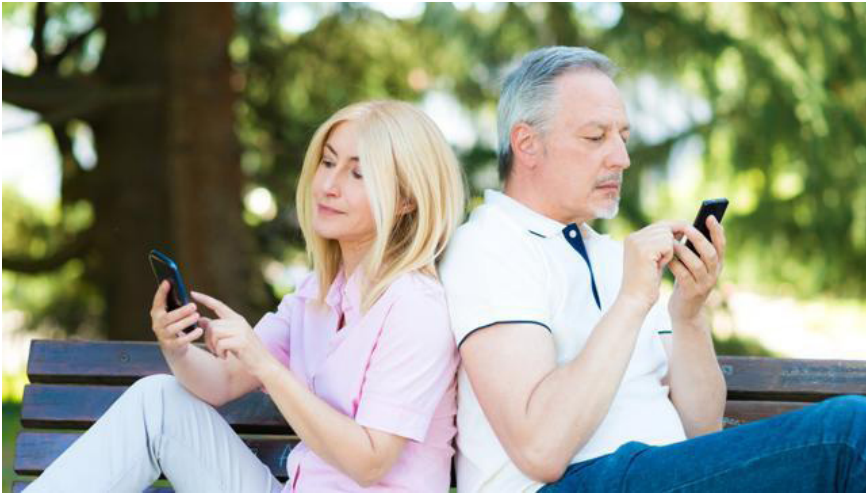


ROUTING TECHNO-INTIMACY, RISK, ANXIETY AND THE AMBIENT POLITICAL

Geeta Patel

If you saunter along any ilākā in Delhi, from an upscale colony to a bastī and stop people along your meanderings to ask them where they imagine their intimacies lie (geherī dostī, khās rishtedārī, avaidya sambandh, khās sambandh), how they might be forged, one almost automaton like, involuntary, reflex, perhaps even knee jerk response rehearses relationships with and bonds between people as flesh, as blood, as bodies. Technology would appear nowhere in this portrayal even as technologies are becoming more and more ubiquitous in South Asia. In fact most common presumptions and conceptions of the place of technology are underscored by the routes through which technology stalls, disrupts, and intervenes in face to face encounters even as technologies are touted as the ultimate enablers.¹ In the case of the central government in Delhi (a tweeting Prime Minister led Sarkar), technologies are envisaged as cleaner, clearer routes, veritable magical carpet rides that will obviate the need for people through people transactions and along the way clear away the underbrush of bureaucratic corruption which is said to divert/distract currency from its proper course and right destination; somehow mobile banking, paying by cards, an Aadhar number (a numerical avatar for a person) will manage what has stymied generations (and of course all these salvific technological modes and the implicit critiques that underwrite their fantasies of success must be denuded of political economies—they are obedient, as can be expected, to that very peculiar and particular paradox in bureaucratic market politics (i.e. writing about the market sans political economies, so that bureaucracy makes way before some strange notion of market forces).

“Hey, why don’t you marry your phone?” The article by Sonal Kalra from the *Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, on February 7, 2016 carries the first two images; in one, two people are sitting on the bench, backs fused, but intent only on their phone screens. The second voices



the plaint of every friend, lover, acquaintance whose dinner, lunch, coffee companion sits hunched over their phones obliviously.² They and the third image also from *Hindustan Times* from September 9, 2015, "Give me a sec, I'm on phone: Don't snub your partner on dates" sourced from the Press Trust of India, Washington all hang



on the same joke.³ That the phone reroutes, detours, circumvents, bars or jams the proper channels along which nose to nose yearning, seduction, fondness, sex, aversion, repugnance, animosity must voyage and ultimately puts the kibosh on a relationship you might ardently crave or loathe (even if antipathy is sent along via text, twitter and such). A term has even been coined for it: pphubbing (partner phone snubbing).⁴

All three images, with their deliberate allusions to a world outside South Asia peopled by more or less white, obviously heterosexual folk, evince feelings or their absence in the kash-ma-kash, the tug and pull between mesmerized absorption in a phone and the person glaring at the device wielding user.⁵ In all three photographs, because we, as viewers have no clue about whom or what is on the phones, the phone transmutes into the object of desire which intrudes, perhaps inadvertently, in a possible relationship between two people. In each case the techno-lover is oblivious to their surroundings; it is as though their very absentmindedness, somatically charged into their device, gives them the fillip to forsake the human beside them, across from them, or even alongside them. In the first image the two characters who sit on a park bench, bodies curled in towards the phones in their hands, facing away from the other, their entire concentration on screens over which their fingers hover are lost to the putative joys of trees and leaves fading into the background. In the second two, the mise en scene is of a probable date between a young woman and man in a café or restaurant, the images graced with accoutrements that might signal this reading: coffee cups with logos or glasses of wine. In each of these two, the woman's attention is targeted at the man rapt in an encounter with or through a phone.

Do we love our anxiety?

Upper middle class Indians use phones incessantly: chatting and taping while at the movies; texting and photographing while eating out with friends; texting and social-media-ing in classrooms, where teachers sometimes ban electronic appendages in a vain attempt to stem or forestall the constant flickers of lost attention. For Indians who work at any middle class occupation, or patch together a living with ad hoc jobs or labouring serially in households cleaning, cooking, managing, phones are their work line, tethering them to the daily schedules and occasional or constant vagaries of employment. But by picturing phones in stories that feature white people, or by reissuing stories that were composed for and from an elsewhere outside the subcontinent, something has been performed or perhaps prognosticated for news readers in India which does not necessarily issue from the present presences of phone use in India. These particular portrayals, precisely because they issue from Euro-America, become a promissory cautionary future, one which is likely to be inhabited by new entrants to the narrative ledger of feeling detours: along with the phone's pleasure or benefits comes ambivalence. One might imagine then, a refurbished catalogue, slowly and perhaps stodgily piling up with roundabouts—feelings that ought to be oriented in one direction sent off in another. The image narratives suggest a possible “it might happen this way” from which we want to perhaps disengage, which we want to shove away. In other words, they show us technologies that are paradoxically keyed: into responses pulling in a way that one might not fancy or one might want to not crave. Can we conceive of them as diversionary intimacy prosthetics which could be tacked onto a list of impedimentary devices which are so much more familiar such as family members whose interference and meddling in one's stabs at cosy-ing up to lovers, friends, marriage mates, has a long, sometimes fraught, sometimes soporily congenial lineage (mother-in-laws are the most commonly recognizable, but so are mothers who attempt to ensure that their children are not geared towards the persons, things, situations that might keep their young or adult child in thrall).

