This dissertation is dedicated to

SK Rangarajan

(1934 – 2008)

‘Best Father in the World’

Even Better Father-in-Law!
Acknowledgements

There is a litany of people across places, cultures and generations, without whom this dissertation would not have presented itself, and perhaps not in this specific avatar. It is a pleasure to finally have a space to acknowledge the contribution of each of them:

The thematic choice of mimesis and pedagogy for this dissertation owes to two people, Rammanohar Reddy, editor, Economic and Political Weekly, who first gave me the opportunity to think and write about plagiarism. When I delved into the literature, I realized what a complex topic it was. My ‘significant other’ pushed this interest by dubbing ‘mimesis’ to be at the foundations of this complexity. Mimesis sounded so esoteric that I decided to work on it for my PhD. As the literature unfolded, I realized ‘esoteric’ was an understatement. The literature on mimesis is vast and straddles a number of disciplines from philosophy and aesthetics to literature and theatre. It also is a concept dating back to antiquity so there was a large time period to cover. And lastly, although it is essentially a European concept, having its origins in Greek culture and language, I was curious to see what Indians had to say about similar themes.

At every turn I was overcome, and sometimes even overwhelmed, by the discovery of newer layers and facets of mimesis. I could have spent another five years on this topic and not mined a fraction of it. I then remembered Christof Wulf’s emphasis four years ago that the dissertation is only one part of the larger learning we do towards the PhD. His words have heartened me many times during the writing of this dissertation.

My debts of gratitude go back a long way: Creative exploration in music was learned at the feet of Shaila Kapileshwari nee Puranik through classical Hindustani music in erstwhile Bombay of the 1970s. Its effects and influence have lasted long after that, as indeed has her impact as a dedicated teacher who tirelessly took hundreds of students through the musical scale. While the hard task elementary school teachers face with young children has some acknowledgement from the public, the work of, and challenges faced by, community art teachers remains unacknowledged. Anything I love about music comes from those wonderful years of learning and improvising from Shaila Didi. The section on classical music in this dissertation particularly draws on them.

Myrdene Anderson, my advisor at Purdue University, from whom I learned to be an independent ‘tinkerer-thinkerer’, but only after I left her tutelage, would deserve mention just for this. But she also introduced me to the world of ideas and intellect, the breadth of which astonishes me even today. ‘Striding through the literature’ was her dictum and was of use when time was short as I was teaching twelve contact hours a week through much of the work done towards the dissertation. My interest in linguistics and semiotics was also fanned by her.

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since then. The section on yoga in this dissertation has its roots in such a dedicated practice over the interim years.

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My dear sisters - Madhu and Bhanu - motivated teachers who taught me that ‘practice makes perfect’ when they were only a little bit older than my twelve years of age. In their own selfless and sweet ways, they have always been a part of my life, nurtured the child in me and stood at my side as I continued the struggle to overcome our shared heritage. I hope I have finally succeeded.

My mother-in-law, Santha, whose extraordinary skills in things intellectual, as well as her great ability to make constant culinary innovations through ‘substitution’ is a table-top demonstration of mimesis in Tamil women of that generation. More than any other woman I know, she embodies the intellectual, the creative and the emotional in a perfect blend.

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The aesthetics of contemporary dance presented itself to me in the mind-body of Jayachandran Palazhy – dancer-choreographer extraordinaire. Avant-garde in the truest sense of the word, Jay is creative, intellectual, physical and strategic, all at the same time. It doesn’t help that he is also a good writer! The language and idiom of the Attakkalari repertory is truly mimetic and deserves a host of observers and researchers to document Jay’s pedagogic methods on creativity.

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