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তুলনামূলক ভারতীয় ভাষা ও সাহিত্য পত্রিকা

পঞ্চম সংখ্যা- ২০২০

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Editor

Mrinmoy Pramanick

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সহ -সম্পাদক

অভিষেক বসু ও দীপান্বিতা মন্ডল

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to this journal are their own.

Editor's Note

We are happy to publish the fifth volume of the Journal of Comparative Indian Language and Literature. Covid 19 pandemic led to a slight delay in the publication. The aim of this journal is to represent the current areas of study in the department and tries to serve the discipline widely. We seek to publish papers which enquire less explored areas of Indian literature and literary studies in general. This issue is also no exception. The journal explores literary studies with the approaches of interdisciplinarity which is again an important approach of the discipline. The new syllabus which was introduced in 2018 under the CBCS system, focuses to develop new directions and areas of Indian Literature and this journal also addresses such new areas. Hence, syllabus and journal together may offer glimpses of new directions of studying Indian literature. We believe that our conscious effort to work on such academic endeavour may introduce new dialogues between our discipline and greater academic community across the world. This volume includes literary contribution made by the scholars working across the country. One may find wide range of verities in the subject published here.

As an academic journal, Journal of Comparative Indian Language and Literature believes in academic integrity. Therefore, all the papers are blindly peer-reviewed by the academicians working on the areas concerned across the country. All the papers are claimed new, plagiarism free and unpublished by the authors themselves. No part of this journal can be reproduced by anyone by any means without written permission of the editor.

I acknowledge the kind cooperation of the University authority and all the people associated with this endeavour, like the advisory committee, members of the editorial board and especially the reviewers who took this burden of reviewing voluntarily, out of their dedication to the academics. I also acknowledge Mr. Pratim Das and Sounak Sengupta's assistance to prepare the final draft of the journal.

Mrinmoy Pramanick

31st December, 2020

Calcutta

Contents

Reading a Bio-Centric Universe in Bongcher Oral Tradition, through a Structuralist Paradigm

Sharmistha Chatterjee

Abstract

The Bongcher people of Tripura (Nelsipara at Ompi, Amarpur subdivision) are a small community of about thousand people who still subsist on agrarian economy. Almost illiterate and very poor, this community has for centuries bore the brunt of oppressive kings, making them a partially nomadic tribe in search of safe heaven, almost in the tradition of the Jews. Originallybelieved to be from Sinlung in South China the Bongchers left their homes to move towards present day Mynamar, then to Champai in Mizoram and ultimately to Lungleng Tang, meaning- ' the hillock of lost hearts'. 'Songs of Destitutes' and 'Songs of Separation'were composed on this Lungleng Tang. After a period of stay in this area, the Bongchers finally shifted to Chittagong tract area through which they entered Tripura. A community without script, their oral literature traces this desire for settlement and home, the search for the same and the endless journey for peace, love and acceptance. Often steeped with morals, these folktales and songs necessarily follow the universal structuralist paradigm unraveled by Formalists like Vladimir Propp and A.J. Griemas. They traverse the trajectory of the three main 'syntagms'- the contractual structures, the performative structures and the disjunctive structures which necessarily show the Bongchers' optimism and ability to surmount difficulties in a hostile world. But the recurrent tropes in this design is hard to miss out- the 'jhum cultivation', the trees, the flowers, the animals, the birds, the rain and the sky equally participate, befriend and often compete with the humans to bring home a message of bio-centric harmony and egalitarianism. The presentation/ paper seeks to read these recurrent motifs, tropes and 'semes' in the Bongcher oral tradition which speak of the underlying history and the worldview of its people in absence of a script.

Keywords: Bongcher, Oral Tadition, Nomadic, Folktales, Songs, Structures, Paradigm, Bio-Centric, History, Worldview

None, no one I can call my own

Is there, on this desolate earth

I search my heart for a destination

(And find nowhere a welcoming hearth.)

'I leave this land of yours'- I call out

Seven times. None to my left I see.

None to my right nor can I find out.

Who is there my own? Who will be?

I search for cucurbites in valleys, on hill,

For the core of banana plants even.

What else to eat? My belly to fill?

Can I ride a tortoise to go to heaven

("Song of the Destitute" II ll I-12)

The first two 12 lines of the "Song of the Destitute" sung by the Bongcher community crystallizes, three essential things that one searches for, or, they may be portrayed as the desires of a forlorn human being, the first- 'the welcoming hearth' or home, the second- someone to call 'my own' or a soul mate and third- something for 'my belly to fill'. It is these three basic desires and a diehard optimism to surmount the odds ('Death doesn't come, I cannot die' l-13), that characterizes the Bongchers' approach to life. Minakshi Sen rightly observes in her Foreword to the collection of tales and songs of the Bongchers- *Echoes from Lungleng Tang* ,"Their folklores and songs appear to have picked out of this long journey over space and time" (i)

There is veritably no scope to disagree with the claim, since this cluster of twenty-five to thirty Bongcher families who are settled at the foot of the Barmura hills of Tripura, Ompi's Nelsi Boncherpara, with a population which cannot exceed a thousand people are a race of migrants who have travelled over long distances and time in search of peace and food. At present scattered and in other places as Teliamura, Gandachara, Dhanalekha and Agartala, the Bongchers ethnically belong to Tibeto-Burman Mongoloid tribe. Linguistically they come under the Kuki-Chin language group. Generally speaking they are sub-tribe of the Halam tribe and they call their dialect Bongcher language. Having no script of their own they have retained their linguistic, ethnic, and cultural identity by heavily depending on memory. Their distinctive vocabulary has given expression to traditional songs, proverbs and stories. It was only in 1992 that S. Sailo published a monograph on the Bongchers on behalf of the Tribal Research Institute of the Government of Tripura.

The stories of the beginning and earliest history of the community are also oral. It is also this history that very clearly shapes and propels the Bongcher vision of life- the axiological dimension to the signified/ signifiers which has built a 'belief' (read history).

The Bongchers believe that their original abode was in Sinlung or Chhinlung in South China. The word Sinlung means the covering stone of the entry of a cave. At the oppression of the tyrannical kings in Sinlung, the Bonchers left their homes and moved towards Burma, the present day Myanmar. At that time Burma was under the rule of Mog Kings. Jhum and agriculture dependent Bongchers settled around the Ri-Li Lake. Later the Bongcher settlements extended to or shifted to Champai in Mizoram. The Ri-Li Lake area and Champai were very fertile provinces and the Bongchers temporarily lived peacefully there. Instances of this peace and abundance can be still found in rituals and the folktales and songs. During the reign of Bongcher King Karpuiya, the Bongchers settled in Parsen Sib area. Parsen Sib is situated in the North East of Kolsib town in North Mizoram.

King Karpuiya was an alcoholic and a tyrant. During this period a bloody feud took place between Bongchers and the Mars of Puis (a term meaning 'aggressors from north'). The Bongchers were defeated by the superior warriors and they scattered in flight. The fleeing Bongchers came to a big, deep and rapid flowing river, the Tuipui River. The helpless Bongchers tried to cross the river in

Bamboo rafts. Many of them drowned others who could not cross the river, surrendered; they ultimately lost their Bongcher identity. Few who could cross the river came to a place called Lungleng Tang, meaning 'the hillock of lost hearts'. Memory says that the songs of destitutes and the songs of separation were composed on this Lungleng Tang, looking back over the river.

Separation (I)

2.

O Ramkoinithey, why don't you listen to my appeal?

I'll give you a neck-high garland.

Don't you know anything?

My eyes are full of tears.

I see only deep black clouds.

3.

Don't call me with your sweet tone and words,

O Ramkoinithey,

Here I am alone, only me, all alone and none else…

The trauma of Mar-raids is so deeply etched in Bongcher psyche that, it is related to the naming of the community also. S. Sailo states, "In Bongcher language, 'Bong' means to cut in parts and 'Cher' means to sprout." (viii) Symbolically, the never dying spirit of Bongchers made others believe that the murdered Bongchers could come alive and fight back.

Extreme poverty, lack of education, untimely deaths due to diseases; still make Bongchers a sad tribe. "An awareness of the present and the memory of the past (make) Bongcher songs… invariably sad and singers shed tears as they sing" (Kamal Bongcher, ix)

In case of the Bongchers, the lack of written script make memory the repository of 'beliefs' which for them becomes 'histoire' or 'story' (in words of Gerard Genette) and interestingly the 'recit' or narrative in form of tales or songs arrange the signifiers or 'representamens' in such a manner that the 'referent' or 'object' invariably has to be negotiated with the 'interpretant' (borrowing C. D. Pierce) which by default according to Naess and Guattari needs to be dealing with 'sign value and meaning'.

Thus the Bongcher folktales draw upon signifiers of homes, hearth, family living, invariable journeys, movement, rivers, jhum cultivation, fertility rites, resistance, problems, fierce fights, separation, loss, reconciliation and ultimate peace. The Bongcher narratives in this way become 'a particular form of representation implementing signs' (Cobley, *Narrative* 3). However, as stated above, the form or the structure of narration is never an innocent one. It is in perfect connivance with the ideology and the world view of the Bongchers which is a result of traversing time and space, as stated above.

Paul Wake bridges the gap between meaning and form of narrative in the following words, 'the ways in which we construct notions of history, politics, race, religion, identity and time. All of these things… might be understood as stories that both explain and construct the ways in which the world is experienced'. ('Narrative and Narratology', 14)

The folktales fit like hand to a glove in respect to Vladimir Propps' structuralist paradigm of a folktale which discreetly traces a journey trope, a movement in the tradition of the Jews. Tales as 'Thuimuthu', 'Lalrawnga Retep', 'A Tale of Hen's Egg', 'The tale of Selepchha', 'The Tale of a Fox', 'Zongkhak tepu', 'The Tale of Parualsirika', distinctly introduce the 'narratemes' of the story and situation: who, where, when how, why…

It is worth knowing the themes and the plot lines of the tales so that a paradigm may be attempted.

-" Thuimuthu" is a tale of a gifted and a kind hearted son who was deserted by his parents for the greed of the fruit of the same name. Thuimuthu is brought up by a tigress which helps him to return to his family. He is reunited with his family and like a good son saves them from poverty with his magic.The story definitely harps on harmony between nature and humans.

-"Lalrawnga Retep" is a story about a brave man who was prophetic in his sayings and a great talker. Being gifted, he fought with the Gods and supported his parents to alleviate the poverty of his house and the village. When he threatened to kill a powerful God, he gave him boons with which he could tame nature but remain in harmony with it. Lalrawnga's village was once troubled by a tiger whom he could ultimately befriend. But this folktale is of immense importance because it tells the readers how humans and tigers later fell out of friendship, but how in the Bongcher tradition, the last rites of a dead tiger is still performed as an honour to the earlier friendship and good acts done by the tiger.

-"A Tale of a Hen's Egg" is a tale of revenge taken by the Hen's egg on a fox which had cheated the hen (the Egg's mother) and eaten her up. In avenging the wrong, the hen's egg is helped by the hen's excreta, the chopper, a wasp, a dog, a pig and a trap. Thus both the animate and the inanimate world (however ludicrous) come together to get justice for the wrong doing.

-"The tale of Selepchha" tells the story of a poor boy who becomes the king of his country.One day he went fishing and found a golden flower in the river. He promised to give his friends, the hen, the pangolin and the bird, if he could find the heavenly tree and bring back the flowers. But in the forest, the fairies saw him and the youngest fairy fell in love with him and took him in disguise to heaven. On learning that his daughter wants to marry an ordinary man, the king of heavens, Indraraja sets for him impossible tasks. But Selepchha is able to do all of them with the help of older fairies. On returning to earth with his fairy wife, he brings a lot of golden flowers for his friends. The prince of the kingdom and his father on seeing the fairy wife, wants her as their own. Selepchha fights and his friends help him. Ultimately, the prince is defeated and Selepchha becomes the king and is able to keep his fairy wife too.

- "The Tale of a Fox" is a departure from the other selected tales where the good and able triumph over evil. This is the story of a trickster fox who dupes a crocodile and eats up her children. The fox feigns to be literate and traps the crocodile cubs in the pretext of teaching them. When the crocodile finds out, he escapes and goes to a village where he similarly cheats people to kill and

eat all the hen. When the villagers put him in a cage to beat him to death, he fools a tiger to get into that cage and escapes from there too.

- " Zongkhak tepu": This melancholic tale of a monkey by the name of Zongkhak tepu who fell in love with a human girl and married her forcibly. They had a son and although Zongkhak did his best, his wife could never be happy. On finding an opportunity she runs away to her father's home with their son. When Zongkhak is able to find her, she gets angry and kills him. Zongkhak gets transformed into a bottle-gourd plant in the courtyard. The day when the mother-in-law of Zongkhak tries to sell the plant, his son pleads her not to. Zongkhak's wife gets very angry and deserts her son too. Taitari, or the son goes away to the forest but is killed by the other monkeys who cannot accept the child of a human and a monkey.

-"The Tale of Parualsirika" traces the story of a young but a poor boy who pleases Goddess Laxmi by offering her water and rest, when she comes to his home, disguised as an old woman. Earlier, she had been denied water in the home of a rich family of seven brothers and a sister who grew a lot of paddy. Perualsirika or the boy worked as a labourer in their fields and in return was given a meagre amount of rice. Goddess Laxmi began staying in Parualsirika's house and gave him plenty of food with her magic. Later she advised him to grow paddy in his own field. He did so and the paddy grew in abundance. Perualsirika fell in love and married the sister of his former employers, settling into a domestic life. The old woman or the Goddess, blessed him and disappeared. The story has a moral which teaches readers not to ignore the infirm and old, since they too are representatives of God.

Following is a table which tries to show how these Bongcher tales perfectly fit into the paradigm discovered by Vladimir Propp although shorter tales may not exhibit all the constituent elements.

Names of Tales	**1 Something's Missing**	**2 The Warning**	**3 Violation**	**4. Reconnaissance**	**5 Delivery**	**6 Trickery**	**7 Complicity**
Thuimuthu	The wife's desire to have delicious fruits, all consumed	The fruits have magic power.	Abandons their child(Thuimuthu) in forest in greed of fruits.	Bear Elephant Tigress attempt to devour the child			
Lalrawnga Retep (Long story)	Lalrwanga's father failed to hunt.	Lalrwanga talks too much/ at war with Gods.	God as antagonist- Sarath Sakhingui.	Lalrawnga as antagonist wants to know charms.		God tries to trick Lalrawga's father of his game.	Hero agrees to suggestion of villagers' relatives.

A Tale of Hen's Egg	Mother Hen is missing.	Fox had killed the hen.					
The Tale of Selepchha	Golden flower stuck to fish hook- to search for heavenly tree bearing flowers.	Young fairy fell in love with Selepchha					
The Tale of Fox	No food at home. Fox wanted to cross the river.	Too inexperienced & weak to float	Fox as antagonist- mouth watered on seeing crocodile offsprings.	Fox understands that mother Crocodile wants her kids to read to and write.		Fox pretends to be learned.	Crocodile agrees to give cubs for teaching.
ZongkhakTepu	Clothes of seven sisters missing while bathing- Zongkhak (a chimpanzee) had stolen them.		The antagonist chimpanzee abducts youngest sister in pretext of giving back clothes.			The chimpanzee tricks the sister and marries her.	The sister has to give in.
The tale of Parualsirika	Rich brothers turn away. Goddess Laxmi disguised as a woman.						

Name of the Tales	**8 Villainy and lack**	**9 The challenge**	**10 Counteraction**	**11 Departure**
Tuimuthu		The tigress brings up Tuimuthu and as dispatcher makes Tuimuthu	Tuimuthu accepts challenge.	Tuimuthu heads towards village/

		go/ search for home.		Tigress helper keeps eye.
Lalrawnga Retep	Tiger causing panic in village.	Tiger offers to become friend. Lalrawnga takes up challenge	Lalrawnga covers up fear to take up challenge.	Tiger goes to his house. Following Lal goes to tiger's house.
A Tale of Hen's Egg	Fox still residing in tong home.	To avenge the murder of Hen mother.	Hen's egg, excreta, the dog, pig, wasp, trap and chopper take up challenge.	They move to fox's house.
The Tale of Selepchha		Indraraja tests Selepchha.	Selepchha accepts the challenge.	Selepchha takes his wife home, providers: chick, pangolin cub, birdlings.
Tale of Fox	Fox eats the eldest cub.			Fox escapes to a village.
ZongkhakTepu			Seventh sister does not like her husband's home	Seventh sister goes back to her house.
Perualsirika	Poor boy (hero) worked for rich sons given meagre quantity of rice.	Goddess Laxmi, (Dispatcher) sends hero to work and tells him to arrange jhum field.	Hero chooses to accept challenge but does not know how to get seeds.	Hero leaves and does job with help of dispatcher.

Name of the Tales	**12 The test**	**13 Reaction**	**14 Acquisition**	**15 Transport**	**16 Confrontation**
Tuimuthu	House in poor state, parents are old, mercy of lazy brother.	Tuimuthu reacts positively.			

LalrawngaRetep	To hunt and satisfy the tiger.	Lal is proactive.	Magical power given by Sarathi God.	Walking to tiger's house.	Bitterness between the friends.
A Tale of Hen's Egg	Fox cunning- to trap and kill him.	All friends work in co-operation.		Roll and move throughout fox's house.	
The Tale of Selepchha	The prince's eyes fell on Selepchha's fairy wife.	Selepchha refuses to give up his wife.			The prince makes Selepchha confront him through tests.
Tale of Fox	Fox puts villagers to test, fools them.	Villagers agree.	Fox (antagonist) eats up all hens and terrifies women and girls.		
ZongkhakTepu	Zongkhak arrives to claim wife and son.	Seventh sister angry.			Seventh sister pushes Zongkhak off and kills him.
Perualsirika	Dispatcher tells hero to clear land of weeds.		Obtains cooked rice with help of the magical Goddess.		

Name of the Tales	**17 Injury**	**18 Victory**	**19 Resolution**	**20 The hero returns**	**21 Pursuit**
Tuimuthu		Wins over his family	Initial lack-fixed with direct efforts of Tuimuthu		
LalrawngaRetep	Tigers bite at his feet-pain	Defeats tiger family with magic rain	Returns home through his efforts		The tigers eat up Lal's brother who ventures

					into their territory
A Tale of Hen's Egg	Fox injured	Fox dies	The initial lack is avenged		
The Tale of Selepchha		Selepchha wins his wife	Initial problem solved		The antagonist prince stakes his kingdom in challenge
Tale of Fox					
ZongkhakTepu		Seventh sister victorious	The girl gets back her home		Taitari (Chimpanzee's son) prevents her grandmother from selling bottle gourd plant- his father's flesh
Perualsirika	Hero gets tired				Weeds(antagonist) crying to be saved

Name of the Tales	**22 The Rescue**	**23 Back home**	**24 The false claim**	**25 The difficult task**	**26 Task performed**	**27 Recognition**
Tuimuthu						
LalrawngaRetep	Rescues brother with magic but he dies again	Carries back home brother's corpse.		The tiger friend comes to take revenge.	Lalrawnga kills him with magic arrow.	Opponent magicians recognize his power.
A Tale of Hen's Egg						
The Tale of Selepchha	Saved by pangolin and birdling.					
Tale of Fox				The fox trapped by villagers-	Tricks a tiger to get into the cage.	

				difficult to save himself.		
ZongkhakTepu			Seventh Sister's heroic character questioned.	Attempts to get Taitari, her own son killed.		
Perualsirika	Goddess Laxmi warns him and intervenes			The hero keeps on harvesting paddy for six months but they do not end.	Dispatcher helps him to do the task.	The Goddess is recognized as important by hero.