Such devices become an anxiety generator, if one represents anxiety in the vein that the philosopher Soren Kierkegaard spoke of over and over again in his playful, heartrending text from the mid-19th century, *Either/Or* (the Swedish term *angst* is heavier, deeper, darker than the slightly diaphanous intent that many uses of the word anxiety might draw on, even though when one is gripped by it

thoroughly one can feel as though one was blotted out or diminished and eroded). For Kierkegaard anxiety is usually a route to something else, or elicited by something other than itself, or hovers between the tug and tussle of two things: sorrow, ebullience, completeness, loss, absence and presence. Perhaps not quite as somatically volatile as the more capacious repertory culled from languages in South Asia. Just a smattering might include “pareshānī” or “vyākultā” “betāb” “becain” “bekal” “kshubdh” “vyāgratā” beqarārī “utsuktā” “cintā” “utkanTH” “iztarābī” (zwaad): each expression is similarly coded but each also leans towards a subtly distinctive tangible graininess to register fear, terror and agitation, restiveness or edginess. Grubby, grim or fractious or thorny feelings have illustrious aesthetic lineages in South Asia and continue to be well fleshed out in contemporary song, poetry, prose and dialogues from cinema; the plethora garnered from the poetics of love or war or life or in more recent lyric from politics. And many of the local words might satisfy Kierkegaard whose stories parse anxiety and they might also conform to Sigmund Freud’s equally mobile deployment of the word⁶ as byways to something else. “Pareshānī” or “vyākultā” evoke the restlessness in which one is snagged, an inability to sit still; and behind or before them are so many other possible moods. A sequence of brief or quick or hurried moods (vyabhicāra) crescendo-ing (vibhāva begins and anubhāva ends the sequence) into an ampler one has a time honored history in rasa theory. So how does the English word anxiety work its way into this lexicon? What of technologies such as statistics on health, wealth and death that are the harbingers of anxiety verging, in the work of the literary scholar Kathleen Woodward in her book *Statistical Panic*, on panic.⁷ Is anxiety symptomatic of the incursions of technology into everyday lives in South Asia? Does anxiety in the English also carry with it a smidgen of the furtive or delicious pleasure that knotty or barbed feelings from South Asian lyric might have and hold when doing their deals with passion? A sort of love of the symptom a la Slavoj Žizek?⁸

Let’s circle back to the newspaper articles with which we began. Each one of them tells a sorry tale of companionate love or companionate friendship. If one did not want the body across from us to laser focus on us as *their* person, would it even matter to us that they were distracted away from us by a competing object? Companionate friendship is tried and true in the annals of south Asian poetics: from sakhīs who may or may not want the same thing (or lover) we do, to the rāzdān, to the yār. Companionate love, especially on public display, brandished for all to see, has a much more foreshortened history. So

then, does something weird or idiosyncratic or merely curious ensue when technology is the confidante, the buddy, the lover or when our lives and livelihoods are made over through technologies? Some of the dos and don'ts to which we are so addicted, that we seek so ardently might suggest that it does? Sonal Kalra, the writer of some of the pieces I have discussed, and doyen of the 'what you can and should not' genre for technologies now attached to us compulsively is very specific in her recommendations. Cautionary tales complement sales pitches for fetish objects which we want so avidly: *The Hindustan Times* runs articles on both. And a growing cluster of the ins and outs of investing, insurance pedagogies from copious advice-givers such as money gurus and religious figures who tell you where to park your money while offering prayers of various sorts, to investment and pension specialists on call-in television, radio, and other news media, to the CEO whose pearls of wisdom grace the side-bars on finance pages of paper proffer profuse and prudent suggestions to their, shall I say it, anxious interlocutors. South Asians are fervent devotees of experts and advisors. But I am getting ahead of myself by bringing finance into this story. For the moment I want to stick to technologies housed as objects such as the phone or the computer and pick through various genres, if you will, of anxiety they might broker or trundle along with them.

One of sources of anxiety embedded in objects is whether or not they will stay alive; whether they will break down (given that many people who buy phones purchase revamped ones), or run out of juice (given the ubiquitously erratic electricity). The shape anxiety takes here is as a niggler—not a necessarily or always consistent flow of worry but worries that hang over one's shoulders in stutters, which sporadically come and pass away. With the fuss and bother (even if it episodic) over an object's putative life span comes a sense that the entity is more than merely an item. Rather, it prolongs something, enables something, and makes something possible. In simpler language it is an extension of oneself—a prosthesis which recomposes one as a cyborg, as an amalgam of human and machine, not quite machine not quite human but both.⁹

Even if the machine is just something we deploy or turn to for keeping in touch with employers, losing that article means that an avenue of possibilities is blockaded or shut down. The machine is thus tied into wellness, a future that is larger than an close present, or an immediate present which continues to find fulfillment in a near future (my job is in 90 minutes) or a longer more lingering future (I clean this house every week at 10 in the morning), or I am

trying to set something up which will give me a better life, pay for the week's food, help my family with our bills (deals need not be just for the middle or upper middle classes)—all of which make living possible either in an attenuated but necessary fashion or in a more capacious way.¹⁰ I will return to these further along in this paper.

