



Cuttack Darshan: Urban Imagination and the *Laukik* Style in Colonial Odisha

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Abstract

Govinda Rath was a printer and book trader in late nineteenth-century Cuttack, Odisha. He composed and published a verse narrative called *Cuttack Darshan*. Literally, *A View of the City of Cuttack*, the narrative takes the reader on a tour of the city, and shows him the most prominent features of the urban landscape. This paper offers a reading of the poem and argues that it draws upon pre-colonial *laukik* or folk spatial imagination to make sense of the experience of dwelling in the colonial town at the height of the British Raj. The *laukik* style consists of two topological devices, *parikrama* or circumambulation and *darshan* or seeing. The style was often at work in the pre-colonial literary genre of *sthala-mahatmya* that described the significance of places of pilgrimage. Rath mobilises these topological devices to describe the town of Cuttack as a site of pilgrimage for the educated and progressive middle orders of the region. In the process, the poem constructs a subject-position that at once celebrates as well as resists absorption into the colonial modern. On the one hand, this subject is deeply aware of the town's increasing embedment in what has been described as the colonial state space, a space that was marked by the presence of the colonial state and the progress it ushered in. On the other hand, he also looked for spatial experiences that went beyond the confines of the state space.

Keywords: Colonial Modernity, Dwelling, Place, Cuttack, Folk, Govinda Rath, *Laukik*, Spatial Imagination.

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Dwelling in the Locality

Govinda Rath was a teacher, antiquarian, printer and book trader in colonial Cuttack in the last quarter of the nineteenth-century. He was a crucial, but largely under-studied, figure in the history of Odia literary modernity. In 1884, he composed and published a verse narrative titled *Cuttack Darshan*. Literally, *A View of the City of Cuttack*, the poem takes the reader on a sight-seeing tour of the market town that served as the seat of colonial administration in the province. This paper offers a reading of the poem and reconstructs a short history of dwelling at Cuttack at the height of the Victorian empire. Writing such a history is possible only when we treat a place as an event. Scholars have argued for such a treatment. Place is not merely a geographical location. It is not only about *where* one is situated. It is also about *how* one is “together with others,” that is, how one engages with others. And *who* they all aspire to “become together” (Casey 23). In other words, place is something that we experience (Casey, 30). It is not only a natural experience. Rather, it is a cultural experience as well (31). In this sense, a place becomes historical, that is, it acquires a historicity. It becomes an event that unfolds over a long period of time (Casey 32). And the event is about “the experience of being” in a place and “becoming part of the place” (Casey 33). This history of place at Cuttack is reconstructed in order to argue that Rath’s poem represents a folk or *laukik* style of inhabiting the locality. He borrows this mode from pre-colonial discursive traditions, and deploys it to construct a subject-position that at once celebrates as well as resists absorption into the colonial modern. In other words, this folk or *laukik* spatial imagination enables the poet and his narrator to dwell in the colonial urban space.

Colonial State Space and the *Laukik* Style

Scholars have described the formation of a colonial state space in India in the nineteenth-century. After the Mutiny of 1857, the colonial state sought to consolidate its territorial authority in India (Goswami 43). It developed an elaborate bureaucracy and carried out survey and measurement of land. It also undertook enumerative exercises and produced ethnographic knowledge about the people. Besides, it set up massive infrastructures for communication and

transportation. All these aimed to provide the state with an increasingly invasive presence in the colonised society (Goswami 43). This project of territorial consolidation went hand in hand with the expansion of imperial capital. Metropolitan political economists came to see colonies not so much as separate countries but as “outlying agricultural or manufacturing estates” of Britain (Goswami 44). British capital, they argued, flowed into the colonial spaces and turned them into “inner supplements” of the British imperial-global economy (Goswami 44-45). These two historical processes of territorial and capitalist expansion worked to “transform the geographical space of colonial India into a commodified, ‘second-order’ space embedded within...the broader imperial economy” (Goswami 45). Scholars have described this second order space as the colonial state space. It bore the marks of the “state-works,” the visible material embodiments of the colonial state’s authority and its civilising mission. It included the official buildings such as the courts of law, prisons and military barracks, the infrastructures of communication such as the roads, railways and telegraphs, and the projects of irrigation (Goswami 46-47). The colonial state wished to naturalise this second order space. It constructed and disseminated official maps and made modern geography a central aspect of school education (Goswami 132). This naturalisation of colonial India as a second order space involved a dismissal of pre-colonial Indian modes of spatial representation as inadequate (Goswami 143).