Name of the Tales	**28 False claims exposed**	**29 Acknowledgement**	**30 The Hero wins**	**31 The Hero returns.**
Tuimuthu			Seen in a new light, family reunited.	
LalrawngaRetep	Another magician claims to be as powerful.	Lalrawnga made stone stick to bottom of man.	Lalrawnga completed funeral rites of tiger with horns of Sajuk.	
A Tale of Hen's Egg				
The Tale of Selepchha			The antagonist prince is vanquished.	Selepchha marries the youngest fairy and becomes the King.
Tale of Fox			The anti-hero wins and the tiger is killed.	
ZongkhakTepu			Taitari, the son goes to the forest to live among monkeys. Gets killed.	
Perualsirika		Hero acknowledged as hard working one.		The hero gets the hand of the seven brothers' one sister and is married with

				pomp/ settles into family life.

Out of some fifteen (15) Bongcher folktales, the seven(7) above are selected randomly as specimens to examine whether the form/structure is axiologically shaped by the semantics/ histoire. It is observed that, apart from tale no 5 (The Tale of a Fox) all the tales essentially weave themselves around a good and industrious hero/ heroine, the travails and problems in his or her life, which also affects the family or community adversely, the journey and efforts undertaken to solve the problem or surmount the crisis which is either deterred by antagonists or guided by providers and ultimately a desire for happy, settled family life within the larger community. Many of the tales are anthropomorphic thus projecting animal life, flora and fauna with human values and characteristics (The Tale of Hen's egg), (The Tale of a Fox) (Zongkhak Tepu). Animals and Gods often participate in the 'narratemes' and become antagonists or providers (Lalrawngna Retep) (The tale of Selepchha) (The tale of Parualsirika). Even inanimate beings often serve as providers (The tale of Hen's egg). The Bongcher universe thus fits into the universe of six 'actants' and the three axes as designed by A. J. Greimas:

The six actants which also accommodate aberrations like 'The Tale of a Fox' which is to be seen as a 'disjunction' in the 'axis of desire' (for example, a murderer succeeds in getting rid of his victims' body). Greimas therefore perceives Propp's functions as:

- The axis of desire- (1) Subject (often hero)/ (2) Object- often princess to marry.
- The axis of power- (3) Helper/ (4) Opponent
- The axis of transmission (the axis of knowledge) - (5) Sender/ (6) Receiver.

Traditionally these sets of actantial models operate in form of:

1. Contractual structures – Subject sent on a mission.- initiates 'Plot'.
2. Performative structures – Subject undertakes tasks, battles, faces and obstacles. –'action of narrative'.
3. Disjunctive structures – Moments of arrival departure and movements in a narrative.[i]

Till here the meaning and the form of the Bongcher tales seem to be inseparable with each other. What Stylistician, Archibald Mcleish would call (Monism), but as claimed earlier, this semiotic study has to and must rivet around an eco-sophy.

'Come, O Rain'

Come, O rain, come,

My chicks are thirsty,

Come, O rain, come,

My pigs have their throats all parched,

Come, O rain, come

My kids seek water, they are thirsty,

Come, O rain, come

My little flowers wither,

Come, O rain, come,

My paddy lands have all dried up,

Come, O rain, come.

In the Bongcher worldview, the chicks, the kids, the flowers, the paddy lands and the rain are all signifiers laden with sign value and meaning – a thoughtful axiology based on ecological wisdom. Emphasizing this axiological dimension of semiotics helps understand (according to Arne Naess and Felix Guattari) how dominant significations, habits and values are established and enlighten the crucial part it could play in the humanities and beyond by partly coalescing with ecosophy. Arguably, ecosophy as axiomatized semiotics. From this novel perspective the Bongcher songs and folktales seem to partake in a signifying process, in a space that is at once an ecosphere, a semiosphere and a vast political territory. With a growing realization that environmental degradation lessens our quality of life, the Bongcher love for kids and chicks, and tiger and paddy and flowers all in the same plane, might make us rethink our values and practices.

While Biology traditionally conceives of the environment, or more specifically the biotope, as non-living, an ecosystem like the Bongchers denotes a continuous and inseparable collection comprising of a biotic community and an environment. An ecosystem is thus, a reunion in a single analytic unit of a biocoenosis[ii] (a community of living beings; flora, fauna, fungus [chick, hen, fox, tiger, elephant, crocodile, birdlings in Bongcher tales]) and a biotope (a non-living habitat; geology, hydrography, topography, climate conditions, etc. [rains, jhum cultivation, cherra, sky, sun, excreta in Bongcher tales]). The value and correctness of this shift in concept and 'interpretation' (Pierce) from the study of individuals to the study of ecological wholes should continue to nourish many discussions in environmental ethics.

It should be understood, therefore, that ecology and semiotics share this structural propensity to study units of a higher degree -system of signs-, which does not mean an interest in objects themselves, but conceives of the object as shaped by its relations within a given environment.

Objects presuppose semiosis just like organisms presuppose an environment to occur. An organism cannot be separated from its environment, and as Simon Levesque puts it, "The environment is not merely sensed, but perceived (as objects [Pierce] are formed with interaction between 'Representamen' and 'Interpretant'): there need to be perpetual judgments by organisms in order for them to avoid danger and favour reproduction. (516)

Thus the,

1. - 'Rain' (sign/ representamen)
   - 'Giver' (interpretant)
   - 'Water drops' (object)
2. - 'Tiger' (sign/ representamen)
   - 'Friend' (interpretant)
   - 'Striped yellow animals' (Object)

3. - 'Birdling' (sign/ representamen)
   - 'Provider' (interpretant)
   - 'Feathered young bird' (object)

4. - 'Chopper' (sign/ representamen)
   - 'Provider' (interpretant)
   - 'Weapon made of iron' (object)

5. - 'King' (sign/ representamen)
   - 'Antagonist'/ 'Dispatcher' (interpretant)
   - 'Person of power with a traditional crown [maybe]' (object)

To the Bongcher world view, one could thus apply the term 'ethosemiotics' (based on Morris 1964)[iii] and used by Susan Petrilli (1993) to grasp "that kind of inquiry into signs which is not expect to be neutral", describing it as "[a]n approach that reaches beyond logico-cognitive aspect of the semiotic process in its responsiveness to the problem of the axiological order, to the problems of evaluation, of ethics and aesthetics." (246)

In 1969, Arne Naess had raised an important distinction between 'bigness' and 'greatness' and between 'standards of living' and 'quality of life': the former are quantitative and the latter are qualitative. Devotion to outright ecosophical life in the Bongcher tradition could make us rethink of a qualitative 'bigger' life- a life of symmetry and symbiosis, a serious desire towards harmony and ecological sustainability where culture and literature are referents/ signified of the mind sets and ideologies (signifiers) and not divorced from each other-as in the post-modern urban life, where the structure stands for itself, desperately trying to conceal the meaning in the mind.

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[ii] Karl Mobius (1877 , originally, German) coined the term biocoenosis; 'bios', life, and 'koinoenein'- to share something, to have something in common

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De-Occidentalizing Law and Literature Narratives

Debasis Poddar

Abstract

Nearing half of the century of its trajectory in USA since 1973, so called law and literature movement is yet to generate its momentum in India; albeit, sporadic occasions of conversation and publication apart. While reasoning behind vacuum- if not void- lies in the want of cross-disciplinary discourse, fundamental fault lines appear elsewhere. In the given academic ecosystem, interdisciplinarity remains a buzzword; with little practice in the pedagogy of either discipline. Thus, law sounds Greek to the sophomores of language and literature alike; and vice versa.

The subject matter of this effort is hitherto least-explored cleavage between law and literature in the South-Asian subcontinent and its default population. Since time immemorial, with classical rhetoric, essence of the eternal law went transmitted to generations through hymns of ancient spiritual wisdom; followed by commentaries and, last yet not least, verses of the epic literature. Besides, the courtcraft belongs to foreign legacy and went introduced here by the colonizer; something nonexistent in the indigenous heritage of India. So also is the case of statutory regime; enacted by the house of legislature. The author hereby extends argument to get the academic movement initiated with *sui generis* genre to suit to the soil and its folk in altogether divergent cultural setting. In final count, both law and literature reflect cultural setting in the context of time and space of the given society.

Keywords: Law in Literature, Law as Literature, Law as Interpretation, Law versus Literature

The poets are liberating gods. … They are free, and they make free.

(White, 212)

Trajectory of Law and Literature Movement in USA

The idea of getting foreign legacy imported is no new praxis. Also, the idea of getting law and literature movement imported elsewhere is not new. The very nomenclature of this effort went hypothecated- albeit, not verbatim- from trans-Atlantic precedent to this end (Olson, 1). What appears new in this effort is getting the import extended to larger trajectory, from North America to South Asia; thereby experimenting product of one cultural setting to another, poles apart, setting. It is here that this effort is meant to add value, if any, to relevant academic discourse. Without further ado, the author intends to brief the hitherto movement to readership.

Beyond *Wikipedia*, discursive semblance between law and literature appears apt enough to boot this effort. Language creates the crossroads of these two otherwise poles apart disciplines; law and literature alike. At bottom, jugglery with language is foundation of both; albeit, with altogether different algorithm behind. Public reason is locomotive for the law. The essence of literature lies in individual emotion with appeal to public. The magic lies here that both attain the respective wonder with language; irrespective of poles apart difference otherwise. no wonder that both legal and literary practitioners ought to qualify the criteria common to both professions. Face-off in mundane practice apart, two practitioners somewhere walk alongside. In final count, a judge and a poet do the same act: public good; and they do it with intellectual technology of their own. Since time immemorial, therefore, the normative and the narrative have had exchange *inter se*; thereby make the merger to get together. Law and literature, therefore, often than not leave lasting influence upon one another.

The judge and the poet construct respective imagery for law and literature by default toward synergy on several counts. Both engage quest for truth with good conscience; albeit, with poles apart mindscape. The judge condemns disorder with the legal fiction while the poet contests otherwise unproblematic public order with the literary diction; thereby decipher the disorder in disguise behind public order. At bottom, they introspect with insight to reflect public conscience of the given time and space. A role reversal thereby swaps their respective stakes in course of pilgrimage for truth. Great judgment thereby transcends to poetry of the state. Likewise, great poetry transcends to judgment of the society. Here lies synergy between two otherwise poles apart pieces of prophecy. Accordingly, the judge and the poet- albeit few, too few, can- get transcended to prophet to legitimize respective stake; thereby bring in wisdom toward societal transformation. Let us recourse to illustration from respective domain:

Judges in USA:

1. *It is emphatically the duty of the Judicial Department to say what the law is.* (Marshall, *J.*, 1803)
2. *The life of the law has not been logic: it has been experience.* (Holmes, 5)

Poets in UK:

1. *For Mercy has a human heart*
   Pity, a human face;
   And Love, the human form divine;
   And Peace, the human dress.
   - (Blake)
2. *Where is the life we have lost in living?*
   Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
   Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?
   The cycles of heaven in twenty centuries
   Bring us farther from God and nearer to the Dust.
   - (Eliot)

A series of intellectual intercourse between law and literature thereby procreated three progenies in the West; thereby create somewhat similar character *inter se*, albeit, with little diversified cross-disciplinary DNA of their own:

A. Law in literature
B. Law as literature
C. Law as interpretation

Without replication of rudimentary literature to introduce these three sibling variants, something a click away with net, survey upon gestation of the movement in USA ought to prove productive to engage cross-disciplinary comparative study of the movement; followed by research on potential and limitation of similar genre of hybrid literature in the given regional settings of India. Before we move ahead with the discursive study in forthcoming paragraphs, let us take stock of regional difference in these two regions; with hemispheric difference between them. First, North America went prevailed over by settlers while South Asia went ruled by invaders, followed by colonizers; until transition of power to homegrown gentry recently. Consequently, top-downed law enacted by the state and bottom-upped literature narrated by the society could never attain eye-contact; thereby bridge the vacuum- if not void- through mutual conversation. Second, legal system in USA is unproblematic due to want of rupture by regime change while indigenous legal tradition in India succumbed to naught by unfamiliar tradition; followed by imposition of the legal tradition with foreign features to local population: English language, Common law and Anglo-Saxon legacy. None of them suits to soil and native folk of the subcontinent anyway (Chand 1951). Third, unlike USA, India has had phenomenal linguistic diversity in its demography; something non-conducive for conversation even within literary authors with stake in different linguistic heritage. Not without reason that comparative literature movement is a foreign implant in itself; inspired by democratic genre of the West. While such is the state of affairs, cross-disciplinary comparative approach as desideratum of dialogue for law and literature movement appears otiose due to want of *lingua franca* in India. Fourth, *lingua franca* between law and literature appears nonexistent even otherwise. The statecraft emerged from the society in the West by default while the same went imposed upon the society in India through administrative arrangement. Consequently, faceoff between statal law and societal legacy emerged as new normal in British India since the then law belonged to the colonizers while literature to the colonized. Due to want of mutual audience, law and literature engaged monologue with tautology of their own and the attitude has left lasting impact to get percolated even after independence of India.

Let us recourse to illustration from the representative literary legacy in British India:

1. *Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;*
   Where knowledge is free;
   Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;
   Where words come out from the depth of truth;

   … *…* *…*

   Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

   \- (Tagore, *Gitanjali, 27-28*).

2. *Nay, do not pine, tho' life be dark with trouble,*
Time will not pause or tarry on his way;
Today that seems so long, so strange, so bitter,
Will soon be some forgotten yesterday.

\- (Naidu).

Thus, in the mainstream literature in India, dream for utopia through freedom struggle as journey from the colonial *Raj* to *Swaraj* went dominant and the same went reflected as somewhat dominant discourse in British India. A schizophrenic cynicism upon law- enacted by the British Parliament- went introduced; thereby get continued afterwards, with sublime- and at times subversive- postcolonial politics. Here lies regional context behind cross-disciplinary crossroads of law and literature in India; something instrumental to contribute to bizarre genre, like law versus literature.

Postcolonial Experience: Literary Militancy in India

By courtesy Article 372 of the Constitution, handful exceptions apart, existing laws in British India continued after independence; with the result that public perception upon the Indian legal system hardly changed. Three core components, viz. language, law and legacy, remained the same; as earlier. Even otherwise, the same set of judges in the Federal Court took over the Supreme Court as maiden team of judges; similar to the rank and file personnel in administrative services and military services of India. Therefore, despite the metamorphosis out of transition of power in India otherwise, relations between law and literature continued to suffer from want of warmth *inter se*; also, the fateful proclamation of emergency in 1975 and the repressive rule thereafter deteriorated residual trust of literary personnel upon the law to nullity.

Illustrations from the representative literary legacy after independence appear plenty:

1. *With a cover of the*
Sun and the Moon, the earth
Is a beautiful book.
But starvation, poverty and slavery …
God, are these your sermons
Or simply printing errors?

\- (*Pritam*).

2. *Why world is fighting fighting*
Why all people of world
Are not following Mahatma Gandhi?
I am simply not understanding.
… … …
Still, you tolerate me,
I tolerate you,
One day Ram Rajya is surely coming.

\- (*Ezekiel*).

Reflection of the paradigm shift went apparent: from erstwhile dream for the utopia of *Swaraj* to discontent upon the dystopia vis-à-vis aberration of the good governance; something pledged during the midnight freedom. Besides, rising concern went reflected upon the state of affairs after tryst with destiny; upon fundamental governance failure culminating into extreme poverty, slavery, and inter-community hostility in particular. On other side, outspoken literary personalities went assaulted, at times assassinated, by vested interest with passive state patronage after allegation blown in the air; albeit with impunity, due to want of strong forensic logistics, e.g. evidence, proof, witness, etc. Inventory of celebrity victims thereby went increased with the passage of time: *Safdar Hashmi*, *M. M. Kalburgi*, *Gauri Lankesh*, among plenty others, from emergency to date, to gross detriment of the great grandeur vis-à-vis rule of law. In consequence, participation of literary personalities in the civil society movement appears on its rise as response to repressive rule; often than not run in the disguise of duly elected regime. What initiated in USA for confluence of law and literature ended in India into conflict; thereby placed them Janus-faced: as law versus literature.

While such is the state of affairs in Indian English literature, poetry in particular, it is just tip of the iceberg since authors with stake in so called Indian English literature represent urbane, and therefore sophisticated, middle class gentry of the subcontinent. So far as authors in respective vernacular literary tradition of the mainstream Indian multicultural (read multilingual) lifeworld is concerned, they comprise a community by and large charged with anti-establishment politics; though often than not engaged in mutual rift on technical nitty-gritty. The statecraft, however, takes unfair advantage of their dissident position; thereby get them charged with penal provisions- otherwise meant to net the anti-national (read anti-state)- while, the eccentric apart, the accused are more patriotic than those who indulge in prosecution to settle score with dissidence; something not in consonance with democracy as a basic feature under the Constitution. Besides their ideological difference *inter se*, multilingual ecosystem appears a divider, beyond diversity, to get literary laureates together toward professional congregation; more so with the lived experience of subnational imperialism through state-sponsored Hindi hegemony since long back. Unlike states in the West, there is no *lingua franca* for the statecraft in multilingual India. Here the narrative of law and literature in India parts its counterparts in the Occident. Indeed, poetry is taken as icon of literature and the same represents other variants of literature as well.