But, for the moment, if we stick with physical machines as the most literal manifestations of technology, it is clear that machines ferry along all sorts of likelihoods: avenues for living that transform/transfigure some of our everyday habits, anoint us with abilities and knacks that make us feel grander than ourselves so that we appear to flourish, or we nudge open a smidgen of room in which to subsist or to manage a life adequately enough push us into slightly touched up stories that make up possible futures¹¹. But South Asians are acquainted with things falling apart, dwindling—these are much more familiar contours for life plots than fulsome ones. And they come along with anxiety, worry, and sometimes even blasé nonchalance: will something actually persist in working, what will I do if it doesn't, what strategies will I cobble together to help me? One can sense this sort of worry in fits and starts, or in apprehension and disquiet hunching in the recesses of one's mind relentlessly, dogging one's dreams.

So far, I have laid out two hues that anxiety might take. One is lodged in what the object can enable or disable, the other in keeping the object alive. In an era when people piece together a litany of jobs just to cope with everyday expenses, keeping abreast of tasks assumes an acute urgency, escorted by an interminable, almost itchy rankle. A phone can then mutate into a conduit that promises some respite from turmoil—*anxiety*, *pareshānī* about how one might eat, sleep, survive. All these can be downloaded onto the phone's capable avenues for communication, keeping in touch, tallying up work (and in the process losing it becomes more exigent). And so we beget the singular and unavoidable paradox hounding technologies housed in or amalgamated into brittle existences: that precisely because something has been handed the proficiency to forestall worry it becomes the thing that incites fretting.¹²

Anxiety is intriguing. It is clear from my remarks thus far, sifting through where and how it lives, that anxiety is not exactly a feeling. It may be reckoned as fleshy discomfort, as irritation, as a tangle, as a panic-yedginess channelling to something or somewhere else. Anxiety is discombobulating; it can throw someone off kilter.¹³ And one can get stuck there, sucked into its vortex, unable to shed the dogged persistence of its inevitable arising even when that is fitful.¹⁴ In the

language of *rasa*/*dhvānī* theory the state of *vyabhicāra*, betweenness, might be said to be its most unfailing idiosyncrasy. It is as though one can never quite get away from it enough to land into delight or horror or lambent grief keyed as *anubhāva*, the enduring mode which crescendos into a finale as the more provisional feelings that lead to it or compose it fall or wear away. Under these circumstances, when one is anxious, moving it out, away from oneself, shedding it seems so very urgent. Downloading it or outsourcing it so one does not have to bear it anymore and it is assumed by someone or something else as their burden, or releasing it as catharsis becomes vital (even when the anxiety assuaging object onto which it has been downloaded spawns another line into disquiet).¹⁵

Technological others

Apocryphal moral fables of technological road blocks on the path to love (which also include ancillary side-stories of phone, net, computer addiction, as an early childhood infection or disease), are paradoxical. Even as they are cemented through assumptions and inferences about the truly appropriate orientations of desire (towards mammals of various species (although one rarely encounters phone blocks to a happily domesticated caring for a dog), they inaugurate and institute techno-intimacies in worlds overrun with technological apparatuses such as phones, computers and such. But as they are doing this, particular genres of technology become the headlines for how technology is conceived—as prosthetic objects such as phones and computers that extend the reach of what it means to be human. Along the way, Marcel Mauss's early 1935 essay of technologies of the body (techniques of body as social, political, economic apparatuses and pedagogies with political economies underwriting them, that guide into commonplace, almost unheeded habits such as digging, walking, swimming, shitting, smiling), which Michel Foucault also picks up on in *Discipline and Punish*, seem to lose some of their purchase.¹⁶ A point that many scholars have made about capitalism, might be of value here. It is as though one often falls prey to the objects one critiques; they become so much larger than life that they take over, or overtake analytical space.

In this essay I would like to reinvigorate the spirits of Maussian technologies and the ghosts laboring bodies from Foucault via Marx, disinter Althusser's ideological state apparatuses for a moment: by inviting finance into the ambit of the technological. This will enable me to think through how finance ferries along with it other

byways to technological makeovers, such as those through risk, that underwrite personal, social, and political reconfigurations and rearrange or organize intimacies. Along the way this essay will bare the configurations, such as anxiety, we fill in when we attend to, resort to, corral or even absentmindedly implicate in the technological.

One contemporary instance becomes a sales pitch for the fiscal through the technological—a lure to bring people into banking in a country where banking is relatively scarce and the current central government under the prime minister Narendra Modi is also attempting to surveil monetary whereabouts by nudging all such transactions towards technology.¹⁷

BOB Mitra, is sold as your techno-animation friend who invites you like a huckster, to jig, jog, natter and play with the Bank of Baroda in their ads, and tempt you to try your hand at techno-money (aka. hand them your hard earned cash) with his help.¹⁸



Technological others: Whither risk?

When I first stumbled into risk and began stalking it through its fiscal forms, that is, when risk appeared in the guise of the efflorescence, or perhaps even the vitalized ebullience of financial technologies over ten years ago—a cluster of seemingly disparate questions or events had pulled me in those directions.¹⁹

Pressured by international loan agencies that imagined that India might be faced with a deficit of trust, the economy had been “opened”—to new investors in financial technologies such as insurance and loans who wanted to hawk them as promissory notes, life-lines to refurbished futures. The Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM) had been marshalling troops in and out of parliament to stop this inflow of the foreign via capital. In the general spirit of closing ‘our’ borders off to so-called alien influences, the right wing—the VHP, BJP and Shiv Sena—had been on other rampages during this period. They levelled their ire against syncretic shrines, against the Pakistan cricket team playing in Mumbai, against portrayals of Saraswati by MF Hussain, against the film “Fire.” The right wing combine

shepherded into the fray arguments that had been pulled out of their pockets many times before and that are both brutally and banally familiar and underwritten by anxiety run rampant: about their hurt Hindu sentiments, Hindus violated and about Hinduism under siege, about the infections flowing in from the west. Their dictums were keyed through raging anxieties that capitalized on particular brands of Hinduism with nationalism held as a hostage (what it meant to be a citizen). The Naz Foundation was entering India and starting their work in India to address and offer health solutions to men likely to get HIV/AIDS. Lawrence Cohen and I ran one of the early workshops on MSM with them in the 1990s, under the auspices of Trikone, to “train” them how to think about sexuality on the ground, so to speak.