Rath’s mobilisation of the folk or *laukik* spatial imagination is an argument against the second-order status of the colonial space, against colonial pedagogical practices that sought to naturalise colonial spatiality. *Cuttack Darshan* employs traditional religious topological devices of *parikrama* and *darshan* to demarcate Cuttack as a site of pilgrimage for the emergent Odia middle-class. Before tracing this reconstitution of the colonial state space as a site of pilgrimage and drawing out its significance, a short reflection on the notion of the folk or *laukik* is in order.

First, the author relies on those strands of folklore studies that do not see “folk” and “urban” as antithetical experiences. Rather, the urban is conceptualised as one of the several sites wherein the

“traditional” and “unofficial” culture finds articulation and helps people to respond to the pressing issues of the contemporary world (Dorson 46). Here, folk does not necessarily represent “a world different from the centers of power, wealth, progress, industry, and intellectual and political activity in the metropolises” (Dorson 33). Rather, it signals engagement with “contemporaneity and modernity” (Dorson 48). Second, the author draws upon those scholarly insights into *laukik* which do not see it as a lesser term in the binary of great and little traditions wherein *shastric* constitutes the grander term. Instead of this “upstairs/downstairs” view, attention is paid to “context sensitivity” and “reflexivity” as modes of organisation at work in narratives (Ramanujan 8). While *shastric* reflects more of a doctrinaire position, *laukik* refers to a more embedded-in-the-world position (*Hinduism* 25). And both could be treated as different registers of cultural expression that comment on each other—they “invert, subvert, and convert” each other (Ramanujan 8). In addition, all translations from original sources in Odia language to English are undertaken by the author. Let us now turn to Govinda Rath.

Antiquarianism and Printing Culture in Cuttack

Govinda Rath’s reconstitution of the colonial state space as a site of pilgrimage relied on his vocation and profession—he was an antiquarian and a printer. Antiquarian enterprise arrived at Cuttack in the last quarter of the century (Bedamatta 405-422). The educated urban intelligentsia worked to collect, edit and print old Odia literature. Two broad trends emerged. On the one hand, there were societies and collective enterprises such as the Utkal Bhasoddipani Sabha and Cuttack Printing Company. These concentrated on high literature such as *kavyas* and epics. On the other hand, there were individual print-entrepreneurs who concentrated on folk and *laukik* genres and brought out cheap popular editions for mass consumption. This distinction was not set in stone. There were overlaps between the two trends. Nevertheless, these emerged as two pole positions in a spectrum.

Rath epitomised the latter position. He presided over a successful marriage between folk and *laukik* traditions and urban mass media. He compiled, edited and printed about eighty tracts in Sanskrit as

well as Odia. For instance, *Parashara Krishipaddhati* and *Achara Siksha* were compilations of Sanskrit aphorisms on proper methods of agriculture, and ways of conducting an everyday moral life. As regards his Odia language tracts, *Dhagamalika* was a compilation of proverbs and sayings in circulation in the region. *Bata Osa Katha* was a compilation of a folk verse narrative in Odia. *Haria Tanti* was another folk tale in Odia verse. Invariably these tracts were priced cheaply. Rath's editorial intervention was often minimal. Consider, for instance, the sixteen-page tract *Mahabahu Chautisa*, priced at five paise, it brought a song composed in the raag *pancham baradi* by Kavisurya Baldev Rath to the print market. On the last page, Rath, the printer, addressed an editorial comment to the reader: "At some places in this book, the meaning is not clear. At a later time, we desire to publish a glossary along with this book. If someone has an old manuscript [of the text] kindly send it to us. We will be deeply obliged" (*Mahabahu*).