Cross-disciplinary Discourse: Roads and Roadblocks

A glimpse beyond the contemporary chronicles across the world, however, unfolds an altogether different narrative vis-à-vis law and literature synergy. In ancient antiquity, no trace of the crossroads between law and literature went mentioned in the chronicles. With valid reasoning behind, rather than naïve premise that there was no intersection, the author pleads coexistence of law and literature in the scripture; something meant to get the normative and the narrative together in same basket. After the then wisdom, literature is law, law literature; similar to poetic revelation depicted by Keats: beauty is truth, truth beauty. Due to the disciplinary indivisibility vis-à-vis law and

literature, crossroads are invisible in ancient antiquity. Let us recourse to *Srimad Bhagavad Gita*:

> *yadaa yadaa hi dharmasya glaanir bhavati bhaarata*
>
> *abhyutthaanam adharmasya tadaa'tmaanam srijaamyaham* // 4.7 //
>
> [*Whenever there is decline of dharma (righteousness), O Bharata, and rise of adharma (unrighteousness), then I manifest myself*.]
>
> \- (*Srimad Bhagavad Gita*)

Attempt to get the normative and the narrative dissociated ought to prove otiose since epic literature is meant to bridge the temporal with the eternal through poetic depiction of juxtaposition for good and evil, justice and injustice, right and wrong, and the like; with mythology involved therein. With the ballads on Lord Krishna and Lord Rama, *the Mahabharata* and *the Ramayana* preach edicts acceptable to the regional lifeworld. Thus, normative lessons from the narratives deserve introspection, more than civil war upon the historicity of *Mathura* and *Ayodhya* as their birthplaces; after these fictions. Such otherwise classic literary rhetoric apart, legal reasoning appears manifest enough with the restatement of rule of law. Thus, whenever there is aberration of *dharma* (law), the Lord (enforcement agency) manifests time and again; thereby restores public order. Do these epics represent narrativity of the normative? Or, normativity of the narrative? Perhaps both. The civilization initiated its odyssey with the quest for holistic truth. Truth succumbed to fragmentation with divisive disciplinary devices for convenience of knowledge profession; more so for the pedagogy in practice. Indeed, went separated by praxis, law and literature merge together in quest of truth.

Is truth one? Are there too many truths to get documented? The conundrum is relevant here. Every sundry civilization engages its perennial quest for truth- with consensus that truth is one- and thereafter each arrive at the respective truth of its own: different from one other; incidental merger apart. The comparative studies decipher observations arrived at by different civilizations around with the hypothesis that means and methods are diversified in the civilizations in quest of the eternal truth; something indivisible. After literary language, conclusion may thereby get drawn that with diversified *ethos*, *logos* and *pathos*, each drive similar *telos*; i.e. quest for truth. Thus, a functional unity (read universality) does exist underneath these otherwise poles apart diversities since, in final count, they engage quest for the truth. Despite diversified means and methods, there is level-playing space to merge together in course of respective quest for truth. A caveat may get extended to ascertain clarity. Means and methods of quest are many while the same is not the case vis-à-vis truth. At bottom, law and literature merge here that, with respective tools and techniques, both engage quest for the truth indivisible. Despite diversified trajectories, destination is same for them. The quest for truth differs not with space alone, but with time as well. Well within the same civilizational fold, archaic truth stands toppled by nascent truth; neither getting lesser than other in merit. In law and literature alike, the waves rise and fall with time. For instance, naturalist, positivist,

historical, sociological, realist, etc., in legal theory, and enlightenment, romantic, realist, surrealist, postmodernist, etc. in literary theory; each enter and exit with respective truth in the same spatial setting.

Since time immemorial, with the aesthetic camouflage of pro-establishment literature, law plays undercover, thereby percolates intended normativity toward the grassroots with socialization of the subjects through narrative. Accordingly, in the epic narratives of India, docility to seat of power- even if royal dictates depart from dictates of reason- went apparent as the normativity to reign India. Law and literature went apposite here. However, dissident literature is available as well with depiction of darker hemisphere. The narrative of *Ekalavya* in the Mahabharata, or, that of *Shambuka* in the Ramayana: both did flag-off systemic antinomy in a way or other. Subsequently, popular protest against the seat of power went narrated by *Sudraka* in his drama *Mrichchakatikam* (The Clay Cart). A parallel genre, anti-establishment literature resurfaced its presence time and again. Not without reason that the poets went abandoned in ancient literature (Plato, 375 BC). The prophesy underwent lived experience while many literary laureates often than not preferred self-exile; thereby recreated heterotopic space for themselves to decline enlightenment (read establishment): *El Dorado* in 'Candide' appears such iconic space among them (Voltaire, 1759). Also, *Malgudi* is another fictional landscape (R. K. Narayan, 1943); a heterotopic narrative space recreated in the Indian literature. In the midst of diversity, e.g. pro-establishment literature, anti-establishment literature, etc.; departure from the reality thereby recreates narrative reality for the readership. Since law and literature engage diversified crossroads, discursive exchange depends upon the realpolitik law and literature concerned are charged with. Anti-establishment literature is no monolithic genre and the same may get classified in diversified styles. Since long back, a radical literary style in *pari materia* with the left-wing praxis and with militant approach against the establishment- state apparatus in particular- appears on its rise. The creative literary psyche is thereby taken to captivity by partisan praxis of the civil society movement; with progressive yet political agenda of its own. Albeit, with no rebuttal to such otherwise *pro bono* movement, words of wisdom from a veteran Nobel laureate sound prudent. To plead from '*The Case for Literature*':

> *To subvert is not the aim of literature, its value lies in discovering and revealing what is rarely known, little known, thought to be known but in fact not very well known of the truth of the human world. It would seem that truth is the unassailable and most basic quality of literature.*
>
> \- (*Xingjian*)

Albeit, in the context of colonialism, another Nobel laureate expressed his scepticism upon patriotism since the same is corollary to '*Nationalism*':

> *The political civilization which has sprung up from the soil of Europe … is scientific, not human. And it can be safely prophesized that this cannot go on, for there is a moral law in this world which has its application both to individuals and to organized bodies of men. You cannot go on violating these laws in the name of your nation, yet enjoy their advantage*

> *as individuals. … you must keep in mind that this political civilization, this creed of national patriotism, has not been given a long trial. But the civilization, whose basis is society and the spiritual ideal of man, is still a living thing in China and in India.*
>
> \- (*Tagore, 1917*)

The truth advocacy cannot fence the defence of public service- often than not extended by radical laureates- since literature is meant to invent hidden truth yet to get known to public sphere; not mundane truth well known to the world, even if there is silence out of deterrence. Roadblocks, if at all, are meant to prevent potential political rivalry from within the laurels of literature; not to prevent the authors' freedom of expression. The position is not intended to get the tyranny legitimized, but to flag-off the fallacy. If laureates descend to the street and struggle with street politics and players around, they are subject to rules of the game; cannot claim privilege for the gentry in the street. The setback they suffer from, however, turns other laureates weary of establishment. With the passage of time, a paradigm shift reduces cross-disciplinary conversation- if at all- between law and literature. Thus, unlike the dominant development in the West, discursive face-off between law and literature appears on its rise in contemporary India to the detriment of both. Rare occasions apart, National Seminar on Law and Literature- conducted by the Council for Social Development Hyderabad on 12-14 February 2012- may be taken into count, serious cross-disciplinary effort to bridge the given vacuum- if not void- went hardly taken by either discipline while revival of the dialogue is need of the hour toward the synergy of reason and emotion.

Manifesto of Law and Literature Narrative in India

The rise of liberalization-privatization-globalization has crafted a conducive ecosystem for the academic movement in India since nationalization of so called new international economic world order has spearheaded spectacular social transformation in public life. The erstwhile societal structure went broken down to pave the way for newer structure; similar to the Occidental variants. The narrative, therefore, ought to get initiated with trajectories of the West. Subsequently, regional traits ought to add value; thereby get the initial mileage accelerated by default. Let us take stock of hitherto developments with the crisscross movement of law and literature in India:

Law in Literature

After respective development of law and literature as independent discipline in itself, here lies maiden engagement between them across the world and experience in India constitutes no exception on this count. Way back in the late nineteenth century Bengal, law in literature may get traced back in the narrative of a native judge turned laureate:

> *The court and a brothel are similar, no entrance without payment. Money is needed for stamps; money is needed to pay the fees of lawyers. Process fees have to be paid for witnesses, they have to be fed, perhaps witnesses too have to be paid. The bailiff may have to be paid. The court has constables and clerks, they have expectations.*

- (*Chatterjee, 1879*)

Also, once again in the early twentieth century Gujarat, a native lawyer, turned farmer and weaver by profession (to quote from his affidavit in the court of law), depicted altogether similar narrative of the daily lifeworld; played out in the temple of justice:

> *If we were not under the spell of lawyers and law courts and if there were no touts to tempt us into the quagmire of the courts and to appeal to our basest passions, we would be leading a much happier life than we do today. Let those who frequent the law courts- the best of them- bear witness to the fact that the atmosphere about them is foetid. Perjured witnesses are ranged on either side ready to sell their very souls for money or for friendship's sake*. (*Gandhi, 1920*)

These two similar narratives, taken from two poles apart regions of India with interval of four decades, reflect spectacular parallel to document state of affairs on their own. These two authors are relied upon as well informed since both engaged legal discourse by profession before they documented their experience. Therefore, respective narrative of Chatterjee and Gandhi- narrated out of lived experience- may be held to have drawn reliable literature of the travesty for procedural justice in the courtroom of British India. Interestingly enough, while Plato implied to get poets abandoned from the republic, he often than not went read in literal sense of the term. Although Plato banned them from his republic, neither philosophy nor the law has displaced the poets in exploring what is just. Justice constitutes critical concern for literature; no lesser than the law. When Plato seeks definitions of justice through a reasoned dialogue aimed at finding absolute truth, the epic is found wanting and poets will be banned from his republic precisely because they teach through the emotions (Schenck, 2013). The history went ridden with chronicles to decipher a poet of normativity within the judge and a judge of narrativity within the poet. The former transcends the law of his land and the latter does the time and the space of his own; both patron the merger of law and literature in quest of justice via respective routes of their own.

Law as Literature

Literary narrative of the law apart, legal expression constitutes a literary genre in itself. Be the same enactment or judgment, every sundry legal document is product of merger between narrativity and normativity. Whatever appears normative is narrative in itself. The author has had prior literature to get his comparative method fortified with citation:

> *Judgments are a challenging genre of writing to engage with. They puzzle and they punish, they enforce and they entertain. A thousand lines of judicial text often states too little; ten lines, too much. Although written by legal experts in technical language, both the reason and consequence of judgments is for a general audience. Guidelines on judgment writing have, therefore, traditionally emphasized simplicity and clarity*.

- (*Ramnath, 1*)

Likewise, despite getting named after senator(s) concerned (practice prevalent in USA in particular), every sundry statute has had meta-narrative behind. What the

draftsmen do is last and final part of the legislative procedure: documentation of the manuscript with systematic expression of the communication of state policy to the world at large in technical legal language. Prior to documentation, meta-narrative but lies elsewhere. The legislative history stands initiated with social fact, often than not social problem, followed by a series of activities ranging from commencement with survey, followed by observation, introspection, participation, identification, experimentation, action, discussion, public opinion, etc.- whatever applicable- followed by policy formulation in consultation with actor, stakeholder, vulnerable, beneficiary, civil society, ministry, peoples' representative, statesman, and the like. Legislative draftsmanship, therefore, represents mere tip of the iceberg below. For instance, without learning meta-narrative behind repeal of the Land Acquisition Act of 1894 by the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act of 2013, understanding present land governance regime in India ought to get reduced to naught. Normativity apart, therefore, law has had no less narrativity than literature. At bottom, law is normative literature; with the nitty-gritty of its own.

All discursive antinomies to keep law and literature apart thereby get finally dissolved. Every sundry form of law resurfaces insignia of narrative with respective of its own:

> *… The law, broadly speaking, may be said to employ rhetorical strategies, to use stories, and to be narrative. … Some of the controversy stems from the view that law cannot be reduced entirely either to storytelling or to the broader category of narrative. Of course not. Yet we need to understand the ways legal discourse uses and embeds narrative elements. … The question is not whether opinions, articles, or other communicative acts within law can be seen as stories, but whether they are best understood in this way.*
>
> \- (*Baron & Epstein, 148*)

Besides, law and literature share matching DNA vis-à-vis authorship of respective text. In a way or other, the trope of '*The Death of the Author*' (Barthes, 1967) is applicable to both. Even statutes, once enacted by the legislature in democratic governance, stand for judicial review (read interpretation) since the legislature cannot claim monopoly upon interpretation of statutes with reasoning that the statutes went authored by itself; the way literature, once published, is subject of critical appreciation by the readership. Thus, with creative interpretation, text may get subjected to attribution of the meaning beyond imagination of the author. In contemporary times, the institution of authorship went contested by so called 'murmur of indifference': "*What matters who's speaking?*" (Foucault, 1969). Also, the attribution of literary works to individuals as authors, with all the ethical, interpretive, and legal implication of the attribution, went interpreted as a cultural artefact (Posner, 2009). So also is a case in the attribution of judicial works where judges are the "authors" of opinions written by their law clerks (Posner, 2009). Likewise, the attribution of statutory works turns to legislators as they are "authors" by endorsement of manuscript; prepared and tabled by their draftsmen. At bottom, all these "authors" are but puppets of time and space; thereby meant to respond to needs of the hour either way; via law, or literature, alike. In legal literature, judicial authors engage everything

doable by other laureates. Like literature, enactments and judgments get published. The following narrative is authored by a veteran out of lived experience:

> *Artists combine craftsmanship with creativity. But so do judges, displaying craftsmanship in the legalist phase of decision making and creativity in the legislative phase (the phase in which judges exercise discretion to make law; as distinct from passively applying preexisting law), and to both phases working through a legal problem or series of legal problems and wrapping the solutions in a theoretical package pleasing to their colleagues as their primary audience but also, they hope, to a broader audience as well.*
>
> - (Posner, 2008)

With phenomenal points of convergence, therefore, law has had potential to emerge as another genre of literature; with style of its own. Indeed, law is literature even now. There is but strong roadblock to get the conversation open. The history of dissociation may get traced back to the late nineteenth century practice of clinical legal education:

> *Until the Civil War, the man of law in the United States was also a man of letters. But by about 1870, when Christopher Columbus Langdell became dean of Harvard Law School, law began to be conceptualized as a science rather than an art, a specialized professional discipline characterized by its own logic, methodology, and subject matter. Once law became an independent field, literature was no longer a part of legal education, nor was it a part of lawyers' everyday competence. Putting this point in a slightly different way, there was no "and" to law in its Langdellian form; law was autonomous. Indeed, this lack of an "and" was made law law.*
>
> - (*Baron, 1074*)

In the postwar world, law and literature movement went initiated and had momentum in the wake of critical legal education- as a subset of critical legal studies- to question, thereby contest law as independent knowledge domain to get establishment fortified. The politics of critical legal education is driven by caveat vis-à-vis interdisciplinarity of law, to decipher law as interdependent knowledge domain; thereby get the plurality of the institution revived. Thus, besides so called black-letter regime, juridical studies initiated its experiment late twentieth century onward as inclusive knowledge domain to engage cross-disciplinary dialogue; thereby get law socialized. Law and literature movement is one of them. There are plenty others, e.g. legal history, sociology of law, economic analysis of law, and the like. Taken together, they spearhead law and society movement to transcend black-letter regime; thereby read text of law in larger context of the society.

Law as Interpretation

The phrase went invented in the late twentieth century (Dworkin, 1982). Interpretation as praxis, however, is in place as canonical inventory to decipher statutory meaning since long back. Also, the same is part of curriculum in professional legal education. With the epiphany in law and literature movement, the methodology of interpretation resurfaced discursive synergy for both; thereby draw functional parallel between them. It went proposed that we can improve our understanding of law by

comparing legal interpretation with interpretation in other fields of knowledge; particularly literature. It also went expected that law, when better understood, will provide a better grasp of what interpretation is in general (Dworkin, 1982). The following paragraphs are meant to get the given hypotheses proved beyond doubt.

The position hereby taken has had logical construct to its credit. Law and literature both emerge from within the given text and, therefore, remain subject to construction; something well inclusive of deconstruction. "Like the New Critics' prior knowledge that all literature is paradoxical, the deconstructionists' foreknowledge that all texts are allegories of their own unreadability" (Graff, 2007), thereby subject to volte-face; if required by time and space concerned. For instance, the Preamble to the Constitution of India went once interpreted by the Apex Court as appurtenant to the Constitution and not part of the Constitution (*In re* Berubari Union of 1960). The same Preamble went again interpreted by the Court as part of the Constitution (Kesavananda Bharati Sripadagalvaru and Others v. State of Kerala and Another of 1973) and, subsequently, besides getting read as part of the Constitution, the Preamble went interpreted as a key to the understanding of relevant provisions (read basic features) of the Constitution (S. R. Bommai v. Union of India of 1994). The paradigm shift resembles the tradition in literature and available in 'Songs of Innocence and Experience' (Blake, 1789); where naïve poetic illusion reversed into prosaic disillusion in the context of truth around. Also, very similar shift went traceable in 'Crisis in Civilization' (Tagore, 1941); where the obsession of a laureate with 'the ideal of civilization' went bankrupt after he saw "the crumbling ruins of a proud civilization strewn like a vast heap of futility". The poet hereby portrayed paradigm shift in the West: from renaissance to deterrence. Reversal of innocence in the late nineteenth century by experience in the early twentieth century- poles apart from one other- went apparent with narrative of clear contrast in the text:

> *As I look back on the vast stretch of years that lies behind me and see in clear perspective the history of my early development, I am struck by the change that has taken place both in my own attitude and in the psychology of my countrymen- a change that carries within it a cause of profound tragedy.*
>
> … … …
>
> *While I was lost in the contemplation of the great world of civilization, I could never remotely imagine that the great ideals of humanity would end in such ruthless travesty. But today a glaring example of it stares me in the face in the utter and contemptuous indifference of a so-called civilized race to the well-being of crores of Indian people.*
>
> - (*Tagore, 1941*)

Since interpretive U-turn went taken to cope with the need in changing circumstances, both legal and literary texts ought to turn open-ended and stand subject of interpretation by the readership to decipher meaning of law and literature in the given circumstance. For Blake and Tagore alike, their utopic lifeworld crafted with otherwise tenable logic turned dystopic; by courtesy, lived experience. Thus, experience turned logic in itself, with reasoning of its own: something flagged-off with poetic prophecy by

Holmes, *J*., while he pronounced that the life of the law has not been logic; it has been experience. A protagonist of legal realism, he has brought law back: from the ivory tower of power to grassroots of social realism. After his line of thought, legal empiricism has toppled the top-down approach with bottom-up approach in law. Besides, literature is not at all schizophrenic narrative with seamless stream of aesthetics. With normative yardstick, laureates often than not grapple with conundrum of ethics; thereby judge the lifeworld with juristic quotient no less than veteran priests in the temple of institutional justice. Indeed, judges cannot be expected to get versed to technical nitty-gritty of literature. Neither laureates be expected to get versed to technical nitty-gritty of black-letter law. However, they fit into role reversal since, nitty-gritty apart, both engage quest for truth; thereby serve public good. Also, text may and does resemble law and literature alike:

> *The ambition of the greatest man of our generation (Gandhi) has been to wipe "every tear from every eye". That may be beyond us, but so long as there are tears and suffering, so long our work will not be over.*
>
> \- (*Nehru*)

Albeit a lawman, the author was neither a judge by profession, nor a poet by passion, while his speech named '*Tryst with Destiny*' resembles both; something with impact upon the making of the Constitution of India and the wisdom for India of his dream. Contrary to the Platonic commandment, a poet thereby led so called 'tryst with destiny' to fruition. Also, contrary to the adversarial pronouncement, a judge thereby engaged the people to build the noble mansion of free India where all her children may dwell (Nehru, 1947). Law need not get reflected in enactment or judgment. Neither literature ought to get reflected with aesthetics or poetics. At times, both transcend sundry form or content; thereby turn omnipresent in sundry text. Reason and emotion are propriety of both; not monopolized to law and literature respectively.