At the time, I was teaching in and instituting local pedagogical initiatives through the University of Iowa, and the spate of suicides in that predominantly rural state, post the Reagan administration’s so-called fiscal prudence drives, had led me to track farmer suicides in different countries, while grappling with what political economic contingencies drove them there. These curiously unwieldy, contradictory flows (for want of a better term), events, mobilizations, matrices, I came to see as co-constitutive—in the ways that Theodore Adorno envisaged the empirical vibrant with, or Jacques Derrida imagined for *khôra*, the receptacle that is co-constitutive of the things it receives or accepts (picked up by Doreen Massey writing on space and place), or that Althusser animated through ideological apparatuses or that Michel Foucault brought into play with matrices composed of architecture, shape and volume of rooms and furniture, their proper use, currents of traffic, textbooks, moral injunctions, playground proprieties, classroom pedagogies, parents, teachers, doctors, disease management, the ordering of a day with bells and flurries of transit in *History of Sexuality Volume One* when unfolding schooling.²⁰

Everything I have recounted which pertains to South Asia in the 1990s (along with the brief interposition on farming in the US), all speak to the ways in which neoliberalism enters some arrangement of the everyday through what I left unspoken in that list.²¹ They are constituted through risk or more explicitly they are shaped by risk. As risk becomes more habitual, it offers a conduit for anxiety, which is the modality that allows risk to insinuate itself—in the process anxiety as tangled into risk turns commonplace.²² As I will go on to show risk here is not quite the same as the inevitable things-falling-apart, not-exactly-working-as-expected to which South Asians are

so accustomed. And I want to deploy risk itself as a technology in the more capacious sense. Risk taken in this emergent way that the technological can gesture towards furnishes us a vantage from which to grapple with what is happening in India right now; much of which is detoured through anxieties (qua anxiety).

How does curving towards risk as the vector through which one can transit into the vicious political exigencies that are besetting India at this moment equip us to attend to what we must notice? What do I understand risk to be? As a concept metaphor (Spivak) risk is enormously enticing at present, its little fingers reaching deep down into and grabbing hold of our intellectual and pedagogical projects. Its temptations invite certain categorical confusions or perhaps better, categorical conflations between two registers of risk.

Bear with me! One sort of risk, which has a long history, is the diffuse notion of danger/uncertainty that is specific and or inevitable, which daunts everyday life or work—such as death if one is not a divine presence or if one is engaged in a shipping venture the possibility of drowning or sinking as a clear-cut though amorphous danger. These are nucleus of older stories that accompany risk; some of them appear Lorraine Daston's writing on its history and here one might recall Gottfried Leibniz's earlier and Frank Knight's later invocations of judgement as the key to navigating one's way through the depredations that risk brings in its wake.²³ In other words risk as an inchoate yet precise future that might or must fall upon us but we don't quite know when or where. Risk as *danger*, hazard, peril or uncertainty, pervasive but perhaps not so easy to get a hold of, perhaps the always elusive future. Taken to South Asia, where scarcity is met every day with the intermittent peril of having things nose-dive, *pareshānī* or *vyākultā* are almost unremarkable somatic manifestations of consistently, dependably, regularly unreliable futures.

The other key in which risk appears that we often slide into the first is the *management* of danger or uncertainty—as the statistical collection of data, real or fantasized, on danger or on jeopardy that gives us some sense of, or purchase on the notion of a more likely future. In other words, uncertainty turned into data, so that its chanciness can be seemingly handled, supervised and controlled. Here anxieties can be downloaded onto the numerical accretion of information to afford the illusion of managing them. Statistical likelihoods that then come to colour, orchestrate or choreograph run-of-the-mill politics (in the guise of or the shape of friable, crumbly fiscal nationalism). Coping with a vague future by handing it over to

number or nation: which morphs disaster away into something that feels as though it were merely and dangerously hazardous. Vyākultā or pareshānī turn less potent, and their grip on one's throat loosens slightly.²⁴ This form of risk is what I want to focus on in this essay—especially since it has become so paradoxically mundane for us all here and more and more so in all of South Asia, rather than just in India. It is here that we come to see the deep incorporation of, the flesh, skin and tendons, the incarnations of intimacy and the feelings that coalesce in them.

Let me explain what I mean. As financial technologies such as insurance, credit and debt become more ordinary, the idea of managed risk is absorbed through them. Here lies the work of neoliberalism—commonsensical neoliberalism in which we are all complicit. Along with pensions these fiscal technologies promise life futures, so I have clustered them, bundled them together into a composite I term 'life-finance.' 'Life-finance' keeps hope in place: Armān, wish, desire, hope, longing, eagerness, used as the sales pitch in a finance advertisement seems to suggest this. Do upper middle class white folk in Europe and the US have what Kierkegaard suggests—which is a kind of assumption of fullness, or repleteness?²⁵ Whereas in South Asia where everyone has to finesse their way through things not working quite the way one envisioned, this assumption is less likely to be commonplace. Banks, insurance companies and finance companies play on this in selling their wares. 'Life-finance' comes with the assurance that one won't have to hustle, fight, argue—one can buy into finance to make an easier, prettier life possible and in doing so be able to shelve (hand over to or off-load onto the financial company) the anxieties instigated by managing in this economy. They then annex our worries so that, though they might still lurk, they don't have quite the same muscle.²⁶ Can we call these economies 'make-over' ones, or 'anxiety-economies' or even 'anxiety-alleviation economies'?