Rath's typical style of engagement with the folk or *laukik* and print market received contemporary acknowledgement. Fakir Mohan Senapati, the most prominent Odia novelist of the period, wrote the following verses commenting on Rath's caste-identity, vocation and profession: "Praiseworthy indeed is Rath's brahminhood / printing tracts priced at an anna or two // Good indeed, nice indeed, may this continue as a means of livelihood / one or two manuscripts may continue to be printed" (Senapati 24). Gopabandhu Das, the most prominent local leader of the Indian National Congress, described Rath as a "lok nayak" or "people's leader" for his legal and social activism to protect the interests and rights of the "praja" or common people in an obituary, and observed "if a history of the people of contemporary Odisha is ever written, it will remain incomplete without taking into account the life and work of Rath" (Das 8-9).

Laukik Spatial Imagination: Early Modern Traditions

Cuttack Darshan draws upon an older tradition of topological literature in Odia. There is room to study two verse narratives—*Bedha Parikrama* (henceforth, BP), *Bedha Bula* (henceforth, BB)—as examples of Odia literary engagement with the sense of the place in pre-colonial times. BP and BB were picked since Rath himself

compiled these two verse narratives and published them together for the first time in 1895. BP consists of sixty-one couplets and BB consists of thirty-five quatrains. Both are meant to be sung priced at four *paisa*, this tract of sixteen pages aimed at popular circulation. Rath's act of publishing these narratives, from different eras of the pre-colonial period, as companion pieces should be read as a self-conscious attempt at constituting a *laukik* canon of topological literature in Odia. Both BP and BB are concerned with the temple of Jagannath at Puri. *Bedha* is a place-name: it refers to the area that surrounds the main temple within the larger sacred complex. It is dotted by various other deities and sacred features. The usual mode of visiting Jagannath includes a circumambulation of the temple through the *bedha* and the *darshan* of the various deities enshrined therein. Both *parikrama* and *bula* refer to this circumambulation. The verse narratives invite the reader to circumambulate the temple; the narrators tell him all about the deities and sacred features he needs to see. BP is counted among the compositions of Balarama Das who composed the *Jagamohana Ramayana* in the sixteenth-century. From internal evidence, BB is by one Janardana (*Bedha* 8). The second one is assumed to be of a later age.

BP and BB broadly belong to the genre of devotional literature known as the *sthala mahatmya*. Written in both the classical language of Sanskrit as well as diverse vernacular languages such as Odia, the genre can be described as pilgrim manuals. They typically elucidate the glory or *mahatmya* of a particular sacred place or *sthala*. This is accomplished by presenting a series of mythological narratives about the place and by pronouncing the tremendous spiritual and material benefits that accrue to the visitor of the site. They usually include details of specific topographical features of the place and some geographical data so that one might navigate the sacred place more easily (Smith 1-2). Medieval Sanskrit language *sthala mahatmya* about Puri—Vacaspati Misra's *Purusottamaprakasa* and Raghunandana Bhattacharya's *Purusottamakshetrattva*—recount both mythological narratives and glorious benefits, and put emphasis on the prescribed rule or *bidhi* of circumambulation (*pancathirtha pradakshina*) to be followed by a pilgrim to the temple town. The ritual of circumambulation helps to demarcate the sacred space and establish the visitor as a pilgrim (Schneibel 106-107, 114, 115-6).