Beyond Legalese: Literature is Law, Law Literature

The etymology of law and literature movement in USA went charged with the occidental spatial legacy by default; thereby get law and literature dissociated by implication. The legacy in the Orient but went poles apart. Since time immemorial, in ancient India in particular, law as independent knowledge domain was nonexistent. Instead, literature went generated to communicate the law of the society by implication. A holistic genre of normativity and narrativity reigned the South Asian subcontinent; until demerger:

> In India, as in other countries of the Orient, law is an integral part of religion and ethics, and the books dealing with these subjects, called *Dharmashastras*, therefore, offer us … the manner of living and customs of Brahmans and kings, and other subjects. Many of them say nothing at all about law proper, and only a few later compilations may be called juridical works.
>
> \- (*Sternbach, 535-536*)

Thus, with nonnarrative literature, viz. *the Vedas* and *the Upanisadas*, the authors preached ethics through aesthetics; thereby ascertained that the learned readership get socialized to *dharma* (*sui generis* construct of the eternal law). Besides, with narrative literature, viz. *the Mahabharata* and *the Ramayana*, the authors intended popular socialization of *dharma* to get public customized to *dharma* with conduct performed by protagonists of these epics. Taken together, ancient literature was meant to preach eternal law toward public good. No wonder that authors endured anonymity to attribute divinity to the literature with *bona fide* intent that great grandeur of the impugned text may get taken as expression of the divine intent; thereby prompt public at large comply with societal law of the land.

For the learned gentry, so called *Brahmanas*, destination went set to transcend mediocrity. A verse of ancient Indian literature may get cited as non-narrative yet normative text:

"*(Om) Asato Maa Sad-Gamaya*

Tamaso Maa Jyotir-Gamaya

Mrityor-Maa Amrtam Gamaya".

[(Om) From evil lead me to good.

From darkness lead me to light.

From death lead me to immortality.]

(*The Brhadaranyaka Upanisad*)

Also, in *Ayodhya Kanda* of *the Ramayana*, advisory of Lord Rama upon *rajadharma* to Bharata- his brother and the prince coronated to rule the kingdom- deserves citation:

All the citizens are indeed to be protected by king through his righteousness.

… … …

A wise and learned king, having obtained and ruled the entire earth, properly by righteousness and by administering justice to the people, indeed ascends to heaven.

- (*Valmiki Ramayana*)

At bottom, fundamental rights and directive principles of state policy, taken together, resembles *rajadharma* as these constitutional edicts cast onerous duty upon the state to secure good governance. For instance, nondiscrimination clause and welfare clause may get cited as remnants of ancient legalese in Articles 14 and 38 of the Constitution:

The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law and equal protection of the laws within the territory of India. [*Article 14*]

> *The State shall strive to promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting as effectively as it may a social order in which justice, social, economic and political, shall inform all the institutions of the national life*. [*Article 38(1)*]

Here the protagonist, Lord Rama, ought to attract attention since the character, drawn in the post-Vedic India, went elevated to icon of public lifeworld in the subcontinent. Indeed, due to want of technical historicity, make-believe politicking of his otherwise celebrated lifetime as lived experience ought not to get academic validity. The narrative of his popular biography (as the Ballad of Rama), however, survived the test of time; thereby earned immortality in the public psyche to such extent that his regime-named as *Rama Rajya*- went acknowledged by advocate turned poet of politics in British India:

> *By Ramarajya, I do not mean Hindu Raj. I mean by Ramarajya Divine Raj, the Kingdom of God. … I acknowledge no other God but the one God of truth and righteousness*.
>
> \- (*Gandhi, 1929*)

In *the Ramayana*, life of the protagonist went portrayed as a template for commoners to follow in every sundry age of lifecycle; whatever may be the age: of *brahmacharya*, *garhasthya*, *banaprastha*, *sannyas*, etc. For instance, his docility to parents, empathy for siblings, company as spouse, duty to subjects, conduct toward friends and enemies, and the like, ought to transcend his time and space. In time of battle, Rama observed eternal rules of warfare. In ancient antiquity, while his father himself had three wives, Rama observed monogamy throughout his lifetime. Also, in every sundry walk of life, he went adherent to rules of conduct of his society. Besides unambiguous precedents of totalitarian statecraft, such ancient legacy, therefore, went handy for the Parliament to add value to the Constitution through insertion of fundamental duties for citizenry. Last yet not least, literature resembles law while Rama set a precedent of good conduct with his subjects. After he learnt popular perception about the character of his spouse (a clear case of character assassination), he went tolerant with subjects, did not revenge, and, with broken heart, abandoned innocent spouse to prove his pledge to seat of power after *rajadharma*; something getting sidelined in contemporary times. Similar legacy is available in the legalese of oaths or affirmations before taking offices of public trust by incumbents to act without fear or favour, affection or ill-will, under the Constitution (Articles 60 and 159, read with several Forms in Third Schedule to the Constitution). Ancient literary tradition thereby formulated contemporary legal tradition by default. Here lies original input of the regional genre. Besides law as literature, the catchphrase recites literature as law; albeit, not in letter, but in spirit.

Postscript: Whether Literature Includes Subversive Text

Back to literary militancy and response (read repression) upon subversive authorship, the action and the reaction expose literature and law alike. Since the literary militancy is often than not motivated by partisan ideological politics of civil society movement, authors get carried away by the temporal, cannot connect the eternal; thereby

fall short of getting their efforts elevated to literature. With repressive response to the freedom of expression, however, those in power suffer from loss of legitimacy since repression as response to fundamental right to freedom of expression has had cascading syndrome to generate momentum for the civil society movement with upward public patronage; followed by popular participation to turn the movement into mass movement. Whether partisan text- meant for dissent alone- may get interpreted as literature hardly concerns either side anyway. The academic treatises on cross-disciplinary crossroads, therefore, should get limited to mainstream literary tradition. So also, is the case in reverse side of the fence since tyranny, played out to get dissent silenced, cannot get elevated to law. Indeed, a *de novo* catchphrase- law versus literature- appears on its rise; by courtesy, free-for-all syndrome in partisan politics with systemic indulgence, partisan literature in comradery of civil society movement and deterrent treatment unfolded by parochial partisan politics with passive state patronage. Neither represents archetypes of literature and law respectively. Thus, due to want of mutual conversation, 'law versus literature' lacks the locus to get into such otherwise inclusive movement; irrespective of its merit to generate polemics upon the respective ideological politics.

Even for anti-establishment literature, there are occasions of award by establishment. After his play *Shantata! Court Chalu Aahe* went authored and first staged in 1967, *Vijay Tendulkar* received Sangit Natak Akademi Award in 1970. The play demonstrated the dramaturgy on the occasion of a mock trial: played out by a team of group theatre personnel to get female teammate silenced by the courtcraft in practice, thereby trapped, to manage confession upon seduction where she went victimized; with covert cynicism over procedural justice. *Mahasweta Devi* received Sahitya Akademi Award in 1979 for her novel *Aranyer Adhikaar* where she contested the forest policy of Government of India that offered the award to her. *Girish Karnad* authored and staged *Tale-danda* in 1990, narrative of a radical social movement in twelfth century toward overt negation of the caste hierarchy in contemporary times, and thereafter received Jnanpith Award in 1998. These works transcended the temporal and corresponded to the eternal; no wonder that these authors went acknowledged for height of aesthetics thereby reached. Law is a fundamental knowledge domain and, in larger sense of the term, all domains have had law of their own. Therefore, authors ought to pay heed to law of literature; like the predecessors just cited above.

A pinnacle of the premise went fortified by instance of Sahitya Akademi Award 1974 conferred upon *Nirendranath Chakraborty* for his poetry book *Ulanga Raja*; apparent antiestablishment literature in such an unsettled time, yet awarded by another no less repressive regime and to such extent to get national emergency proclaimed afterwards:

> *Everyone can see the King is naked.*
>
> *They keep clapping nonetheless.*
>
> *… … …*
>
> *Where did the child go? …*

Let him once come in front of the naked king

And stand unafraid.

Let him once raise his voice above this roar of applause

And ask:

Hey, where are your cloths, King?

\- (*Chakraborty*)

The fact would appear stranger than fiction, yet could take place since the poet depicted something beyond the narrative of antiestablishment parochialism. Indeed, the rhetoric stripped the ruler. His poetic diction but portrayed the absurdity of power psychosis with naïve realism of a kid; thereby won those sitting in ivory tower of the statecraft. Indeed, blackletter statal law is meant to score rational quotient. Societal law is meant to score emotional quotient with higher impact upon the civilizational prospect. Here lies epiphany to reconstruct law of the land. Thus, literature 'shakes the worldly dust from the feet' without feud between law lords and laureates. Literary praxis resembles law practice; known as nobleman's profession. Fall of one cannot get fall of another justified, even with intent to rescue the fallen; similar is the case of literary militancy as response to political bankruptcy. Letters in camaraderie of the civil society crusade (not to get confused with literature), therefore, posit outside the mainstream narrative.

Nota Bene: Two parallel arrays of *Works Cited* follow two genres of *In Text Citation*. Quotes either from the literary classics or from the celebrated works of veteran authors went placed on one side, and reference from prior literature went placed on other side. Judgments stand cited in another array. In the context of frequent quotes in this effort, the arrangement is meant to convenience of readership.

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Powerful Voices in Women's Writing: The Bangla Novel in Post-Independence India

Sreemati Mukherjee

Abstract

The rise, development and consolidation of a woman's tradition of writing in Bengal, is by itself an extremely compelling chapter of Indian literary historiography, embodied in texts like Kailashbasini Devi's *Hindu MahilaganerHinabastha* (1863) RassasundariDevi's *Amar Jibon (1875)*, Binodini Dasi's *Amar Katha*(1913) and Krishnabhabini Das's *Englande Bangamahila*(1885).It is here that the new dramatic script of Bengal's culture and history is written as women transformed themselves into agents by becoming the script writers of their own histories. Contemporary women writers of Bengal have come many miles from their first literary beginnings, yet the process of critique of hegemonic societal mores goes on. A writer like Ashapurna Devi offers a radical and powerful critique of how the sign 'woman' is traditionally read in society. In her novel *Subarnalata* (1964), one witness the linguistic and cultural struggle whereby the pejorative 'meyemanush' for women, gradually changes to 'mahila'. Since language carries both epistemology and culture, this is indeed a dramatic epistemic shift. The two novels of Mahasweta Devi, which are part of this essay, are highly charged women centric novels, *Hājār Churāsir Mā* (1977) and *Bioscoper Bāksho* (1371 bangab**d**a***),*** where women's feelings of loss, alienation, and helplessness in the face of family and societal mores is memorably and compellingly explored.

Keywords: Women's writing, Language, Feminist, Critique, Epistemology, Agency, Voice, Narrating the nation.

In *A Room of One's Own* (1929), one of the earliest feminist critiques of culture, Woolf refers to 'The extreme activity of mind which showed itself in the later 18th century among women—the talking, and the meeting, the writing of essays on Shakespeare, the translating of the classics.." (65). Woolf was of course, referring to a certain section of English women, and it was in the writing of fiction, romance, autobiography, journals, diaries or letters that this energy most manifested itself. *Jane Eyre* (1847) is a fictional autobiography and *Pamela* (1740), written by Samuel Richardson several years earlier, contains a strong epistolary format, possibly because the writer realized the narrative and dramatic potential of foregrounding a woman's consciousness, through letters. Later on in Bengali Literature, Rabindranath Tagore makes masterful use of the letter as grounding and expressing woman's ontology, in his short story *Stir Patra* (*Wife's Letter*), written sometime between the years 1914—1917. Senegalese writer Mariama Ba's *Une Si Longue Lettre* (1979) translated as *So Long a Letter* in 1981, is a novel containing an excoriating exposure of patriarchy that endorses polygamy, and yet, it is modeled in the form of a letter. Early feminist historiogrpahies in Western academia like *Madwoman in the Attic* (1977), or *Literary Women in* (1963, 1985), reveal exactly how contiguous novel writing or fiction writing was with women, when they took up the pen for the first time.

The magical contiguity of gender and genre seems to emerge in England with the rise of the middle class and the introduction of literacy among women. In postcolonial times too, women in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean, have found the novel to be the most congenial form within which to contain the specific materiality and ontology of women's experience. The novel seems to

allow women to claim or reclaim their voices in a distinct manner. As African writer Aminata Sow Fall, conceptualizes it, it is a trajectory which may be described as "du pilon à la machine à écrire" which translates into from the "pestle to the typewriter."[1] Irene Assiba D'Almeida calls it a "prise d'ecriture" or the "seizing of writing".[2] *In Francophone Women Writers of Africa and the Caribbean,* Renee Larrier posits that autobiography is the most privileged genre among women writers of Africa and the Caribbean in postcolonial times, because this genre lends them a 'double auteurite' or'double authorship,' which stems both from autobiography as genre, and from the immediacy of the culturally and racially specific gendered voice narrating itself (4). As Toni Morrison, writing in the aftermath of Black Nationalism of the 60's and foregrounding both history and gender in her narratives, tells Thomas Le Clair in a 1981 interview, '…stories seem so old fashioned now. But narrative remains the best way to learn anything whether history or theology so I continue with narrative form.' (Taylor-Guthrie, 123).

To situate my argument about Ashapurna Devi and Mahasweta Devi, as writers of novels in postcolonial, post-independence India, I will start by referring to Timothy Brenan's essay, "The National Longing for Form", in which Brennan speaks of the novel as *the* literary form that has accompanied the rise of nations:

> It was the novel that historically accompanied the rise of nations by objectifying the "one, yet many" of national life, and by mimicking the structure of the nation, a clearly bordered jumble of languages and styles. Socially, the novel joined the newspaper as the major vehicle of the national print media, helping to standardize language, encourage literacy, and remove mutual incomprehensibility (49).

This is certainly true of the work of Ashapurna Devi and Mahasweta Devi, who have tried to portray in their novels all the complexities, difficulties and turmoils related to gender, caste, class, politics, hegemony and social practice that constituted 'dominant', 'emergent' and 'residual' patterns of various ontologies in post Independent India. Ashapurna Devi has principally foregrounded the issue of gender, emphasizing its cultural semiotics and she also draws attention to the changes in the socio- historical and political contexts of women's lives from 1860 to 1960. Mahasweta Devi has spoken of the various forms of women's oppression within class, caste, economic and ideological structures, highlighting the plight of women of the lower castes and classes, who are often objects of brutal deracination.

History is one of the most obsessive concerns of the postcolonial realigning of theoretical issues related to language, dominance, hierarchical structures of society, colonial hangover, colonial perpetuation and genuine cultural freedom and remaking. It is history that has to be rewritten to reclaim the occluded and reorder historical narrative from the standpoint of those whose voices had not been heard. If one makes a close survey one will notice that in most postcolonial contexts, it is the novel that is considered the most convivial genre for carrying the postcolonial experience, its many shades and subtleties, its varied nuances and complexities.

A certain degree of historical recapitulation is now called for before I locate the women writers in my study within a tradition of women's writing in Bengal. In her essay "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography" (1985), Gayatri Spivak posits that the subaltern as sign brings about a "functional change in sign- systems" (197). It is my contention that woman/female as a new sign similarly disrupts the syntax of 19th century Bengali culture (rural and urban), reversing

and realigning conventional notions and expectations of woman's agency and power. A tradition of women writers was initiated from the mid-nineteenth century, who paved the way for the emergence of woman as a radical sign within the cultural economy of Bengal and India. The endeavors of these women caused what we call a shift in sensibility, altering previously held notions of the term "feminine," and led to the dramatic gendering of history and culture.[3] At this moment of epic transformation, epistemological categories regarding the sign woman altered irrevocably, and what was previously the weaker sex, now claimed power and agency in its own right.

Those women whose names are most noteworthy and memorable in this context are Kailashbasini Devi (1830--1895), Krishnabhabini Das (1864—1919) and Swarnakumari Devi (1855--1932), mostly hailing from Brahmo or Hindu aristocratic or upper middle class families, and enjoying the active support of husbands (Kailashbasini and Krishnabhabini) or parental families (Swarnakumari Devi).

As Geraldine Forbes mentions in *Women In Modern India,* women in other parts of India too, emerged as doctors and that time and continually after, aided by the establishment of the Dufferin Fund by Lady Dufferin, in 1885 (161). Anandibai Joshi (1865—1887) who was Pandita Ramabai's cousin, carries the rare distinction of being the first Hindu woman to get a medical degree abroad, graduating from Women's Medical College in Philadelphia, also in 1886 (Forbes 162).

The inaugural moment of this outstanding efflorescence of women's writing in polemics, travel writing, autobiography and journal articles, could be said to begin with KailashbasiniDevi's *Hindu Mahilaganer Heen Abastha* (1863) which translates into *'The Degraded State of Hindu Women'*, a semi-- polemical tract, in which Kailashbasini Devi engages in analyzing and detailing the many causes for woman's servitude. In personalized travelogues like Krishnabhabini Das's *Englande Banga Mahila* (1885) which translates into *'A Bengali Woman in England'*, the writer was able to claim her voice with such distinction, that she not only emerged as the narrator of her own life, but also that of the nation. The autonomy of her position as narrator/writer was validated not only by her own voice narrating her experiences, but doing it in her own language.

Certain factors facilitated this transformation of women's position vis à vis society, and the signal contributions of certain male reformers in bringing about these transformational changes, cannot be ignored. In his chapter "The Nation and its Women" from his book *Fragments of a Nation* (included in the *Partha Chatterjee Omnibus*), Partha Chatterjee posits:

> ….the "women's question" was a central issue in the most controversial debates over social reform in early and mid-nineteenth century Bengal—the period of its so called Renaissance." (116)

Several historians and cultural critics of repute like Ghulam Murshid (*Reluctant Debutante***,** 1983)**,** Geraldine Forbes(*Women in Modern India***,** 1996)and Bharati Ray (*Early Feminists of Colonial India,* 2002)have written about how exposure to Western ideals of granting women egalitarian status, influenced prominent male thinkers like Raja Rammohun Roy (1772--1833), Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820--1891), Dwarakanath Ganguly (1844--1898), Akshay Kumar Dutta (1820—1886), Peary Chand Mitra (1814--1880) and others, to take active steps in creating a climate of change through writing and urging legislation, which would free women from inhuman

social bindings and oppressions. Raja Rammohun Roy wrote his second tract against Sati in 1819, and his efforts coupled with those of the Government led to the Abolition of Sati Act, in 1829. Vidyasagar campaigned for widow remarriage (first tract written in 1855) and the Hindu Widow Remarriage Act was passed in 1856.