Let's look first at insurance. Indians are being sold on purchasing protection against particular vulnerabilities or potential losses and are also being persuaded that buying into investment as life insurance provides cover (in the guise of a secure transaction (for which Indians, including OCIs get tax relief for the policies)). Other emblematic instances are the thriving ubiquity of credit/debt and private pensions. Both are either a genre of "protective" finance, annuities/insurance instruments endorsed by the current government, with ample tax support from the 2016 budget, or a genre of future access to a better life. Both are being peddled as the

tactics or vehicles through which risky lives become manageable or as inducements into dreaming oneself into the shinier economies of makeover consumption.²⁷ Credit and insurance, including that offered through development or rural banks or microcredit institutions or insurance providers can be turned over to protect your harvest or to buy seeds if you are a farmer imagining a more fulsome harvest while straining to make a new or less precarious future (your life at risk), or from government or private banks or insurance agencies to go on holiday or purchase a house, a car, a motor bike, fund an education or wedding if you are one of many middle class consumers enticed into hope and promissory economies, that many recent authors term aspirational.²⁸ A recent advertisement by Hero (Honda) offers *umīd* and many property ads open their salvos with *sapnā*; aspiration as both a hope and a dream. Fiscal technologies such as these effloresced under various Congress governments and continued unabated under NDA and BJP. Anxieties, worries about futures are downloaded onto fiscal technologies—and handled by corporations, banks and the government in its various guises. They are outsourced. But at the same time what they sprout are the dreams and hopes of wellness—as promises.

Where exactly is risk in this? Insurance and loans risk pool, group and glue people together based on their “risk profile” (as subjects at risk or subjects who generate risk) or collectivities coagulated through the risks that that they have in common and the anxieties that they share or that reside in that “profile.” You profile yourself in political economies where profiling has become so regular that it escapes notice. Credit and investments are sold to variously pooled consumers as the ways through which they can alchemize themselves into less risky subjects whose worries taper or ebb, and can also restyle themselves into glossier versions. Capitalism cannibalizes new terrains, and in consort with the policies and procedures of governance augments spaces where risk economies, which might well be named worry or anxiety economies, flourish. Ironically, wellness regimes offer some of these spaces.

Two species of fiscal entailments tug in different directions. We see ostensibly contradictory movements, yanking at each other but also composing each other. One is that of risk pooling—or risks and their attendant worries—based on loss, on vulnerability, on threats to life or livelihood. Pooling for things that will go amiss, in other words, losses to life and livelihoods that one or a community will endure (from STDs, to violence, to *Hindutva*—with its constant wail of Hinduism under siege). What is important to notice here is that

the harms and bereavements have significance in express political economies, can be real as well as fantasized, their temporalities cupping past, present and the future. And one might consider this as risk-loss-pooling, coagulating constituencies through loss and the collective anxieties, “pareshānī” or “vyākultā,” which escort them.

The other is risk’s smiling Janus face—alchemical wellness regimes. Mitigating risk through wellness routines, working remorselessly to produce better, salubrious, prettier, worthier lives that hold “pareshānī” or “vyākultā” at bay. Here we can clump and dump everyone from pedometer following people, to healthy food eaters to credit card consumers, to serial borrowers (whether they are Maharashtrian Dalit farmers striving to make their next harvest more fulsome, or upper middle class Delhi holiday goers hunting for the newest foreign location, or Vijay Mallya starting one company after another).

Both risk loss pooling and alchemical wellness regimes compel a peculiar self-generating commitment from subjects who live through them—a kind of neo Adam Smithian entrepreneurial subjectivity, floated on a sea of paper (or numerical) currency. And with them come family. Many of the ads that sold finance in the early 21st century banked on a corporation underwriting the nuclear family as a surrogate for the māmā, kākā, dādā who you might have once relied on for fiscal support and who were your resources in times of worry or difficulty—so they reinstated, renewed the bankrolled family planning ad family (ham do hamāre do). Entrepreneurial alchemy at work. If I can make myself and my nuclear family over, finance the best self for a future, I myself (and they with me) will somehow be inured from danger and distress, perhaps even flout them, to become a happier, salubrious, livelier, richer, more outsource to them, count on their anxiety-alleviation measures, you could happily persevere as a nuclear family. Techno-intimacy ensues from risk loss pooling and wellness closeness. Along the way the lives of the parties to techno-intimacies, corporations, banks and various configurations in which states appear, are ensured longevity. Consumers and citizens cache their hopes here. If their lives fail, or become risky, so do the projects of techno-intimacy ensured through them. And in so doing, corporations and states download their own friable futures onto consumers and citizens or citizen consumers.²⁹

Citizen shapes

Continue to bear with me—I have thrown a bunch of provocations your way, and I would like to close with a few others that I hope

will incite all of us to think together about the abbreviated scenarios with which I first started my forays into risk and what is happening today. What I would like to array before you is the question of citizenship, or more appropriately multiple sorts of citizenship that become actualized possibilities as risk infiltrates national, local, state and community registers of belonging, so that risk becomes the technological byway through which intimacies in these venues are shaped.

These final thoughts build on many of the contemporary assays of neoliberal citizenship.

Aihwa Ong's flexible citizenship and the organic body of Pheng Cheah's spectral nationality, Achille Mbembe's necropolitics and Jasbir Puar's maimed citizens belong here.³⁰ As do Lilly Irani's entrepreneurial citizens and Bill Maurer's nuanced mutation of the citizen from rights bearer, to share holder to risk sharer. Here we might also take account of feminist research done by Sri Lankan scholars such as Neloufer de Mel on the security state as the developmental state, and the emergence of the securitized citizen, subsisting on the state's promissory note to govern the constant disarrays of fiscal, social, political uncertainty promulgated by various factions in state bureaucracies.