BP and BB testify to the vernacularisation of the Sanskrit tradition of composing *sthala mahatmya* about Puri. While BP is more *shastric* (scriptural) in its orientation, BB is more confidently and jubilantly *laukik* or popular. BP explicitly presents itself as a *sthala mahatmya*: “Bedha Parikrama extols its glory; listening to it will bring us joy / listening to it, will do away with endless dangers” (*Bedha* 9). The author submits that he closely follows the prescribed rule or *bidhi* in his narrative about Puri: “I write as per the *bidhi* about the sacred field of Puri; do not find fault in me / I am no great scholar; have erroneously tried to make my small wisdom well known; thus says Balarama Das” (*Bedha* 16). BB makes no reference to any *bidhi* outside of the narrative itself, which suggests that the process of vernacularisation of the *mahatmya* genre in Odisha had grown in confidence by the time Janardana wrote his piece. Instead, BB derives its authority from the folk narrative frame it employs: Shri Rama, the divine hero, shows Sita, his wife, around the *bedha* of the temple at Puri, and thereby, instructs the ordinary readers and listeners in the practice of circumambulation. Janardana concludes by drawing attention to this unique narrative choice of his own and by locating himself firmly in the tradition of *bhakti*:

“What is not seen
I narrated that O Lord,
And rendered it visible.
Bestow mercy on me,
O Beloved of Sita.
O Raghupati,
May this mind remain at your feet” (*Bedha* 8).

In their attempt to construct a sacred landscape in words, BP and BB face two specific challenges. First, they must find a way to insert a series of geographical sites into a well-ordered narrative sequence without having recourse to the methods of modern cartography. Second, as Axel Michaels points out, the religious sense of the space always refers to something beyond the geographical features located in the place. This something beyond is the sense of the sacred, which cannot be observed but rather felt within. A site is no holy place if the religious sense of space is not understood. The challenge, then, is to find a way to represent religious notions of merit, grace or

liberation in the landscape (“Mappings” 131-143). BP and BB mobilise the notions of *parikrama* or circumambulation and *darshan* or seeing to address these issues.

BP and BB use temporal markers instead of cartographic ones to create a narrative sequence that describes a place. Michel de Certeau’s analysis of spatial stories helps to see how cartographic markers operate. He describes two kinds of narrative modes, tour and map. A tour describes movement or journey from one place to another. A map renders one or more places visible. These modes thus invite the reader either to move from place to place or to see a place in relation to a host of other places. Language employs both the modes to represent space. A description, de Certeau observes, usually oscillates between either “going (spatializing actions)” or “seeing (the knowledge of an order of places)” (de Certeau 119). Consider, for instance, the hypothetical narrative sequence: if you travel ‘x’ number of steps to the east of the entrance you come to ‘a’; if you look to the north-east of ‘a’, you see ‘b’ which is ‘y’ feet in height. Attention needs to be drawn specifically to the tour. In de Certeau’s analytic model, the movement from one place to the other is organised via cartographic markers. These markers provide details about direction and distance— ‘to the east of the entrance’ or ‘x number of steps’ etc. In contrast, BP and BB mobilise temporal markers to insert a series of geographical sites into their narrative sequence. For instance, after seeing x, one sees y. And then, one proceeds to z. The narrative texture is marked by phrases like *tahinra antare* or “after that”, *tathi pare* or “and then”, *ethu anantare* or “after this” and *ete dekhi kari* or “having seen this much.”

BP and BB do not allow the reader to map the place or the journey. They assume that the reader or listener already knows the geographical site and the route. For instance, the opening verses of BB do not give a sense of the geographic direction in which the narrator wants the reader to proceed: “Holding Sita’s hand in his own, [Rama] proceeded to the *bedha* / and pointed out to her the deities therein / ‘See, O, beloved, / the Lord in His eternal repose’” (*Bedha* 1). Similarly, the narrator in BP says:

First, go and see *patita pavana* at the *simhadvara* /
 see also *kasi visvanatha* on the twenty-two steps
 as he dwells on *brahma* in its full form (5)
 behold the *bhoga mandapa*, bow your head,
 all your sins are washed away here /
 . . . proceed now to lord *vighnesvara* (Bedha 9)

The narratives draw attention not to the cartography of the tour around the temple but rather to the subject that tours and the objects he sees. It is akin to the touring of a spectator in a museum or art gallery. The movement between the objects is less important than what the subject sees. *Parikrama* or circumambulation in BP and BB is then not a cartographic practice.