Western texts that were possibly widely circulated at this time among the Bengali intelligentsia of which HenryLouis Vivian Derozio's(1809--1831) Young Bengal was definitely a radical part, were, Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792),Tom Paine's *Rights of Man* (1791), James Mill's *History of British India* (1818), Richard Carlile's *Every Woman's Book* (1826) and William Thompson's *Appeal of One Half of the Human Race Women against thePretensions of the other Half Men* (1825). As Murshid informs us, Rammohun was friends with English philosophers Jeremy Bentham (1748--1832) and Robert Owen (1771—1858) both of whom advocated a higher social status for women (10—11). In his *History of British India*, Mill strongly posited that a country, in which its women remained in a state of underdevelopment, and were not treated with dignity and respect, could not really progress, or be considered developed (11). Education for women, thus became the key area around which the reformist zeal of these progressive male thinkers organized itself, because they realized that without education the condition of women, could not really improve. Somewhere, their pride in wishing to be considered as belonging to a developed country was involved in this investment in women's education, and they also wished to enjoy the companionship of educated and cultured wives.

Tracts urging the institutionalizing of women's education thus proliferated. An important text in this context is Gaur Mohan Vidyalankar's *Stree Siksha Vidhayak* (1822) which could be translated as '*Arguments in favour of the education of women'*. Peary Chand Mitra also wrote on the need for effective female education (Ray 122). Eventually, the efforts of the Bengali intelligentsia led to the founding of Bethune School in 1849, a government led venture with Lord William Bentinck as Governor General and under the direction of the British educator, John Drinkwater Bethune (1762--1844), also deeply committed to female education. However, it must also be mentioned in this context that the missionary Anne Cook, did a great deal to spread women's education between 1823—1828, and other Western women who worked for the cause of women's education during the second half of the nineteenth century, include Mary Carpenter and Annette Ackroyd**.**

The rise, development and consolidation of a woman's tradition in Bengal /India is by itself thus, an extremely compelling chapter of Indian literary historiography, embodied in texts like Kailashbasini Devi's *Hindu MahilaganerHinabastha* (1863) RassasundariDevi's *Amar Jibon (1875)*, Binodini Dasi's*Amar Katha* (1913) and as already alluded to above, Krishnabhabini Das's *Englande Bangamahila*(1885). It is here that the new dramatic script of Bengal's culture and history is written as women transformed themselves into agents by becoming the script writers of their own histories. As Rassasundari, Krishnabhabini and Binodini write, the romance of the word, the romance of learning, self—realization and self-awareness, is enacted. Through reminiscences or through travelogue writing or writing of polemical tracts, women discover and simultaneously master a language with which to articulate both self and experience. I use the word 'romance' or 'romantic' to describe this historic and dramatic event because the inevitable joy of discovery, the sense of a heightened self and heightened possibilities in the articulating and defining themselves, in discovering and extending the boundaries of their selves, is inevitably a 'romantic experience'.

To read this moment or this chapter in literary historiography, as 'romantic' is my point of historiographic intervention. I would posit that the parameters of the word romance are altered, if we view this magnificent burst of women's energies, as a dramatic and significant counterpoint, to the writing of historical romances by Bankim Chandra. Thus, instead of a romantic plot involving the triumph of love between Jaysingh and Tillotwama and Ayesha's graceful retreat from a triangular situation of love, in *Durgeshnandini*, one observes how language and learning become 'romantic' experiences for women like Rassasundari or Krishnabhabini. Rassasundari's odyssey of how she earned literacy, may be told in a dry and prosaic manner, but as readers situated in the 21st century, we are not wrong in applying the structure or framework of traditional romance, in viewing such works within a continuum of literary historiography.

Women writers in India today, have come many miles from their first literary beginnings, as in Rassasundari Devi's *Amar Jibon* (1875), one of the first autobiographies written by a woman, in Bengal. Since then, the realities governing and directing women's lives, both within private and public spaces, present radical alterations of literary sensibilities, and also challenges. The postcolonial novel (if we can loosely use this word) often tells the story of the nation, and the novel written by women within postcolonial contexts, may tell the story in a way that is distinct to women's ways of storytelling, highlighting areas of experience hitherto unrepresented. To speak about woman's historical journey from middle class rural beginnings in 19th century in Bengal, to that moment when after three generations of struggle, such a voice speaks resonantly through the pages of a book, is a majestic feminist/literary/historiographic/fictional task, not attempted before Ashapurna Devi. As one learns from Arundhati Sur's book, *Narir Kolome Narir Kontho*, Begum Rokeya, Nirupama Devi, Shanta Devi, Jyotirmoyee Devi and Shailo Bala Ghosh Jaya, have written socially conscious narrative in Bengali, before Ashapurna; however, their ability to create a kind of visceral language, epic sweep and confident narratorial presence, does not match Ashapurna Devi's.

For women narrating the nation in contemporary times, one sees how subject matter shifts, the canvas becomes larger, awareness of social issues becomes keener and even a certain activism enters, which is committed to improving women's lot by focusing on women's myriad oppression, in fiction. For instance, Rassasundari only spoke of her history, Ashapurna tells us the story of the nation, as it is lived out by women of the middle class, in Bengal, during a particular stretch of history, which witnessed the rise of woman as agent. In the process she also enacts through fiction, dramatic moments, when women of uncommon courage and vigour, questioned patriarchal 'naming' or definitions of women. For instance, a word like 'meyemanush' which translates into 'a being who is female', had a pejorative connotation at the time when Subarnalata, Ashapurna's unforgettable protagonist (second book of the trilogy) had actively entered a mode of violent resistance to hegemonic naming practices. It is not as if Subarnalata is the only one who questions her son's derogatory use of the word. A certain narratorial indignation also manifests itself as the word is made to resonate through the text by constant recall and repetition.

In his chapter "Women and the Nation" of his book *Fragments of a Nation*, Chatterjee posits that for the self-conscious, rationally oriented, urban educated, and 'modern' person of the 19th century,

> the autobiography would be obvious material for studying the emergence of modern forms of self-representation (138).

Chatterjee further posits that for men it would be known as 'atmacarit'or autobiography. But for women's writings of the same nature, the term 'atmacarit' was not used. Instead, the less demanding form 'smritikatha' was used, which could simply be taken to mean 'reminiscences' or 'train of memory'. It was generally assumed that the writing of "smritikatha" was commensurate with women's abilities, since it did not involve the kind of extended cogitation, intellection and organizational rigor that an 'atmacarit' needed (138).

In a kind of modern 'smritikatha' entitled *Ar Ek Ashapurna*, Ashapurna Devi records her indignation vis à vis a society that treated women as inferior or insignificant:

> from childhood onwards my mind repeatedly questioned prevailing social practices and norms and my mind would react angrily to what I perceived as the serious flaws and injustices of the system (*translation mine*) (20).

The idea is continued in Alok Mondal's quote from *Anya Ek Ashapurna*, of which I offer a translation:

> …from my childhood onwards, in middle class families like ours, I noticed that men and women were valued very differently. Women counted for nothing and men were valued like jewels. This used to sting me very much. Protest was not known in those days. My resentments smoldered within me. They finally took shape in the heroines of my stories. Satyavati is one such heroine. (21).[4]

By dramatically highlighting the pejorative use of the word 'meye', Ashapurna is actually pushing at the boundaries of sanctioned culture, and registering a protest. Although she may not have ever labelled herself as a feminist, her work is feminist in its endeavour to highlight gender oppression, and in this case, she aims for the subtlest sphere of all, language. It is through the posing of urgent questions, that shifts in sensibility, shifts in lexical standards, and shifts in expectations regarding urgent areas of experience, are enacted. Unquestionably, and to put it in terms of cultural linguistics, the sign woman burst in with a certain degree of vehemence in the latter half of the 19th century in Bengal, not only through the writing of literary texts, but also through figures like Kadambini Ganguly, who graduated as the first medical woman doctor in 1886.

A writer like Ashapurna Devi, writing almost a hundred years later, simply carries the process forward, paving the way and also offering a powerful critique of how the sign 'woman' is read in society. Her epic trilogy is a work of true feminist contribution to society, and this contribution may be seen at those moments in the texts where she draws attention to how words designating 'woman' are used pejoratively and by implying the oppressions carried in these words, she urges change. As language changes, epistemological categories change. As the sign woman changes from its previous connotations (19th century) to its present ones, the language in which she is represented changes. Moreover, when it is a woman who makes or does the changes, it is dramatically significant from the point of view of culture and culture analysis or Cultural Studies.

In Ashapurna Devi's novel *Subarnalata* especially, we witness the moment of transition or the period of linguistic/cultural struggle on the part of women to make 'meyemanush', dignified, instead of pejorative. Ashapurna Devi creates the enormous affect around this act of monumental courage, where almost singlehandedly a woman tries to push at the boundaries of traditional

linguistic signification, to accord greater equality and dignity to women. Through Subarnalata's struggles Ashapurna Devi shows us how the word "meyemanush" becomes culturally legitimate. Apart from the visceral struggles of Subarnalata's countless childbirths and their implied critique of patriarchy and society, Subarnalata, and by extension Ashapurna herself, are most memorable for the anger they register over the way women are demeaned through language. Literature is obviously the best vehicle through which a powerful critique and protest may be voiced, and Ashapurna Devi, deserves a foremost rank among Indian women who have paved the way for greater alertness and sensitivity to the need for change in women's lives. This is to a great extent done through what seems like a truly 'feminist' interrogation of language regimes in a patriarchal society.

> The key question of why language is important in the case of women writers forms the subject of Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's ground-breaking work of feminist scholarship, *Madwoman in the Attic* (1977). Gilbert and Gubar posit how early women writers like Margaret Cavendish (1623--1673), Anne Finch (1661—1720) and Anne Bradstreet (1612--1672), the Bronte sisters, George Eliot, the poet Anne Sexton, and Woolf herself had to struggle to not only write within the social norms allowed to women, but also to find an appropriate idiom for writing. In the chapter "Infection in the Sentence" of Gilbert and Gubar's book, one gets to know the viewpoints of many women writers over generations, who have spoken about their struggles to write. Some of their pronouncements bring us back to Ashapurna Devi's character, Subarnalata. Ironcially, Subarnalata's daughter, Bokul, who becomes an accomplished writer, and after whom the concluding part of the trilogy is named, never discusses any struggle at all.

Gilbert and Gubar borrow the terms 'infection in the sentence' from Emily Dickinson to epitomize women writers' anxiety regarding how they should write. Dickinson had herself felt that women writers could not only feel suffocated by patriarchal models of writing and patriarchy's constructions of women, but also by women precursors who had written the way patriarchy would have wanted them to write, imbibing patriarchal values (52). Thus, the language that Ashapurna Devi an Mahasweta Devi are using to not only represent women's experience and subjectivity in language, but the language that their characters speak, is an important area of analysis, in terms of placing women's writing in India historically, linguistically and culturally. Such analysis should point the way to the changes that take place between the way Rassasundari affirms the patriarchal status quo by pleading with patriarchy to give women opportunities, to the way Ashapurna Devi mounts a searing attack by drawing indignant attention to the dismissive and demeaning use of the word 'meyemanush', in *Subarnalata.* When Ashapurna Devi (as narrator) comes in with her own insistent questions that reinforce and reiterate Subarnalata's questions, her 'narrative desire' surfaces, and her narrative complicity with the passionate commitment of Satyavati and Subarnalata to women's issues, becomes apparent.[5] This is how shifts in cultural paradigms, which are endlessly involved in the enterprise of 'naming', take place, and an important chapter of cultural history, involving the inevitable interface of language and culture, is enacted.

In the book *Reclaiming Identity*, edited by Paula M.L. Moya and Michael R. Hames-Garcia, Moya and Garcia advance the view that subjective experience carries not only experiential value, but cognitive value, that transform human beings into agents. The principal thrust of their argument is that without this agency no change in postcolonial societies would become possible,

and the old colonial structures would go on unchanged (12—18). In his essay, "The Epistemic Status of Cultural Identity: On *Beloved* and the Postcolonial Condition" Satya P. Mohanty arguing against poststructuralist advocacy of the free play of meaning, posits that the subject's experience has real cognitive value, and that this value was necessary for the construction of identities.

> The naturalist-realist account of experience I defend here is neither foundationalist nor skeptical; it maintains that experience, properly interpreted, can yield reliable and genuine knowledge…Central to this account is the claim that the experience of social subjects has a cognitive component…on the basis of this understanding of experience we can construct a realist theory of social and cultural identity (32).

The relevance of this above analysis by Mohanty is that he does not do away with the question of 'social and cultural identity'. This identity leads to a particular kind of knowledge, which is neither universal, but not to be dismissed because it is not. It is specific and contingent and carries the transformative potential of creating agents. As the editors of this volume and also Mohanty imply, the value of identity is that it leads to action, when and if necessary. It is my contention that among the many women protagonists that we are studying in this book, no change in the texture of women's lives would have been possible if Ashapurna Devi's heroines, Satyavati and Subarnalata did not have identities, and did not believe in what they were doing.

Unlike Ashapurna Devi, who wrote principally from home, Mahasweta Devi has engaged in a great deal of field research. She wrote her first novel *Jhansir Rani* (1956), about a powerful historical personality, who was both a woman and an Indian. In her choice of subject matter, she reveals a predilection for woman centered subject matter, for historical analysis and becomes emblematic of the woman writer as intrepid researcher, deeply and firmly committed to her art.

As she tells Nandini Sen in the interview referred to on page 1:

> I remained interested in history. For me the real history remains in the space between the two printed lines—the white space because there one has to search for people's history. Even for writing my first book which came out in 1956, I, at the age of 28 had gone to Jhansi, Gwalior, and other places, all alone, and collected from the people, folklores, songs, etc. I still remember villagers sitting around a wood fire; it was December—very cold (62).

One may infer that Mahasweta Devi rewrites the subgenre of the Bengali historical romance of which Bankim Chandra remains the most noteworthy practitioner, by centering and focusing it on a woman whose life remains well documented. Whether consciously or not, her choice demonstrates a certain politics of Art, where she reveals a woman centered revisionist focus, highlighting woman as agent. Mahasweta thereby, demonstrates her commitment to both her nation's history, and a woman figure who 'signified' on the nation, in a signal or telling way.[6] It is clear that she rejects Western subjects of representation, or writing stories imitating models of Western fiction, the historical romance of Scott, for instance as Bankim did in some of his novels. Instead, she chooses a real life figure whose life had elements of the romantic and the spectacular, and who till today remains iconic within Indian traditions of womanhood, as spectacular in her courage and commitment to the nation.

In this study we will principally be concerned with two novels of Mahasweta Devi, which are highly charged women centric novels, *Hājār Churāsir Mā* (1977) *Bioscoper Bāksho* (1371 bangab**d**a***).*** In the first novel an upper-class woman's motherhood is explored, after she hears of the death of her youngest son, Broti, who was active in the Naxalite Movement. The novel achieves rare poignancy, tapping as it does into the primal mother son dyad, yet, through a mother's inconsolable grief, a furious critique of a society that remained indifferent to the deaths of hundreds of youths at that time, is mounted. The intensity of ideological indignation, perhaps works against the literary and aesthetic merit of the work. The language of ideology exists as a strong parallel current to that which explores a mother's experience of extreme bereavement.

We could keep in mind here two extraordinary statements made by Toni Morrison regarding the relationship of art to ideology and narrative art to ideology. In an interview quoted by Terry Otten in the *Crime of Innocence in the fiction of Toni Morrison,* Morrison says, 'the best art is unquestionably political and irrevocably beautiful at the same time'.[7] She also tells Charles Ruas in an interview 'that the novel must enlighten without pontificating' (Taylor-Guthrie, 108). These two classic pronouncements may always be kept as overall frameworks of analysis for the narrative art of both seminal writers of Bengali within the purview of this essay.

Bioscoper Baksho on the other hand, written much earlier, is a powerful experience of alienation and withdrawal, once again, in a middleclass woman, who had loved and lost, who possessed a sensibility that was highly charged in poetic perceptions of the world of nature and beauty around her, yet, rendered her helpless in the actual world, as she remained trapped ghost like within the dead walls of past experience and memories of past moments of love shared and beauty experienced. The novel enacts through powerful associative moments and images, the state of this artist manqué, and becomes an expression of gender and middleclass sensibility, which does not find fulfillment through the accepted norms and forms of society, available to a woman. Shelley, the central character of this novel, is strongly reminiscent of Blanche in Tennessee Williams's *A Street Car Named Desire*, where Blanche too, witnesses the collapse of an old world, and finds it impossible to fit into a crass new world, which does not honour her refined sensibilities.

Another very interesting aspect of Mahasweta Devi's art is that she often includes tribal words, alluding to 'untranslatable' zones of language.[8] In the short story *Draupadi* for instance, she refers to the Santhal Dopdi (Draupadi) and her husband's war cry, 'samaraihijulenako mar goepoke' (188) and 'HendeRambrakechekeche/ Pundirambrakechekeche' (188). Incorporation of such words alters the parameters of the traditional novel in Bengali, written by women, bringing in questioning and resistance to the hegemonic practice of using a standard language in novel writing. It is like a sudden incursion, a violent alternation, similar to the way woman herself inscribed herself within the cultural symbolic. Mahasweta Devi's strategy of layering Bengali narrative with these incomprehensible (to standard Bengali language users***)*** hints at irretrievable languages, hint at words for which no dictionary exists, and oral languages that are on the verge of extinction, and while such narrative techniques and language strategies widen and expand reader sensibilities, they also lead the readers to ask questions/interrogate dominant traditions of culture and language systems, or be aware that such questions may/could be asked.

In a prose that is journalistic and in a style that is documentary, bespeaking the beginnings of her prose writing in journalism, Mahasweta Devi, keeps her finger on the pulse of the numerous oppressions of Indian society, those impacting the lives of India's many Others. A very powerful

interface that is often obtained in her fiction is the interface of gender, severely marginalized sub-ethnic group, and several forms of oppression, linked to colonialism and its aftermath, both in terms of constitutional law, social practice and hegemonic belief in India. For instance, in the short story *Draupadi*, part of her collection of stories entitled *Agnigarbha* (1978), myth, ethnicity, race, class and gender come together in an incredibly rich and powerful interface, whereby myth becomes an extension of contemporary political realities, and current political realities, an extension of myth. In this story which enacts the many moments, modes and forms of confluence between the mythical Draupadi and the Santhal, Naxalite Draupadi, both women, involved in a battle for land, a rich continuum of commonality, and possibilities of dialogic interface is established.