My foray commences with the reformatting of the 1860's French constitution which absorbed the protections tendered through labor union based mutual funds. It traffics with various immigration acts including those in the US (the 1882 immigration acts such as the Chinese exclusion act) and tracks further back to Ernest Renan's early 1882 quest into lineaments of national feeling in the essay "What is a nation?"³¹ Turning to an idea of a daily plebiscite (nationalism as everyday habit), features held in common but also dropped from collective repositories (forgotten or forsaken) Renan dives directly into blood as the beating heart of national communities. But rather than what we might expect him to say—communities are composed of those who share blood—he suggests that it is blood shed in common that makes nations, common losses that presses people into common projects.³²

Taken into the contemporary key of risk and pooling we can rephrase Renan—and we can come to see the emergence of quotidian and exceptional forms of emergent fascisms through the invocation of blood. Risk pooling around common and in many cases fantasized future/present/past losses—whether these are narrated as voluminous aggressions or petty grudges or chronic antipathies and slights—begins to orchestrate versions of belonging that are about blood shed, not one's own blood but the

blood of others. In the recent instance of a young 12 year old boy hung by a go rakshak, one might see an allegorical metaphor in a sequence between protection and loss; rakshanya is, after all, the word in Sinhala for insurance. If one brought Slavoj Zizek into this conversation we might say that it is precisely what-will-never-happen brought into a fantasy that goads blood-letting. Here the illusion of harm that will never occur (loss to majoritarian communities who are in fact not losing anything) drives communities to virulently enforce forms of belonging, where belonging is squeezed out of the blood of those who are forcibly expurgated, excised, killed in a macabre ritual to ensure that a fantasy of possible who knows what. When a community orients their political through statistical possibilities sopped up into routine—they abide in the peculiar conundrum of feeling as though something were always likely to happen; a niggle swollen into a spate. This galvanizes or triggers a politics of cathartic release for a sequence of worries that need never have been present; documenting supposedly realist events, as they often are, in fake form.³³ Fantasies beget anxieties, which because they are based on realist fakes, cannot be easily downloaded or outsourced and so flood into blood-letting, supposedly cleansing through release. But because they are grounded in events which are fantasmatic, one release is never enough, and must be lived over and over and in a horror show of compulsive replenishment. The constant possibility, the “who knows when something will come or fail or disappear,” we are always worried futurity, which activates states of security, the alibis on which the security state and securitized states build their own futurities. Preemptive strikes are the interventions on citizens’ behalf—statistical panic writ large—states prepone something they model as a future and intercede to suck anxiety out.

But are there countless and sundry losses that invite people to share the collective fantasy of loss in waiting, like someone standing along a wall anxiously awaiting their turn. More banally put, many other losses are displaced onto this form of loss. In other words, this genus of loss becomes the holding vehicle, the hamper basket, of other fields of loss. Risk then, reveals the voraciousness of capital, the mutability of capital, with ever newer featured losses and risky terrains, through which one can niggle, fret and freak out, being pulled willy nilly into its ambit. Is this then the ambient form of financialization showing up in the get up of, and in fact as, the political?

Here lie the conditions for the eruption of fascism of the sort we saw in the examples from the 1990s with which I began and the genres of violence we have seen so recently. Loss based risk pooled

politics ensue; and majoritarian constituencies who partake in these sorts of pooling envisage their wellness through the death of those who they fabricate as their others (the semi privatized form of the security state buoyed by, subsidized by nationalism).³⁴ But there is another sort of citizenship entrepreneurial alchemical citizenship, makeover citizens, who want from the state the pledge that they will get the conditions for making themselves over (a curious effect of privatization of care and wellness that still emboldens state forms); make overs hold worry at bay. This finessed promise brought people to vote for the right wing, to lay their hopes in Modi—through it, development with little content but with the promise of becoming Gujarat, brought them to the BJP. It is for these projects and this register of citizenship that Modi produced prophylactic, panacea politics imagining that such politics would bind citizens to the BJP—from collective yoga, to turn in your gas connection, to tax relief for insurance/equity instruments, to smart cities, to a budget that asked farmers to buy yet more insurance coverage.

The two routes to risk pooled, anxiety fueled techno-intimate citizenship –blood shed, and alchemical makeover—sometimes work in concert sometimes in opposition.³⁵ Much has been forsaken along the way, justice, salvageable lives, sustainable futures. Can attending to the routes as well as what is dropped aside in the rush along them, help us craft responses to the many ways that which right wing infiltrations are becoming more and more ordinary, lead us back along new paths to the hoary, crucial, insistent and pressing questions of justice: in the predicaments that have been raised by Burger women who lost their homes and families in Sri Lanka, incited by the hangings of children who were in the way, made so urgent by University of Hyderabad faculty, students and staff, and of course JNU.

NOTES

1. Pros and cons covered: <http://time.com/4311202/smartphone-relationship-cell-phone/>
2. Sonal Kalra “Hey, why don’t you marry your phone?” *Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, February 7, 2016. <http://www.hindustantimes.com/sex-and-relationships/hey-why-don-t-you-marry-your-phone/story-lVR9YP1gXoouV1llGw3OYM.html>
3. <http://www.hindustantimes.com/sex-and-relationships/give-me-a-sec-i-m-on-phone-don-t-snob-your-partner-on-dates/story-4PhY93ESx4SBba99MuTV3N.html>
4. <http://time.com/4057948/cell-phone-hurting-relationship/>
5. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-squeaky-wheel/201501/how-cellphone-use-can-disconnect-your-relationship>