BP and BB convey the sacred experience of the tour around the temple by rendering *darshan* a dialogic event. It involves three positions; those of the pilgrim, the guide and the deity. The guide and the pilgrim see the deity; the guide narrates a mythological story about it while the pilgrim listens attentively; finally, they together expect benefits that accrue from the visit. In BB, Rama is showing Sita around the *bedha*. If Sita occupies the position of the pilgrim, Rama serves as the guide as they move from one deity to another:

. . . the beautiful icons of the brothers Rama and
 Krusna /
 Kamsa's enmity brought them into hiding in Gopa-- /
 behold them, /
 they will erase all our sorrows (Bedha 9).

The dialogic nature of *darshan* is also present in BP. The *bedha* enables the formation of a community that sees, communicates and expects. This collective act gestures towards that religious experience, which establishes the *bedha* as a sacred space. *Darshan*, thus, is not a form of appropriation, as the act of *seeing* is in several colonial narratives; it does not establish proprietorial relationships between the viewer and what he sees. The emphasis is on how the former is transformed. This transformation takes the shape of becoming joyous or *harasa*; growing free from pain or *kasta*, sorrows

or *duhkha*, anxiety and fears or *bhiti*, dangers or *sankata*; and finding eventual liberation from the *samsara* (*Bedha* 5, 6, 9).

Parikrama and Darshan of the City of Cuttack

Cuttack Darshan uses the pre-colonial *laukik* topological devices of *parikrama* and *darshan* to dwell in the colonial urban space and engage with the experience of colonial modernity. The narrator is a resident of the town. He invites a friend, who comes to visit him from elsewhere, to embark on a guided tour of the city. The relationship between Rath's narrator and the friend is akin to the relationship between the narrator of the BP and BB and the pilgrim who comes for a circumambulation and sight of the *bedha*. The tour of the town takes the rough shape of a *parikrama*: if one traces its course on a map of the city, they will find it roughly going round the geographical place and coming to an end at the site where it begins. The *parikrama* in this late nineteenth century topological narrative reveals a greater degree of cartographic sensibility. It provides details about the routes in the city and helps the reader to know the direction in which he proceeds:

See, my friend, let us return and go to another place.
Let us stand on the *chowk* of the Chaudhury *bazaar*;
Look around once in all directions.
The route to the west goes to Banka *bazzar*,
Many a gentleman reside there.
Now, let us proceed to the north
We will see many a sight, pleasing to the eye.
(*Cuttack* 5)

However, this new engagement with cartographic sensibility, a nod to colonial modernity, is supplemented with the *laukik* device of employing temporal markers to insert a series of geographical sites into a narrative sequence. Phrases familiar from BP and BB— *ethu ante* and *e ante* or “after this”—reappear in Rath's narrative.

After this, proceed for some distance,
The Chandan Mandap looks so beautiful.
Come out to the front and see the pond,

Lord Binod Bihari enjoys his boat-rides in this pond.
(*Cuttack* 5)

The *laukik* or folk stylistic device operates as an “aside” and lends the narrative that engages with its own present time, an old-world tone (Dorson 64).

The *parikrama* in *Cuttack Darshan* is also accompanied by the experience of *darshan* of the city. Rath conceptualises the town as an art gallery or a theatre where a sequence of scenes unfolds one after another as the *parikrama* proceeds. Just as the pilgrim and his guide move from one site to another around the *bedha*, so do the nineteenth-century narrator and his friend. For instance, as he looks at the full river that flows on the south of the city and the colonial law court where the Collector presides over trials, Rath comments on the *abhinaya* or the drama that unfolds in the natural and the human worlds of Cuttack:

The royal palace stands on the banks of the river
Kathajodi
The collector presides over trials here
One can see again and again
The dramas the king of waters and the king of humans
enact. (*Cuttack* 2)

The event of *darshan* in the colonial-modern poem retains the dialogic structure found in BP and BB. The narrator and his companion collectively see a sight; narrate and listen to a story about the sight; and expect beneficial results from the actions performed. For instance, a *darshan* of the layered ethnic composition of the market for English and *desi* textiles:

Come, O friend, and the wise [readers],
have a novel and wonderful *darshan* of,
the beautiful houses of the Marwari people.
A wide public road passes in the middle,
Double-storey houses stand on both the sides.
Have you heard, *nua-sadak* is the name of the road!
This is the market for British clothes.