Within the context of emerging feminisms since the 19th century, and the urgent need for new and effective forms of woman's agency and power, these women writers, provide exemplary models in their commitment to social issues, women's issues, the history of the nation, and in general work for social upliftment and raise consciousness, demonstrating sensitivity and commitment to issues of nation building and ideology formation. Not only do they actively intervene in culture, by choosing subjects hitherto unrepresented in literature, as for instance Mahasweta Devi, choosing to speak of a woman from comparatively recent Indian history, whose prowess in battle, was almost mythical and whose commitment to India, memorable. Through her research on Lakshmi Bai, by actually travelling out to the Queen's geographical habitat and gathering information through the oral histories, narrated by local villagers, Mahasweta Devi herself creates an important paradigm for the woman artist or novelist, who is fearless and intrepid. It establishes a remarkable point of departure in the typical model of the woman artist writing from home. This is a far cry from the state of Rassasundari who did not for the greater part of her life, even tell anyone that she knew how to read and write, let alone write an autobiography.

Women like Ashapurna Devi and Mahasweta Devi, thus stand for significant shifts in literary models involving interfaces of culture, language, women, history and writing. They provide possibilities for new models of literary historiography, blaze trails, and create new fields of enquiry. Not only do they create new models of literary activity in women, they lead to shifts in gender paradigms as a whole, as they embody in themselves possibilities for Indian womanhood, new avenues of agency and self-expression. If 19th century male reformers helped to free women somewhat from the zenana, Mahasweta Devi, Ashapurna particularly, free women further to choose their own paths, and define their artistic selves independently.

Ashapurna Devi and Mahasweta Devi emerge as powerful custodians of history, deeply engaged with Indian realities, and keenly interested in exploring the social responsibilities of literature. Indeed, in the writing of the two Bengali women novelists, the novel does hold up a powerful mirror to society, putting out urgent socio historical questions, and soliciting an urgent response from the readers. Thus, in the period of post-independence surveyed here, the novel demonstrates serious commitment to issues that take the reader to the very heart of Indian socio-psychological-economic-cultural seams, that are bound to extend and enlarge reader sensibilities, by prompting engagement and bringing wider awareness. If Literature expands sensibility, then it has done its work here.

End Notes

1. Renée Larrier. *Francophone Women Writers of Africa and the Caribbean*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2000. 4.
2. Renée Larrier. *Francophone Women Writers of Africa and the Caribbean*. Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2000. 4.
3. Toril Moi, 'Feminist, Female, Feminine.' *The Feminist Reader* (2nd Ed). Eds. Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.1997.104—116. In her essay "Feminist, Female, Feminine" (1986) Toril Moi explains the three terms she uses to ground her analysis of gender. Female refers to the biological female body, "feminine" to the cultural attributes associated with women and "feminist" as in committed to an active politics of change and betterment of women's embodied situation both materially and culturally
4. Quoted in Alok Mandal "AshapurnaDevi'r Smritikatha, Prabandhha—Nibandhha O Anannya Rachana".*Ashapurna Devi: JanmasatavarshaSmarakgrantha.*Ed. Ashapurna Devi Memorial Trust.Kolkata: Mitra and Ghosh Publishers, Pvt. Ltd. 1416 Bangabda. 111.
5. Peter Brooks. *Reading for the Plot*. Cambridge, Massachussetts: Harvard University Press. 1992**.** 37-38.
6. As Henry Louis Gates explains in *The Signifyin(g) Monkey* (44-51), 'signifyin(g)' in the black vernacular means a 'homonymic punning' on Standard English, whereby a different order of meaning is implied. The 'black vernacular' is the English that the blacks in America speak. 'Signifying' attests to the black 'difference' of speech and is what we could call 'black double voicedness'(51).
7. Karen Carmean. *Toni Morrison's World of Fiction*. New York: The Whitsun Publishing Company. 1993.16.
8. Gayatri Chakrabarty Spivak. "Acting Bits/Identity Talk". Identities. Ed. Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press. 1995.169.

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A Comparative Analysis of Modern Bengali Bibles

Ariktam Chatterjee

Abstract

The 1980s ushered in an era of change in the field of Bible translation, with an increased focus on the sites of textual reception and the developing indigenous theologies in the receptor constituencies. Bengal was a part of this global reception-oriented Bible translation movements, inspired largely by Eugene A. Nida's formulation of Dynamic Equivalence and its kindred theoretical outputs. The Chalit bhasha or common language Bible published by the Bible Society in 1980 sounded the clarion call, which was followed in subsequent decades by many other translated Bibles which broke the shackles of the looming linguistic and cultural influences of the grand colonial translations of the Bible and their embedded foreignness. The present article introduces translated Bengali Bibles that appeared in the last few decades and carries out a comparative study of the same using the linguistic parameters proposed by Sebastian J. Floor as an interpretative tool. It tries to break away from the literal vs. free translation binaries and present the translations as a graded schema within a kiln of resemblant and interpretative oriented translations.

Keywords: Bengali Bible, Modern Bengali Bible, Bible translation in Bengali, Comparative Bible translations

From the 1950s onwards, with the dissolution of all former European colonies, a change was visible in the theology of the Christian Churches. Freed of the shackles of colonialism that were instrumental in introducing the Bible in hitherto inaccessible regions of the world through enormous and ambitious translation projects, a new form of hermeneutics developed within the field of Bible scholarship. Van Toorn calls this widely observed tendency a 'Second Reformation'. If the first and original Reformation led to a prioritization of the Protestant reading of the Bible and its celebration as a supreme European text, the Second Reformation established a non-Eurocentric reading culture with an ethnographic thrust. Van Toorn states:

> In some postcolonial contexts, language and literacy barriers have been overcome, and non-Western readers are now developing their own interpretations of the Bible. The Scriptures are being decolonised, and a second Reformation, global in scope, is now in the process of unfolding. (Van Toorn 51)

Like all previous epochs, this telling shift in the field of Biblical hermeneutics informed the field of Bible translation as well. Regarding the postcolonial translation strategies surrounding the Bible, Sanjay Seth says:

> Translation in a postcolonial context is not merely seeking dynamic equivalence or aiming for linguistic exactness, but desires to rewrite and retranslate the texts, as well as concepts against the grain. The translators of this period seek for a wider intertextuality which links Biblical texts with Asian scriptural texts. (Seth 165)

In accordance with this tendency, Bible Translation in Bengali became a rich field from the 1980s, with one of its key features being the tendency to break free from the overt dependence on the King James Version and other European translations and concordances that informed the missionary translations from the colonial period. Like Bible translations across the world, the late 20th century and early 21st century saw the emergence of a number of Mother-Tongue Translators (MTT) in Bengali too. The 1830s saw the emergence of the Bible Society as the single most important group that published the printed Bible and the strict editorial policy allowed for little change. The Yates-Wenger translation of 1835 provided the basic content, with only spellings being modernised from time to time. This is what is presently known as the Old Version (OV) Bible of the Bible Society, and is still the most popular Bible published by it, used heavily for both liturgical purposes and private reading. Yet, from the 1980s, we observe new approaches to the Bible being applied, with individual translators and a number of translation societies, including those promoted and supported by Catholic groups, entering the field actively. This sudden outburst in Bible translation activity was inspired by the rise of Eugene A. Nida's introduction of Dynamic Equivalence and the simultaneous rise of indigenous church movements in non-European countries in the 1970s.

This was not a co-incidence. The relationship between Dynamic Equivalence as a translation strategy and indigenous theology as a tool for Bible interpretation share deep ideological connections. So much so, that many churches came to be designated as 'Dynamic Churches'. One supported and inspired the other. One of the biggest accusations against Dynamic Equivalence by most conservative Western churches continues to be that it tries to dissociate the Church from the Word, and instigates the development of indigenous and often heretic theologies. Yet, what was a viewed as little desired radicalisation of the scripture in the Western World was a welcome intervention for the non Western Christian communities. For a non-European nation, such a translation philosophy was a call to refashion Christian culture in its own image, non-mediated by the Eurocentric model of Christian evangelism.

One of the crowning achievements of Dynamic Equivalence in practice was the publication of the New Testament called the 'Today's English Version' by the American Bible Society in 1966. Its immense popularity led the United Bible Society to ask the American Bible Society to bring out the entire version of the Bible and funded it. The complete 'Today's English Version' Bible was published in 1975, and it was like a clarion call for the beginning of receptor oriented Bibles. The wave was felt in Bengal, and a new wave of Bible translation was seen. Let us now look at the major Bible translations in Bengali that appeared after the 1980s and look at their publication history.

Pobitro Bible (Old Version (OV)) – Published by the United Bible Society (UBS)

This is the version that we have already discussed in the previous chapter. Basically a reprint of the 1899 translation of William Yates-Wenger, this is the most popular Bible in Bengali, used extensively in the church by the clergy as well as among churchgoers. This is also the most popular version for private study. The volume is without an introduction and chapter introductions. The books are divided into chapters, and there are names of chapters, but these are kept to a minimum. Although it employs *sadhu bhasha* which is carried over from the 19th century, the spellings are

modernised from time to time. It is the highest selling Bible of the UBS. It also forms the backbone of religious and catechistic pamphlets and books published by the UBS. The Gideon's Bible, meant for free distribution in slums, correction houses, hospitals and educational institutions also uses the OV as its source. Although there are occasional archaisms, the stateliness of the language is noteworthy. The close familiarity of this Bible, its phrases, psalms and proverbs, has made its status among Bengali Christians irreplaceable and unshaken.

Pobitro Bible (Chalit Riti Version – CL) Published by the UBS in 1980

Encouraged by the success of the 'Today's English Version', the UBS became keen to publish modernized Indian versions of the Bible in the sixties. Bengali also came under its purview. Dr. Rev. Graham Ogden, translation consultant to the UBS, was given the responsibility of coordinating the various wings of the committee that would bring about this translation. The method followed by the UBS is generally followed by all Bible translation committees and we will presently take a look at how it was carried about.

Dr. Ogden first appointed a group of scholars he handpicked for the purpose. Experts from the fields of translation studies and linguistics, as well as from Bible Studies were made part of the core team to carry out the translation. This collaborative team of translators and experts translated the text. Bishop's College was at the helm of the process, and provided both translators and experts for the purpose. The final translation was then sent for review, which would analyse the translation on whether:

- The Biblical message is commensurate with the original Source Text message in Hebrew and Greek
- The translation is theologically sound and consistent
- The literary appeal of the original has been properly translated
- The aesthetic demands of the receptor language have been made

After meticulous revision of the final draft, the entire Common Language or CL Bible was introduced. Some of the most apparent changes that the CL Bible introduced over the OV were-

i) Modernisation of proper names, particularly place names and names of individuals
ii) Name of the Lord, was changed from Carey's widely popular but often ridiculed সদাপ্রভু. The new translation attempted minimal concordance and translated it on the basis of context-driven relevance, variously as প্রভু or ঈশ্বর.
iii) Each book of the Bible had an introduction and footnotes appeared in higher numbers

The Preface of the CL states the reasons for this translation –

i) Evolution of the language. The Bible needed to be upgraded to meet the modern form of the Bengali language

ii) Increased theological, linguistic and socio-cultural knowledge of the Hebrew and Greek times. This has often replaced earlier meanings and readings by more modern and historically informed ones.

iii) Emergence of reception oriented translation theories and practices in the world of Bible translation.

Apart from the introduction of a more reception oriented philosophy, we find another important element in the above statement, which is the introduction of a new 'purpose' or 'skopos' for the translation. Unlike the 19th century translations, the modern Bibles feel an urge to be acceptable and attractive to a large section of the Reception Language group. This is one of the most marked changes in Bible translation strategy.

However, evangelism continues to be a driving force behind Bible translations. In fact, it is the evangelical zeal that forces Bible translation committees to continuously update bible. In its attempt to address a large section of the non-Christian readership and opening up the Bible for private study, the UBS reinstates the evangelical structure. We can here recall Venuti's questioning of the Dynamic method of Bible translation from its ideological point of view.

The publication of the Common Language Bible was a watershed translation, opening the doors for a number of Reception oriented Bibles in Bengali. The latest update of the CL Bible in Bengali was published in 1994, and the same is now reprinted. But the influence of this Bible was far-reaching, and by the beginning of the 20th century, a number of new Bengali Bibles hit the scene.

The Mangalbarta Bible

Around the same time of the publication of the CL Bible, that is the early 1980s, the Jesuit Mission became intent on the publication of a Catholic Bible in Bengali. Although the Catholics were the first people to preach Christianity in Bengal, they did not participate in the translation of the scriptures prior to the 20th century, when the Vatican Council allowed for Catholics to translate the Bible.

Father Dontan, along with literary critic Sajanikanta Das, was the first person to take an initiative to provide a Catholic Bible in Bengali. The version, written in the formal diction, reads a little dated now, but is a great improvement on the archaic and often criticised language of the Protestant versions of the Bible that were popularised by the Baptist and then the Bible Society throughout the 19th century. The work appears to be of a highly individual nature, markedly free from the Bible translations that preceded it. The only influence that is revealed is of the hand of some very good expert on the Bengali language, and that hand is of Sajanikanta Das, a close associate of the priest in his translational activities.

Despite the collaboration of Sajanikanta Das, this translation of the Bible that saw the light of day in the early 1930s stopped short of being a complete translational and literary success. However, there was no revision or a new edition of the Catholic Bible for another approximately thirty years, when the Jesuit missionaries from the St. Xavier's Institution felt the need of another new Bible. The work was originally entrusted in the hands of a group of four priests from St. Xavier's: Father Datienne, Father Pierre Fallon, Father Christian Mignon and Father Robert

Antoienne. The responsibilities were clearly divided among the four. Father Datienne was to translate the synoptic gospels, while Father Fallon was to translate the Gospel according to St. John and the Acts of the Epistle, thus completing the five books before the Epistles and the concluding books of the New Testament. Father Antoienne was entrusted with the work of translating the Gospels in Sanskrit. Despite the commitment towards the work, when the manuscript was completed towards the early 70s, there were clear objections regarding its quality within the Order.

Speaking of this Bible translation, Father Mignon opines that the biggest problem of this translation was its nearly slavish literalness. In its bid to be faithful to the original text, the final product was halting and unnatural, completely supplanting the Bengali diction to suit the syntax and the expressional quirks of Greek.

Father Mignon along with Mr. Sajal Banerjee was then entrusted with the work of revising it and producing a Bible that read better, domesticating the translation to a degree that made it more 'readable'. Although an attempt towards domestication was evident in this decision of the Jesuit order, yet that was felt to be necessary to make the Bible accessible to a large portion of the Bengali speaking population. It is important to remember, in this context, that the Bible has a performance aspect to it, being used in actual church services, and a foreignized Bible, though true to the original, was thought to present practical difficulties. It was with trepidation that Father Mignon started on his work of revising the pre-existing work, helped on the way by his previous translational activities of certain portions of the Bible that he undertook before, and compiled in three volumes, collectively called the 'Banibitan'. Unlike the previous endeavours, this time Father Mignon would have the help and assistance of Sajal Banerjee. With a native Bengali speaker, the priorities were very clearly drawn out, where Father Mignon because of his theological knowledge would have the final say in semantic matters and decide whether the signification of the original Biblical text was communicated with adequate accuracy. Mr. Banerjee, on the other hand, would have the final say in matters literary, and decide whether the translation was idiomatic enough. The entire process took nearly twenty years to complete, and the New Testament, as was the usual custom, was the first to be completed and published. A huge degree of domestication was evident in this translation; gone was the harsh and halting style of the previous versions, and in its place came an easy and comfortable style more in keeping with the eloquence and naturalness of Bengali diction. The result was good, and the Order was inspired to grant Father Mignon permission to further continue with the work and come up with a translation of the Old Testament, which finally got published in 2003, thus completing the work of the first complete Catholic version of the Bengali Bible. This version of the Catholic Bible continues to be the most popular Catholic Bengali Bible till date, with wide circulation and repeated reprints in the course of the six years of its existence and is equally popular in West Bengal as well as in Bangladesh for private reading as well as clerical purposes.

Sahaj Bangla Bible

The *Sahaj Bangla Bible* is different from the other translations in the sense that it is translated by a single person and not an agency. Sri Arabinda Dey makes it clear in the preface to his translation that he has used two different points of view in translating the Old and the New Testaments. The Old Testament is written in accordance to an older diction, while there has been an attempt to make the language, diction and presentation of the New Testament more

commensurate with the contemporary usage of the language, while retaining 'some' element of archaism to maintain continuity from the Old Testament. This is clear in the choice of 'sadhu bhasha' for the Old and 'chalit bhasha' for the New Testament.

We can take an example:

From Genesis (আদি) 4:1

পরে আদম আপন স্ত্রী ইভের পরিচয় লইলে তিনি গর্ভবতী হইয়া কইয়িনকে প্রসব করিয়া কহিলেন, প্রভুর সহায়তায় আমার নরলাভ হইল।

From Mark 1:4

সেই অনুসারে দীক্ষাগুরু যোহন উপস্থিত হলেন ও প্রান্তরে দীক্ষা প্রদান করতে লাগ্লেন এবং পাপমোচনের জন্য মন-পরিবর্তনের বাপ্তিস্ম প্রচার করতে লাগলেন।

Apart from this, the translation is unique in the way it provides a short introduction before every book, which generally lays down a plan for the book, and provides notes related to translation. The translations are heavily annotated, with detailed explanation of key words. A tendency towards a historical analysis of the Biblical text is noticed in these notes and annotations. The translator makes it quite clear that the target readership of this translation is not only Christian but the non-Christian populace as well. As a result, there is an attempt towards a cultural assimilation within the Indian spiritual ethos. The best example is the long annotation that the translation provides to 'diksha', which he translates as 'baptism'.

The Easy –to-Read Version

Endorsed by the World Bible Translations, WordProject and a number of other reception oriented Bible projects, this is the most reception-oriented Bible in Bengali. The committee follows a four step translation procedure:

Step I: Translation Resources and Training

Step II: First Draft Translation

Step III: Back-Translation, Evaluation and Editing

Step IV : Testing

Step V: Publication

The ERV states as its target readership, 'those with little Biblical knowledge, limited education, or are reading in a language that is not their mother tongue. The Easy-to-Read Bible is also popular among children and young readers. However, even long-time Christians with post-graduate education often tell us how refreshing this translation is for them'. Regarding the translation strategy, the ERV had a stated adherence to Dynamic Equivalence.

The CL Bengali version of the New Testament was first tentatively published in 1980, and then revised based on inputs from readers and pastors, which were included into the whole of the Bible and introduced within a year.