- http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/cell-phone-hurts-relationships-phone-snob_us_560c0cdee4b0dd85030a1c4e
pay attention
<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-your-cell-phone-hurts-your-relationships/>
<http://www.menshealth.com/sex-women/how-cell-phones-hurt-relationships>
<http://www.today.com/health/put-down-smartphone-technoference-can-hurt-your-relationship-1D80339938>
<http://www.essence.com/2015/10/05/stop-pphubbing-new-research-cell-phones-relationship>
<http://www.cnn.com/2013/01/10/health/kenner-social-relationship/>
<http://liveboldandbloom.com/10/relationships/how-smartphones-could-be-ruining-your-relationship>
<http://time.com/4057948/cell-phone-hurting-relationship/>
6. Soren Kierkegaard. *Either/Or*. Sigmund Freud. *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*; Trans. by G. Stanley Hall. New York: Boni and Liveright, 1920; Bartleby.com, 2010. www.bartleby.com/283/.
 7. Kathleen Woodward, *Statistical Panic*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009.
 8. Slavoj Zizek.
 9. Jacob Johanssen and Bonni Rambatan (eds.). *Cyborg Subjects: Discourses on Digital Culture* (Shoestring Anthologies). CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, October 2013. Donna Haraway. "A Cyborg Manifesto" in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women*. New York: Routledge, 1991, began the discussion on cyborgs.
 10. The most obvious tie into wellness is contained in small instruments such as pedometers and apps that read the body's movements, sleep and make one feel that one holds the pulse of one's own wellness when one has them on.
 11. Lauren Berlant, "Slow Death: Sovereignty, Obesity, Lateral Agency," *Critical Inquiry* 33.4 (Summer 2007): 754-780. Miranda Joseph. *Debt to Society*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014.
 12. Kierkegaard suggests that people who have everything understand the tenuous fantasy that everything is forever is always under possible erasure: here lies their angst. These routes of interrogation came out of conversations with Deborah Johnson and Anil Menon.
 13. Adam Phillips. *On Balance*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2010.
 14. Anxiety has been medicalized: as a "disorder" with a taxonomy of types and an entire arsenal of treatments for each sort. <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/anxiety-disorders/index.shtml> dissects the disorder, which becomes a disorder when an anxious person is unable to live a life that is deemed conventional, filled with work and socializing.
 15. I would like to fold my finessing of anxiety into Martin Heidegger's discussion on angst and care in Section VI of *Being and Time* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996). In some ways the registers of anxiety that are embedded in object (or tools or things in Heidegger's nomenclature) or in worrying about how one lives is closer to either fear (which is oriented toward external and internal things) or a sense of care taken in an ontic (rather than ontological) fashion. Care, as ontic, is a form of tranquilization (see Walter Benjamin as well), means that one goes towards willing and wishing (perhaps what I call hope) as urge or predilection, rather than being ahead of oneself or already being in, and being together (pages 180-183). This genre of (almost)

care arouses “a high degree of busyness in taking care of things”...in such a way that there is an illusion of something happening.” (Page 182). “Being-in-the-world whose world is primarily projected as a wish-world has lost itself utterly in what is available, but in such a way that in the light of what is wished for, what is available (all the things at hand) is never enough”...”Wishing ... solely *hankers after* possibilities. This hankering after *closes off* possibilities; what is “there” in such wishful hankering becomes the “real world.” Ontologically, wishing presupposes care.” (Page 182, ital. in text). “Predilection shows the character of being out for something.... The “toward” of predilection lets itself be attracted to what predilection hankers after. ... the complete structure of care is modified. ... “It is “toward at any cost.” (Page 182). Ontic care (worry, freneticness, constant searching after, yearning for) is what I am mainly alluding to in my descriptions, though being suspended in anxiety might come close to Heidegger’s anxiety/angst, which is something other than ontic care. When a ‘person’, as Dasein, unsticks themselves (or is precipitously unmoored) from the world lived in with other creatures, objects and tools in a perhaps hectic, perhaps harried or just oblivious fashion, and is thrown into cavernous aloneness as a result, that process gives them a breach through which they can flash on to another way of fathoming what the world they left behind is and might be. Anxiety arises as an unheimlich state; where unheimlich is uncanniness as a kind of un-homing (un-heimlich is a concept that Freud also uses), as no longer being at home in this world because one has peeled oneself away from an unthinking absorption in its ordinariness. Angst, living in this bottomless solitude, is a profound, acute dread (khauf or bhay) that is redolent with possibilities because it offers a chance at release, a flight from everydayness so that one can return to everydayness, or what the flight is from, in a different key. Anxiety does not call for alleviation or downloading or outsourcing or catharsis for Heidegger. Rather, is it a state in which one must learn to reside to grasp what is so true about being alive—death.

16. *The essay by Marcel Mauss is called “Techniques du corps.” The phrase can be translated as technae of the flesh, of body—and is also Mauss’ title for the book in which it was published Les techniques du corps.* The essay was first published in *Journal de Psychologie*, XXXII: 3-4 (15 March - 15 April 1936) after it had been given as a talk at the *Société de Psychologie* on 17 May, 1934. Michel Foucault picks up on the technologies of the flesh in *Discipline and Punish* 2nd ed. (Alan Sheridan (trans.) New York: Vintage books, 1995), in which he, like Mauss, uses the figure of the soldier as one apocryphal instance of sculpting bodies through technologies/pedagogies. Louis Althusser. “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” in *Lenin and Philosophy*. Ben Brewster (trans.). London: New Left Books, 1971, 127-186.
17. The government is encouraging digital cash transfers and payments by offering financial compensation or support from them. One of many articles on the stories include: ET Bureau, “No Surcharge, Service Charge on Card Payments,” *The Economic Times*, February 26, 2016. <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/no-surcharge-service-charge-on-card-payments-cabinet/articleshow/51127090.cms>
See also <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/To-clamp-down-on-black-money-government-set-to-ban-cash-transactions-over-Rs-3-lakh/articleshow/53802260.cms>