Marwari people sell British clothes
 And earn a lot of money.
 Our desi-people do not take to earning profits
 By trading in British clothes.
 Here after, have a darshan of Chaudhuri bazaar
 [Your] eyes will be pleased today.
 In a wondrous manner, many shopkeepers and peddlers
 Have arranged [and displayed] a variety of commodities
 Cotton and silk clothes of the *desi* variety
Desi merchants trade in them. (*Cuttack* 4)

In a gesture that is reminiscent of BP and BB, Ratha presents both *jnana* or knowledge and *sukha*, *harasa* or pleasure and joy as the benefits one would derive from a *darshan* of the town. As they begin the tour, the narrator says, “Come, my friend, let us go / for a *darshan* of the town! / Much wisdom will it bestow” (*Cuttack* 1). And, also elsewhere in the poem, he observes, “My friend, let us leave the fort behind and go else-where / the heart, broken with sorrow, will grow joyous” (*Cuttack* 20).

A Pilgrimage to the Colonial State Space

By employing the pre-colonial *laukik* spatial categories of *parikrama* and *darshan*, Rath reconstitutes the colonial state space at Cuttack as a site of Odia middleclass pilgrimage. His poem constructs and narrates the lore of the colonial state and Odia civil society. The visitor to Cuttack derives *jnana* or knowledge. He comes to learn about the work of the colonial state. He also learns how Odia educated intelligentsia, landed elite and commercial entrepreneurs participate in the colonial project of civilising modernity. This edification leads to an experience of joy. *Cuttack Darshan* devotes ample narrative space to the built environment of all official buildings—the treasury, the court house, the collector’s office, the military cantonment, its canteens and parade grounds, prisons (*Cuttack* 2, 5, 7, 10); to all colonial projects that provided transport and communications—telegraph offices, post offices, steamboats (*Cuttack* 20, 21, 24, 25), and also to feats of colonial engineering projects—network of dams and canals (*Cuttack* 25). Narrative space is also devoted to other spatial markers of the English civilising

mission—industrial workshops with their smoke emitting chimneys, the clock tower, the saw mills, and the foundries (*Cuttack* 24-25); social clubs, ballrooms and racquet-ball courts (*Cuttack* 19); European housing projects with their straight and wide streets, well-ventilated spacious residences, gardens and porticos (*Cuttack* 21). Each of these features of the colonial urban environment receive vivid descriptions—their lore inspires varied feelings of joyous hope, wonder, and begrudging admiration. The lore the narrator constructs around European housing projects in the town serve a representative instance:

O friend come along this straight and wide road
See the settlements of the English men.
Boundary walls run along both sides of the royal road
One can see them run for a long distance.
How beautiful looks the gate!
[So also] the garden on the front of the house!
Creepers adorn the thatched roof of the veranda of the
buggy-house
Rangnali flowers please the eyes.
Clean and lime-washed house, [stands] well spread-
out.
It has many doors for air-ventilation
The way we differentiate between houses
The Whites do not have a similar rule.
Adorned with many embellishments
The house looks so beautiful as if gods would desire
it.
Many white men and women,
Sitting in their buggies, move along this road.
Why should they care for any one?
As fast as wind they fly [along the road].
Bathing in the dust of the wheels of the horse driven
carriages,
Walk along black men, and think in their hearts
What pleasurable Indra-hood do these enjoy!
We do not have that written in our destiny. (*Cuttack*
20-21)