Bible (Name)	Year	Target readership
OV Bible	The version is of 1909, with time to time modernization of spelling	Church, Professionals and Specialists
CL Bible	1998 version being reprinted, first published in 1980	General readership, Christian and also non-Christian
Mangalbarta Bible	Started in 1980s, published in 2003	The Catholic Church, and general readership
World Bible Translator (Easy to Read Version)	Published in 2007	People with limited education, non-professionals and non-specialists
Sahaj Bangla Bible	Published in 2007	General Bengali readership, with non-Christians prominently in mind

Some of the above translations are dynamic, others use dynamic equivalence selectively. Some are formal, while many are a combination in parts – guided by the relevance of individual frames for translation. Some translations keep a strong eye on the element of functionality, while some do not and use a general and formally neutral style. Most of the Bibles are annotated, some moderately while some heavily. Some contain translator's notes and interpretations. Structurally some are broken up into chapters and with headings and these break-ups can be highly interpretative.

However, despite certain differences, they are all very different either from the colonial Bibles or the few Bibles that were brought out in the 20th century independently. And one can say that the rise of Dynamic Equivalence theories in Bible Translation in the West, and the rise of indigenous South Asian and Indian Christian theology are the two factors behind these differences.

The main points of differences between the translation strategies of the pre-Dynamic Equivalence and post-Dynamic Equivalence must be pointed out:

a) Higher influence of the Target Culture as a determining factor in the translation
b) Influence of historical and anthropological research in the last century
c) Movement from the word to the sentence as the semantic unit for translation, and sometimes as in the Children's Bible, the text
d) Selective use of functionality
e) Higher participation of native agencies in the translation process
f) Shift in purpose for Bible translation

Before dealing with the above points, we will first take a look at the formal aspects of the Bibles. Usually, most Protestant Bibles follow a two-column style, and incorporate the entire Bible in a single volume, with limited gloss except for study Bibles. Notably, the United Bible Society is still in the process of creating the first Bengali Study Bible. The Catholic Bibles on the other hand, are heavily glossed, have a single-column run-on style and often have multiple volumes. *The Mangalbarta Bible* of the Jesuit Mission for example is in three volumes. It serves the purpose of being both a study Bible and a functional Bible.

Comparative Analysis of Modern Bengali Bibles

In order to compare the Bengali Bibles produced in modern times, we have to initially decide on a method of analysis, not depending on highly subjective and ill defined categories like 'literal' and 'free'. Our task here primarily is to define what 'type' a translation is and introduce a degree of systematic rigour in assigning a 'type' to a translation. The second objective is to lay down the criteria on the basis of which this rigor can be exercised. In other words, on what basis can we say that a translation may belong to a certain type. I propose ten-point criteria to determine translation type. I owe much of this model to the one proposed by Sebastian J. Floor. (Floor 8) However, I adapt somewhat it to suit the linguistic scenario of Bengali as a Target Language. Floor isolates an eight point criteria, which form the basis of categorising Bible translations into four types –

i. The Close Resemblant

ii. The Open Resemblant

iii. The Close Interpretative

iv. The Open Interpretative

This provides a more scientific basis in categorising translations as compared to the earlier Formal versus Dynamic, or Free versus literal translations. The ten-point criteria, of which the first four are isolated by Floor, to which I add the last two to suit the specifically Indian tradition, on which translations vary in their relation to the Source Text as well as from one another, are:

v. Order of clauses and phrases
vi. Sentence length
vii. Reference disambiguation and tracking including use of honorifics
viii. Concordance to key lexical terms
ix. Key Terms and unknown terms (including units of time, measurement and currency, flora and fauna, proper names with semantic significance like place or person names etc.)
x. Figurative Usage and Idioms
xi. Transition markings
xii. Information structuring
xiii. Use of Gloss
xiv. Functionality

We will now try and elaborate on each of the above criteria:

Order of Clause and Phrase

This point considers changes from strict correspondence of source language clause order, to slight order adjustment for more naturalness and readability to total disregard of the original clause order. Most Bengali Bible has altered the order of clauses and phrases to meet the natural diction of the language. However, even within alterations there can be changes. In the two translations that we presently consider, the word order has changed. The extract is from Psalms 23:3

তিনি নিজের নামের জন্য আমাকে ধর্মপথে গমন করান। (*UBS)*

তাঁর নামের জন্য তিনি আমাকে ঠিক পথে চালিত করেন। *(WBT)*

Both sentences follow the Noun Clause-Verb Clause structure. However, within the Noun Clause there is a shift. The first begins with the active pronoun and moves to the passive, while the second does just the opposite. Keeping other factors common, the clause order of the first UBS example is closer to the original Hebrew formation as compared to the second.

As is clear, such refashioning and resultant restructuring will also have an effect on the sentence length, which now brings us to the second point.

Sentence Length

Restructuring of clauses usually varies the sentence length. Usually modern translations break up the sentence length for better communication. Cases in point are the eulogies of Paul. They start with the phrase 'eulogetos ho theos' and then go on to cover many verses. For example, the long eulogy at the beginning of Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians starts at 1:3 and goes on till 1:14, making it twelve verses long. Other such examples are the eulogies in Peter I 1:3-10-12, and Corinthians II 1:1 -7

Most translated Bibles tend to break up these sentences, apparently to make them less cluttered and result in better communication. Of the 12 verse long eulogy in the Ephesians, the OV Bible maintains the longest sentence, and that too is three verses long. Rev. Christian Mingnou S.J., the chief translator of the Catholic *Mangalbarta* Bible, mentions the stylistic challenge of translating Pauline Epistles in his introduction to the third volume, which comprises the New Testament. He makes a line end at the end of each verse, thus shortening the sentence length. The *Sahaj Bangla Bible*, which follows the UBS Bible closely also makes sentence breaks at three points – at 1:6, 1:10 and 1:14.

Reference Disambiguation and Tracking

Language patterns differ in the way the participants are referred to in a given situation. In Bengali, as in other Indian languages, this problem is complicated by the translator's discretion in applying the honorific. We can illustrate the following example to separate translation approaches towards reference disambiguation. This is the beginning of that famous narrative in Mark 6:45-56, where Jesus performs the miracle of walking on water. In the original Greek, there is no mention

of the proper name of Christ in the beginning of this episode. The last time his name occurs is about 15 lines back in 6:30.

The OV follows this closely and mentions Jesus and his disciples in the beginning of 6:30 like the original and repeats it once more in 6:35. But, it thereafter consistently uses the honorific pronouns till the end of the verse, i.e. 6:56. The CL translation, however, disambiguates and tracks the reference by including the proper name of Jesus where it is absent in the original.

The second example has deviated not only in tracking the reference and disambiguating it, but has also put in extra words *'sagorer opare'* where it does not appear in the original as an interpretative note, and in fact, the entire meaning is somewhat different. Here Christ does not order his disciples, but actually goes up to join them.

Concordance of Lexical items

Semantics denotes the situation where a word which can have multiple meanings as 'polysemy'. The Bible is replete with polysemic words. Concordance means maintaining the same word in translation wherever it occurs. Depending on the degree of concordance, translation can be of four different types –

1. Full concordance – same translated word maintained irrespective of context, regardless of sense difference
2. Limited concordance – one source language term translated into a few translated terms, depending on sense – difference
3. Minimal concordance –source language term can be translated into many translated terms, but with a higher degree of context-sensitivity than sense-difference
4. No concordance – No attempt to maintain any polysemy at all, and using words of appropriate meaning in a purely context-sensitive way.

One of the most famous and rich polysemic word in the Bible is 'sarx'. In Paul's Epistles, it is repeatedly used to mean 'human/humanity', 'sinful nature', 'physical body', 'descent' or 'sexual desire'. The OV Bengali Bible uses the word 'মাংস' consistently, each time it appears guided by the principle of Full Concordance. The CL and the WBT version use seven or eight different words looking at the contextual polysemy.

Biblical Key Terms and unknown concepts in terms and phrases

This criterion is related to the previous criterion of concordance, but focuses not only on concepts but also on the terms. Biblical key terms and unknown concepts can be divided into the following categories –

i) Terms related to general theology/ philosophy/ ethics – sacrifice, holiness, salvation
ii) Terms of Biblical theology – crucifixion, baptism, resurrection, Covenant, Law, Prophets

Terms in category (i) are present in the Receptor Culture, but may be understood in a way different from the Judeo-Christian understanding of it. The second category may be foreign in the Receptor Language Culture. For the above key terms, form bound translations attempt a

one-to-one correspondence by keeping interpretative intervention at a minimum. Receptor-bound translations often use strategies of amplification, periphrastic construction or description to make the concept clearer for the reader.

For example, in the Psalm 23:3 we have already considered, there is the phrase 'the Way of Righteousness'. In Hebrew, it has the following implicit and explicit significations:

a) The morally right path
b) Covenant of faithfulness
c) Fulfilment of expectations
d) Excellence of condition (in being the 'best path' so to say)

The OV translates it as *'dhormopath'*, thus combining the first two of the above four meanings. The CL uses *'thik path'*, focusing largely on the path, and perhaps implying the fourth.

iii) Proper names of Places and Persons – Almost all names of Hebraic prophets, Christ and his disciples; as well as place names mentioned in the Bible have phonemic associations to an incident or a prophecy. Translators deal with them in different ways.
iv) Names of Flora and Fauna, Units of Measurements etc.

Figurative Usage and Idioms

Figurative usage includes similes, metaphors, metonymy, hyperbole etc., idioms may include proverbs, double-negative, catch phrases etc. Translation may choose to stick to the original figures of idioms or to translate them functionally to bring them closer to the naturalness of receptor language expression. In Genesis 14:23, the Hebrew idiom 'not even a thread and sandlestrap' is used. The OV maintains it, as does all other modern versions. However, since the expression is not natural in Bangla, communication gets affected. A similar idiom of sadness is the repeated use of 'weeping and gnashing of teeth'.

Transitions between paragraphs and sentences

Transitions usually take the form of logical conjunctions like 'and', 'but' etc., as well as connectives like 'therefore', 'then', 'however', 'moreover'. The Hebrew word '*waw*' for example can be translated as 'and', 'then', 'but', 'therefore', 'moreover' etc. - all these meanings complement the core meaning of the word 'and', depending on the context. Some translations follow the original transitions even it is not natural in the Receptor Language system, some refashion them according to RL norms, while others ignore them altogether.

The OV, for example, alternatively translates it as আর and `পরে. We can here take an example from Exodus 4, verses 24 to 29 -

1.24. পরে পথে পান্থশালায় সদাপ্রভু তাঁহার কাছে গিয়া তাঁহাকে বধ করিতে চেষ্টা করিলেন

1.27. আর সদাপ্রভু হারোণকে বলিলেন, তুমি মোশির সঙ্গে সাক্ষাত করিতে প্রান্তরে যাও

1.28. পরে মোশি ও হারোণ গিয়া ইস্রায়েল সন্তানদের সমস্ত প্রাচীণদের একত্র করিলেন।

WBT and the CL usually ignore them altogether, whereas the WBT follows a much freer form.

Information Structure

Biblical Hebrew, like all Semitic languages, follows a Verb-Subject-Object Structure (VSO). There can be differences for the sake of emphasis or contrast, but usually, information is structured or 'packaged' in both Biblical Hebrew and Koine Greek in the VSO format. Every language is unique in the way it packages its information. Bengali, for example, typically follows the SVO structure. Almost no translation, no matter how literal will follow the VSO structure of the Biblical languages when translating into Bengali. Translations differ in the way they respond to the special cases where there are changes of emphasis in the above. There can be differences in the way information is packaged in the different versions of the translation of the same Source Language Text.

Gloss, Footnotes and introduction to chapters

This criterion is not a part of Floor's original list. However, I have made it a part of it, since unlike in Africa which is Floor's field of inquiry, in India Christianity had to address to a receptor culture which has a rich tradition of written religious discourse with well established terminilogy. Glosses and footnotes, along with annotations, can be more than explanatory tools but hint at degrees of assimilation intended by the translator within the receptor culture. Most early Bibles were not glossed. Glosses can be varied in nature. Some like the *Mangalbarta Bible* is heavily glossed. This is commensurate with the Catholic belief in the priestly intervention in an understanding of the Bible. Some, like the OV Bible of the UBS are largely unglossed. Glosses can operate as a mode of domestication, and this is more apparent in indigenous and individual Bible translation. For example, notes to Matthew 11 in *Sahaj Bangla Bible* starts with the heading:

বহুরূপে সম্মুখে তোমার ছাড়ি কোথা খুজিছ ঈশ্বর?

Which hints clearly towards a tendency of assimilation within the receptor culture, just as the chapter beginning Matthew 12:33 is named 'ফলেন পরিচয়তে'.

Functionality

Functionality, in Translation Studies, is an attempt to maintain the formal characteristic of the original in the translation when it is thought to be contextually important, or integral to the message. The Bible, we have to remember, is a book written over many centuries by many authors. Thus, there are many different styles and dictions in the Bible. The OT itself is a combination of four different schools of writing. The priestly books make use of longer sentences and difficult technical words, whereas the 'Yehovah' books are simpler with shorter sentences. They indicate an earlier period of composition with a more severe style. In the NT, for example, the Gospels are written in simple, short sentences, whereas the Pauline Epistles are long and theologically nuanced.

The Psalms are songs and written in the form of lyrics, whereas the Deutoronomical Books are Laws and written in technical prose language. The Prophetic Books and the Song of Songs are mystical writings with their exclusive tones. High functionality would mean a maintenance of these formal differences in translation. Translations vary in their application of functionality. Based on these factors, Floor divides Bible Translation in two categories-

i) The Resemblant – which tries to remain close to the original in both semantic and formal terms
ii) The Interpretative – which tries to remain close to the Receptor Culture in both semantic and formal terms.

This can further be divided into two sub-divisions –

The Resemblant into

- Close Resemblant (Type I)
- Open Resemblant (Type II)

The Interpretative into:

- Close Interpretative (Type III)
- Open Interpretative (Type IV)

We can tabulate the criteria as follows:

Criteria	Close Resemblant	Open Resemblant	Close Interpretative	Open Interpretative
Clause Order Adjusted	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sentence Length Adjusted	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Reference disambiguation carried out	Some, when grammatically unavoidable	Yes	Yes	Yes
Concordance level	Full	Limited, largely sense-driven	Minimum, context-driven	None, fully context-driven
Key and unknown terms maintained	Maintained	Maximally adjusted for	Not maintained	Fully adjusted

(including units, flora and fauna)		better communication		
Figures and Idioms	Literal resemblance	Minimally literal, maximum interpretative	Maximum interpretative, minimally literal	Not maintained
Transitions adjusted	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Information structure adjusted	No	Mixed	Yes	Yes
Gloss (footnotes, chapter introductions)	None to minimum	Yes	Yes, heavily	None
Functionality maintained	Yes	Mixed	No	No

Using the above categories, we can move out of the traditional free versus literal dichotomy, and also provide exact criteria for these categories. This shows us that our categorizations are not stable but more like a cline, or comparative degrees of inclination –

SL----------→ RL

(Source Language) (Receptor Language)

Type I ----------→ Type II ----------→ Type III ----------→ Type IV ----------→

(Close Resemblant) (Open Resemblant) (Close Interpretative) (Open Interpretative)

We will now compare the different types of Bengali Bibles by comparing them on the basis of above categories. For the sake of brevity, we will concentrate on the following verse from 1Timothy 3:16, which will put into play most of the above criteria. The English Version of the verse is

(He) came in the flesh and justified in the Spirit

Now let us look at the various Bengali translations:

OV –

তিনি মাংসে প্রকাশিত হইলেন, আত্মাতে ধার্মিক প্রতিপন্ন হইলেন।

Justified – way of the law, right way (right as the way of the Law, possible Biblical meaning)

CL

মর্ত্যে মানবরূপে হইল তাঁর আত্মপ্রকাশ

দিব্য আত্মার প্রভাবে তিনি হইলেন স্বীকৃত।

SBB

তিনি রক্ত মাংসে দেহ ধরে

হইলেন প্রকাশিত

আর পবিত্র আত্মাতে হইলেন পুতঃ

WBT (Easy to Read Version)

খ্রীষ্ট মনুষ্য দেহে প্রকাশিত হলেন, পবিত্র আত্মার শক্তিতে যথার্থ প্রতিপন্ন হলেন।

Mangalbarta Bible

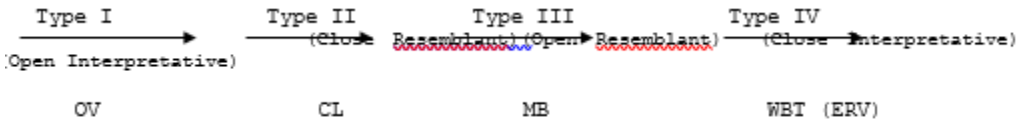
খ্রীষ্ট মরদেহে প্রকাশিত হলেন,

পরম আত্মার শক্তিতে ধর্মময় প্রতিপন্ন হলেন তিনি।

If we consider the units of the sentence, and scan the translated units separately, we can come to following conclusion, keeping in mind the above factors:

Criteria	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
OV	Yes	No	No	Full	Maintained	Literal	-	-	None	Yes
CL	Yes	Yes	No	No	Interpreted	Interpreted	-	-	None	Yes
SBB	Yes	Yes	None	Partial	Interpreted	Interpreted	-	-	Yes	Yes
WBT	Yes	Yes	Yes	None	Interpreted	Interpreted	-	-	None	None
MB	Yes	Yes	Yes	Partial	Partial	Interpreted	-	-	Yes	Yes

If we now place the above analysis in the given cline, then we find that we can immediately discount two forms – Full Close Resemblant and Full Open Interpretative. Perhaps other than the very early Carey versions, no Bengali Bible comes close to the Full Close Resemblant Type. However, considering tendencies, we can place the Bibles in the following cline –



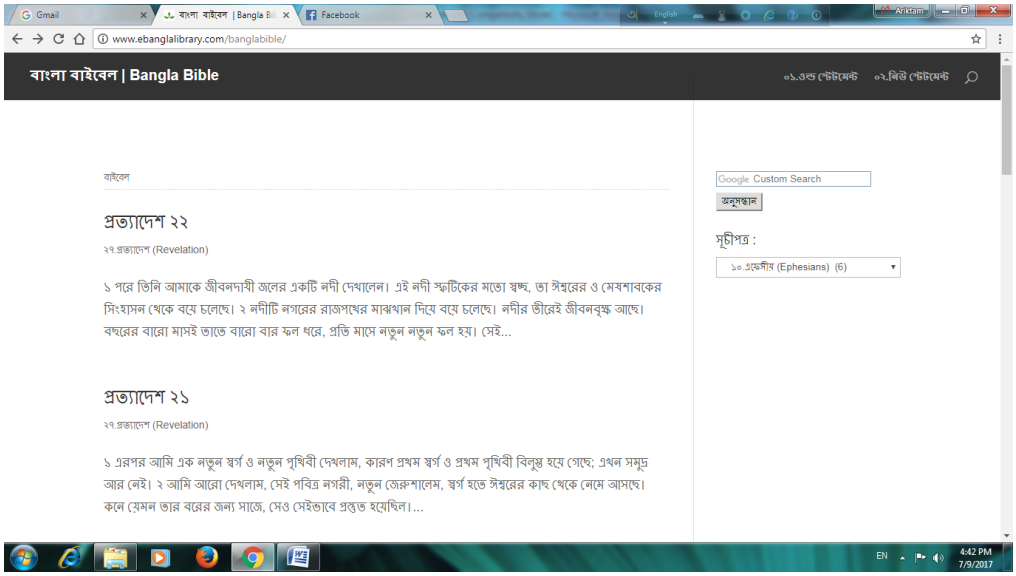
Independent versions like the *Sahaj Bangla Bible* are more difficult to analyse. Although generally it accords to the Type II translation type, yet they seem to be more eclectic. Usually Bible committees lay down specific rules on the basis of which translation is carried out. Therefore, the translation strategy remains more or less consistent throughout. That is not the case for independent individual translations.