- <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/Now-no-surchage-on-card-digital-payments/articleshow/51128071.cms>
- 18 <https://www.google.co.in/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=imgres&cd=&ved=0ahUKEwjhh5ek1rXLAhVNHI4KHYDFD80QjRwIBw&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.bankofbaroda.com%2Fnewpage.asp&psig=AFQjCNFaID8Gw9-qB1PhpWhJpclD-sRtaA&ust=1457683815954187>
 19. Geeta Patel. *Risky Bodies & Techno-Intimacy*. New Delhi: Women Unlimited, 2016. See Introduction, chapters 3 and 6. Some of the specificities that allude to are laid out here; and all three offer interrogations that parallel this essay.
 20. Jacques Derrida. *On the Name*. (Thomas Dutoit, ed) Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995. Doreen Massey. *For Space*. London: Sage Publishing, 2005, 10. Michel Foucault. *History of Sexuality Volume 1*. (Robert Hurley, trans). New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.
 21. I am using the rhetorical strategy that Anthony Giddens deploys to such good effect in his work—Giddens is the propagator of the notion of risk society. See also Patel, *Risky Bodies*, Chapter 6.
 22. Gayatri Spivak, “Scattered Speculations on the Question of Value.” *Diacritics* 15.4 (Winter 1985): 73-93.
 23. Gottfried Leibniz. Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber, eds. *Philosophical Essays*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989. Lorraine Daston. *Classical Probability in the Enlightenment*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995. Frank Knight. *Risk, Uncertainty and Profit*. <http://www.econlib.org/library/Knight/knRUP.html>
 24. The implicit question here is: What are the anomalies when risk is sent off to, or absorbed into South Asia? One difference might be what I indicate—and which is organized through class. Do upper middle class white folk in Europe and the US have what Kierkegaard suggests—which is a kind of assumption of fullness, or repleteness? Whereas in South Asia where everyone has to finesse their way through things not working quite the way one envisioned, this assumption is less likely to be commonplace. Banks, insurance companies and finance companies play on this in selling their wares. “Life-finance” becomes a kind of promise that one won’t have to hustle, fight, argue—one can buy into finance to make an easier, prettier life possible and in doing so be able to shelve (hand over to them) the anxieties instigated by managing in this economy.
 25. For a stark contrast see the work of Joanne Barker, “In Debt: The Dispossession of Manna-Hata,” special issue of *Social Text* co-edited by Jodi A. Byrd, Alyosha Goldstein, and Jodi Kim (in review).
 26. To use Lawrence Cohen felicitous term: are we de-duplicating worries? Funneling via technological repositories?
 27. Here the word ‘imagining’ is key. Many articles and essays published in India on aspiration and aspirational futures rely on ‘imagining’ without ever quite speaking it. For one popular press article see, S Mahindra Dev, “An Aspirational New Generation and Future of India,” *The Economic Times* April 21, 2014. <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/opinion/et-commentary/an-aspirational-new-generation-and-future-of-india/articleshow/34020800.cms>
 28. See Priti Ramamurthy, “Rearticulating Caste: The Global Cottonseed Commodity Chain and the Paradox of Smallholder Capitalism in South India,” *Environment and Planning A* 43 (2011): 1035-1056.
 29. This generates a very different notion of the public or the collective.
 30. Pheng Cheah’s organismic body (“polityasa political *body*”) versus the mechanistic body (“mechanistic model” that underpinned Hobbes’s Leviathan—the great

- artificial man of springs, strings, joints, and wheels ensouled by sovereignty”) — allows for a different configuration of nationalism. His work emerges from Kant and German idealism which builds the metaphor (differentiating between sensible and phenomenal or moral). “Metaphor of the organic body, but while this metaphor is essential to modern theories of freedom, it is also inherently unstable and prone to perform its own unraveling. The actualization of freedom, conceived as the philosophical and political project of modernity, is, then, incapable of completion, and the nation, conceived as a body in which to incarnate the promise of freedom, remains necessarily spectral, neither simply living nor simply dead.” Pheng Cheah. *Spectral Nationality*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003. Aihwa Ong. *Flexible Citizenship*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1999. Lilly Irani, “Hackathons and the Making of Entrepreneurial Citizenship,” *Science, Technology and the Making of Human Values* 40.5 (September 2015):799-824. Bill Maurer, “Forget Locke: From Proprietor to Risk Bearer in the New Logics of Finance,” *Public Culture* 11.2 (1999):365-385. Neloufer de Mel. For one example of the burgeoning literature on debt and citizenship see James Macdonald’s useful though slanted opus *A Free Nation Deep in Debt: The Financial Roots of Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006). Also Geeta Patel, “Advertisements, Proprietary Heterosexuality, and Hundis: Postcolonial Finance, Nation-State Formations and the New Idealized Family,” *Rethinking Marxism* 24.4 (2002):516-535. Achille Mbembe, “Necropolitics,” *Public Culture* 15.1 (2003): 11-40. Jasbir Puar and Maya Mikdashi, “Queer Theory and Permanent War” *GLQ* 22.2 (2016): 215-222.
31. Ernest Renan, “What is a Nation?” Lecture at Sorbonne, 11 March 1882 in *Discours et Conférences*, Paris, Caiman-Levy, 1887, pp.277-310; also in Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, ed. *Becoming National: A Reader*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996: pp. 41-55.
 32. Arjun Appadurai. *Fear of Small Numbers*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006. I first presented this work at the University of Chicago and at Harvard University in the late 1990s; my conversations with Appadurai were not as significant as those with John Kelly on Renan and blood loss which sent me off to sift through the imbrication of loss and fiscal protection in order to generate something true about nationalism. The question of majoritarian claims to inadequate lives and their affective underpinnings and charge took a certain course under the Affect Group in the late 1990s.
 33. Alisa Lebow, “Faking What?” in Alexandra Juhasz and Jesse Lerner, eds., *F is for Phony: Fake Documentary and Truth’s Undoing* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 223-37.
 34. When the electric charge of being subsidized by a welfare state is subdued or wanes, securitized development takes over. Complexes of securitization sell shares in security, not merely as ambient but as the leverage on which legal authorization for states to source cathartic murder is mandated.
 35. Funneling them through the stalemates that anxiety drags along in its wake. Outsourcing those stalemates to state actors and bureaucratic organs. Here I would like to mention the biological metaphors from predatory, cellular, rhizome and such which might be consorted with to good effect.

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