Darshan of Cuttack is also a *darshan* of the emergent Odia civil society. The narrator and his companion move from one significant spatial marker of the work of the civil society to another, as well as narrate and listen to the accompanying lore: the diverse educational institutions in the town which have been built with private donations from Odia kings and *zemindars* (*Cuttack* 3,30-31), the printing presses and town libraries set up by the citizens (*Cuttack* 30); the primary commercial districts in the town and their trade links with the port cities of Bombay and Calcutta (*Cuttack* 3-4, 9). The poem also narrates lore wherein the local *nagarika* or citizen is the protagonist: his public-minded petition to higher colonial authority against an unpopular local water tax (*Cuttack* 31), his consumption of bourgeois forms of recreational leisure (*Cuttack* 29) etc. The description of the Cuttack Printing Company, the most prominent establishment of its kind in the town in the second half of the nineteenth-century serves a representative instance:

Nearby, good friend, one can see,
 The tall two-storey-building of the printing
 company;
 This building houses the printing press that publishes
 many a book;
 With a lot of effort, babu Bichitrananda established
 this company;
 Maharaj Bhagirath was much helpful—he donated
 generously to this cause;
 Working as the secretary of the company,
babu Gaurishankar has made profits for the
 shareholders;
 This building, dear friend, houses the Utkal Samaj;
 Through debates and arguments, many a decision are
 reached on this platform;
 This is also the venue where the residents of the town
 congregate for diverse meetings,
 and pass resolutions. (*Cuttack* 7)

Resistance

However, the trope of pilgrimage helps Rath to simultaneously resist the second-order spatial status of Cuttack. Mediating as it does between a pre-colonial *laukik* spatial imaginary and the experience of dwelling in a late nineteenth-century colonial town, Rath's *parikrama* and *darshan* construct a *mahatmya* of the town of Cuttack. For the narrator and his friend, the *mahatmya* of the town is not dependent on its relation to other locations in the British empire. Production of relative space—space defined not so much as a locatable object but as spatial relations and networks spread over regions, nations and the globe—acquired momentum in India with the advent of colonialism and the rise of industrial capitalism. However, dominance of relative or abstract space, scholars have argued, did not “imply the annihilation of concrete spaces with their particular qualities” (Ahuja 43). Concrete space here refers to an understanding of space as a locatable object, as a natural, absolute, and fixed object. Rath mobilises the *laukik* to allude to the persistence of the concrete and absolute values and understandings of space. These notions comment on the colonial state space. This is particularly the case when the narrator and his friend visit the sacred sites of piety—the diverse temples and routes of festive processions in and around the town. The following is a typical description:

The street is particularly wide at Chandni Chowk
Buildings of many colors are there in the thousands
Sweet coconuts—this fruit is deemed auspicious
People are selecting and buying this fruit [from the
vendor],
And, having fun.
What do I say about the *mahima* (glory) of this *chowk*
When the deity arrives here in procession on the night
of *dashahara*
It is as if the wealth of the heaven comes down on to
the earth
Who else besides a reflective man can cherish the joys
of such a sight! (*Cuttack* 32)

The reflective man who stands at the *Chandni Chowk* on the night of the *Dashahara* and relishes the *mahima* or glory of the place does not necessarily dwell in that moment in a second-order space. He is aware of the colonial state space and participates in it. At the same time, he creates for himself spatial experiences that do not remain limited to the rhythms of the state space. These alternative spatial experiences allude to the concrete and absolute understandings of space. These two languages of spatial expression, colonial and *laukik*, comment on each other. The *laukik* mode of narration enables the narrator to recreate a concrete spatial experience, to appreciate the *mahatmya* of the chowk, and thereby, resist an unequivocal absorption into the colonial state space at Cuttack.

Conclusions

Cuttack Darshan enables one to write a history of dwelling in the colonial city. The verse narrative mobilises pre-colonial *laukik* modes of spatial representation so as to invest older cultural meanings in the modern experience of living in a colonial space. It presents the second order colonial town as a site of pilgrimage for its educated middle-class readership. Older categories of *parikrama* and *darshan* are reworked. They help the narrator to recognise the significance of his town as a locality of the British world order. At the same time, they help him to resist its second order status. As a site of pilgrimage, Cuttack refuses to remain confined to the second order space in which the imperial global economy embeds it. The *laukik* enables the town and its narrator to articulate this refusal and thereby, constitute Cuttack as an event in colonial India.

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