The Sahaj Bangla Bible, for example, tends to be very close to the Type I translation in its translation of the OT. However, in its translation of the NT it moves towards a Type II translation. Again, there are places where the clause order is strictly maintained with full concordance like a Type I translation, but at the same time is heavily glossed like a Type II or Type III translation. As a result, this translation makes categorization difficult. But, the overall tendency is towards somewhere between a Type II and a Type III translation.

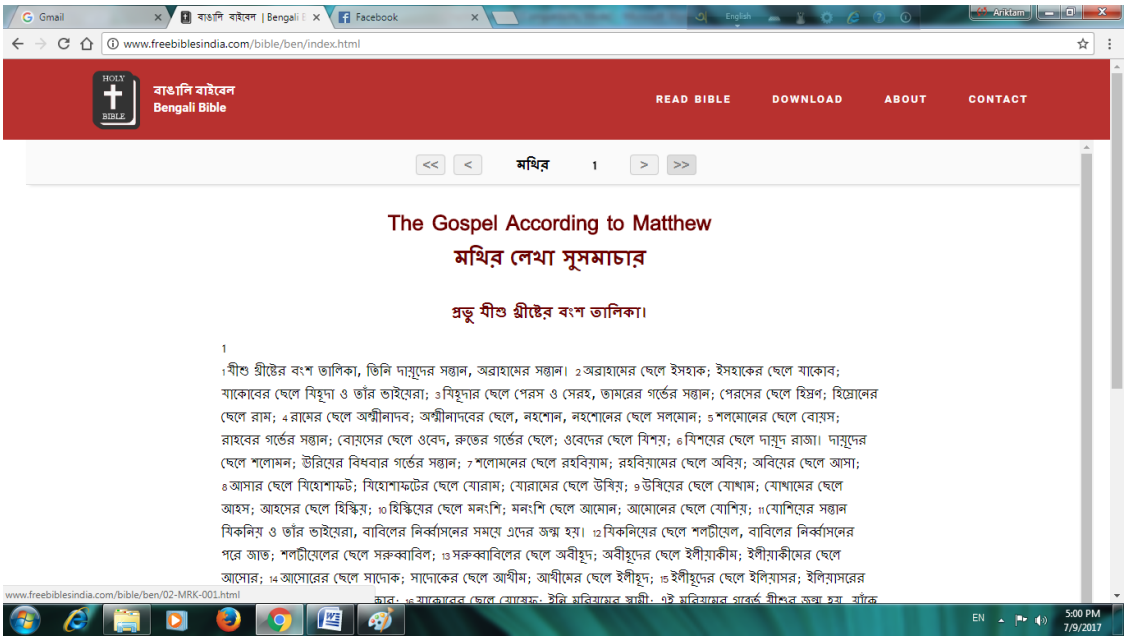
With this, we come to a conclusion of our overview of two centuries of printed Bibles in Bengali. An area that has not been delved into in this study is the appearance of the Bibles, although the way they are designed, just like the way they are named, enter into an interesting play with the content that they carry. The founts, the layout and the general presentation are an important part of its history, particularly within the field of book history that his research has stopped short of entering into. Bengali does not have an illustrated Bible except for children's Bibles, which I have generally kept out of my discussion, along with Bibles in Islamic Bengali, which I could not fit within the rubric of my thesis. To address that lack, I have provided pictures of a few covers and title-pages of Bengali Bibles, both modern and colonial in the appendix for a broad representation of how they appeared to their readers. At this point we enter into the world of online Bibles that is rapidly gaining in popularity.

Online Bengali Bible

In the above mentioned overview of translations of the Bible in Bengali, we have covered mostly printed Bibles, and have also theorized the transition from oral, to the written and finally the printed form and the linguistic challenges that it brought along with it. From the point of view of mediality, however, the Bible has moved on and the most popular Bible for private reading, particularly among the youth, are online Bibles in Bengali. These are available in the form of internet sites as well as mobile apps. A typical format is where the page contains a drop down window, and once the reader types in the required verse it appears through a hyperlink. A typical online bible page would look as follows:



(Unicode Bible)



(Free Bible)

The window on the right hand side in the first instance and at the top of the page on the second is where the reader types in the required verse, and then it appears. Since we have already seen how the change in medium contributes to the change in translation strategy and style, therefore the obvious question here is how this shift has changed the translation process. What happens, for example, to those sections of the Bible that go on for many verses without break – the eulogy from Ephesus that we have discussed above, for instance, which continues from 1:3 to 1:14 in the form of a single sentence. We have already seen how most translated Bibles have broken up the entire section into three sentences, with each running for roughly four verses. The online format, however, necessitates that each verse comes in the form of a single sentence, ideally, since often the reader cannot move beyond that or see it unless that is entered into the search window.

We can take a look at a few online Bengali Bibles and look at the way they have tried to address this challenge. The Unicode Bengali Bible :

এফেসীয় ১: –

৩ আমাদের প্রভু যীশু খ্রীষ্টের ঈশ্বর ও পিতার প্রশংসা হোক। তিনি খ্রীষ্টে আমাদের স্বর্গীয় স্থানে সমস্ত আত্মিক আশীর্বাদে পূর্ণ করেছেন।

৪ জগত সৃষ্টির পূর্বে ঈশ্বর তাঁর পবিত্র, নির্দোষ ও প্রেমময় লোক হবার জন্য আমাদের খ্রীষ্টের মধ্য দিয়ে বেছে নিলেন।

৫ জগত সৃষ্টির পূর্বেই ঈশ্বর ঠিক করেছিলেন যে আমরা খ্রীষ্টের মাধ্যমে তাঁর সন্তান হব। এ কাজ ঈশ্বর নিজেই সম্পন্ন করতে চেয়েছিলেন, আর তাঁতে তিনি খুশী হলেন। ...[1]

The entire section is divided into twenty lines, which in the original is one line without any break between sentences. A similar tendency is observed in the site of Free Bibles as well:

3ধন্য আমাদের প্রভু যীশু খ্রীষ্টের ঈশ্বর ও পিতা, যিনি আমাদেরকে সমস্ত আত্মিক আশীর্ব্বাদে স্বর্গীয় স্থানে খ্রীষ্টে আশীর্ব্বাদ করেছেন;

4 কারণ তিনি জগৎ সৃষ্টির আগে খ্রীষ্টে আমাদেরকে মনোনীত করেছিলেন, যেন আমরা তাঁর দৃষ্টিতে পবিত্র ও নিখুঁত হই;

5 তিনি আমাদেরকে খ্রীষ্ট যীশুর মাধ্যমে নিজের জন্য দত্তকপুত্রতার জন্য আগে থেকে ঠিক করেছিলেন; এটা তিনি নিজ ইচ্ছার হিতসঙ্কল্প অনুসারে, নিজ অনুগ্রহের প্রতাপের প্রশংসার জন্য করেছিলেন।[1]

This stylistic change is a necessity dictated by the medium, which is highlighted by the fact that in translations that are presented in a downloadable pdf format, the continuities are maintained like the printed books. An example is the online Bible published by the Sadhu Benedict Math in Khulna, Bangladesh. The entire section here is divided into only four sentence breaks, once in 1:8, one in 1: 10; 1:12 and finally in 1:14, where there is a formal closure to the sentence in the original.

The problem with such an approach is the complete loss of stylistic diversity within the Biblical texts. As we have discussed earlier, the style of the Pauline scriptures with its long winding lines that read sometimes like philosophical contemplations are drastically different from the style of the gospels which are meant to be simple, both in its structure and choice of words. The online structure, both in its choice of style and lexica threatens to disrupt that complexity and richness of the text.

Conclusion

The significance of Bible in the field of Translation Studies is immense for a number of reasons. Not the least of it is the fact that it has covered a range in time and space that is unsurpassed by any other single text. More importantly, it has exposed itself to a wide range of material mediation.

Bible Translation is related to Literary Translation in the same way the Bible is related to literature. Their fields overlap, yet each maintain a degree of relative autonomy. The world of Biblical scholarship often posits itself in a space that is distinct from, and may be even relatively opposed to, the discursive space of literary convention. Bible translation studies, for example, sometime indulge in a conscious anti-intellectualism. There is, moreover, an evangelical dimension – a 'skopos' to the Bible that is always distinct from that of a literary text. A literary text may betray such a trait i.e. a purpose behind its making, but it is still not be considered as an innate requirement, and definitely does not count as a dominant parameter in its judgment. Yet the overarching field of translation studies can afford to ignore Bible translation activity only at its own peril. The reasons for such relevance are manifold:

- The Bible is the most steadily translated text in the World engaging with one of the highest readership, if not the highest.
- Through its sheer discursive variation and the multiple demands it places on the translator, Bible translation presents us with all possible problematic that can come in the process of translation in general.
- Bible translation has been an assured part of the repertoire of all translational epochs, and thus provides us with a unique case of studying the shifting translation philosophies of each age.
- Due to the fact that the Bible has travelled in translation over continents and cultures, it provides a unique opportunity in analysing culture-specific transferences.

For the above reasons translators, translation theorists and historians choose to keep a close watch on the continuous activity of Bible translation – charting its changing methodologies, finding its points of success, taking stock of its failures and analyzing the various semiotic transferences it carries out to meet its ends. It can be fairly assumed, therefore, that the methods and conclusions that have been followed and arrived at above can be equally pertinent in the study of translated texts at large, whether literary and non-literary. It would also act as a pointer in placing the question of medium in a more central position within translation discourse, as it defines decisions related to the process of translation.

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Understanding Cultural Transaction: Translating from Classical Chinese into Bengali

Barnali Chanda

Abstract

This paper illustrates my experience as a modern Indian translator translating from classical Chinese into Bengali and English. A translation project published as *Tellings and Retellings* (ed. Suchorita Chattopadhyay) has the translation of the Chinese Tang dynasty (618–907) 傳奇*chuanqi* story "Du Zichun"《杜子春》by Niu Sengru, its Buddhist source and its thematically similar Ming dynasty (1368–1644 or 1662) recension 話本小說*huaben xiaoshuo* (vernacular story) "Du Zichun Goes to Chang'an Thrice" 《杜子春三入長安》 by Feng Menglong. This is an attempt to introduce the Chinese story tradition to a larger group of Indian audience whose knowledge of Chinese language and culture is inadequate.

Keywords: Classical Chinese Literature, Pre-modern Literature, Translation Studies, Buddhism, Sanskrit terms, Cultural exchange, Chinese and Bengali, Sino-Indian exchange, Classical literature, Translation

These Chinese stories were translated by a couple of translators. The Tang dynasty story, "Dù Zichūn" was translated by several authors over the last fifty years. Among these, "Dù Zichūn" by Rania Huntington (Nienhauser 49) and "The Alchemist" by J.R. Hightower (Minford 1067) are worth mention. The Ming dynasty version of the story having the same content is named "Dù Zichūn Goes to Chang'an Three Times" 《杜子春三入長安》 (Dù Zichun Sānrù Cháng'ān). This story is taken from *Xǐngshì Héngyán* (2nd part) 《醒世恒言》（下） by Féng Mènglóng (1574–1645). Féng Mènglóng's book *Stories to Awaken the World* (醒世恆言*Xǐngshì Héngyán*) was published in 1627 and it had forty vernacular stories. Shuhui Yang and Yunqin Yang translated this anthology and published as *Stories to Awaken the World*: *A Ming Dynasty Collection* Volume-3. The Ming dynasty authors had used the Tang dynasty plots but had followed a different literary trend using vernacular language. In the Ming dynasty versions we have found that the story does not only depict the subject matter of the Tang dynasty version in a very complicated manner, but it also illustrates the subsequent psychological developments in the characters. This practice of including the personal views of the characters was the first such instance in the Ming dynasty story tradition. Written in different time periods in two different literary styles the stories illustrate the cross-cultural, cross-literary and cross-linguistic transactions between pre-modern China and India.

The Tang dynasty was a period of cultural progress and stability. The capital of Tang dynasty was in Chang'an (present-day Xi'an), which was not only the most populous city in the world, but was also the center of many activities where the golden age of cosmopolitan culture started in China. Even in our chosen texts we find the reference of *bōsīguǎn*波斯管, the Hall of Persia which alludes to several trading connections between Persia and other central Asian countries with the Western part of Chang'an. It was a premise for the foreign traders for offering tribute to the emperor, trading of antiques and jewelry and having commercial and literary exchanges at the tea-houses around Chang'an.

Stories of strange events have a long indigenous tradition in China. They were merged with the migrated Buddhist tales and turned indistinguishable. These stories deal with retribution for evil deeds teaching *karma*. The Ming dynasty *huàběn* stories like "Dù Zichūn Goes to Chang'an Three Times" treated Daoist and Buddhist elements, emphasizing the emptiness of mundane glory as well as the pleasure of reclusion and transcendence. The *huàběn* stories were composed by the educated elite. They used the established norms of storytelling and imitated the models of professional vernacular oral fiction. These stories contained and also preserved the contemporary colloquial oral features, the storyteller's stock phrases and interpolated passages in rhyme. Similar example where Tang dynasty *chuanqi* tales were adapted by Féng Mènglóng in his *Stories to Caution the World* 《警世通言》, is *Báishé Zhuàn* (白蛇傳, the Legend of the white snake).

Classical Chinese stories are hardly read in India. It is not even much of a part of the curricula in the Chinese language syllabi in the universities. The translation works in English (published as "*Strange tales of Medieval China: Tellings and Retellings*" Jadavpur University March, ISBN 978-93836-60094) and in Bengali (a work in progress) are for the section of audience (including students and common readers) who are willing to learn about Chinese literary tradition and culture. Given the fact that translation is a linguistic and cultural project, in our translation, the relevant Chinese terms and expressions are elaborately annotated. As a translator, I consciously avoided explanatory phrases that convey the meaning at the cost of a jarring insertion and have chosen to provide a detailed annotation of the essentially Chinese cultural, historical and aesthetic concepts. The annotations not only convey the literal meaning but also create a semantic space for the readers where they can get familiar with the logocentric Chinese language and literary ideas at the same time. Unlike other translators, I retained and recreated the cultural spaces the original contained. In one of the Translation Studies Lecture, I had an experience of translating Chinese language passages with Indian students having no knowledge of Chinese literature and language. What I did was to tell them the meaning of each word in Bengali and they were able to translate the passage into English and Bengali from Chinese. This exercise incited their curiosity towards the language and literature written in original. The responsibility of a mediator-translator is thus not only to limit oneself to convey the ideas, concepts or the meaning of the source texts, but also to create an impact on the readers by making them aware of the rhythm and poetics of the language.

"Dù Zichūn" 杜子春, the Tang dynasty *chuánqí* story is widely believed to have the direct source for this tale was a 7th century Indian legend found in the *Da Tang Xiyuji* 大唐西域記 (The Great Tang-Dynasty Record of the Western Regions). The oldest extant of "Dù Zichūn" actually can be found in a Sanskrit collection called the *Śrīmad Devī Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (Reed 310). There is another version that we can find in *The Thousand and One Nights*. The story "Joudar" contains several key elements of the Indian and Chinese versions. The *Purāṇic* version of the story corresponds to the climactic scene in the Chinese stories. This Sanskrit story, as a part of the oral tradition, might be the source of "Lièshì Chí"《烈士池》 ("Pool of the Hero") in *Dà Táng Xīyùjì* 《大唐西域記》 (Beal Vol-1) in a section of the 7th chapter named the "The Vigil of the Champion". The story in Xuánzàng's record is collected from a place near Sarnath. The thematic similarity between this, the *puranic* story and Xuanzang's story is astonishing.

In Samuel Beal's "Lieshi Chi"《烈士池》隱士*yinshi* is translated as solitary master which is a literal translation of the term 隱士*yinshi*（隱solitary, 士scholar）. As a translator from India and having the idea and knowledge of what can be the qualities of a hermit, we have translated *yinshi* as hermit in English and *tāpasa* তাপস or *tapashī* তপস্বী in Bangla. The Bengali term directly conveys the idea of 隱士*yinshi* in Indian context. This story belonging to Xuanzang's *Great Tang Records on the Western Regions* traveled to China in Tang dynasty with Xuanzang and presumably was read and circulated widely. Tang dynasty writer Niu Sengru's *Du Zichun*《杜子春》was a remarkable example of cross-cultural and cross-literary example of China and India. The translation of this famous *chuanqi* story "Du Zichun" (Tang Dynasty) by Rania Huntington was more literal, easily relatable, more of a metaphrase translation[1] (Kasparek 83), representing 'formal equivalence'. On the other hand the same story as translated by Hightower was paraphrased, and expressed 'dynamic equivalence'[1] (Nida 200) much relatable to the western readers. In our translation in order to execute the task of truthfully conveying the meaning of the text, the Chinese culture-specific situations and terminologies were thoroughly replaced by English equivalents. For example, the Daoist priest and the scholar follower while addressing each other, use terms like *laoweng* (老翁), *langjun* (郎君). Sir and Young Fellow are the terms that have been used in Huntington and Hightower's translations. In our English translation, these Chinese terms like *laoweng* and *langjun* or *junzi* (君子, a noble)*, hǎohàn* (好漢 a noble, brave and truthful man), *xiǎozi* (小子, a brat) were kept intact with explanatory footnotes describing in what sense and context the terms have been used. While translating the same into Bengali this task becomes even easier because there are specific Bengali terms which can accurately and exactly convey the cultural and contextual meaning of the term *laoweng* and *langjun* or *junzi.* For 老翁*laoweng* the terms like *Mahashaya* (মহাশয়) and *Janab* (জনাব) are apt to be used conveying the meaning of a gentleman. And for 郎君 or 君子*langjun* or *junzi* (young man, a dandy or a playboy), the word *jubak* or *tarun* (যুবক and তরুন) conveying the meaning of Youth has been used. Again for words like *hǎohàn* (好漢) the word like *bhadralok* ভদ্রলোক, *sajjan* সজ্জন and for *xiǎozi* 小子the word like *chhotolok* ছোটোলোক, which also is a direct translation of the Chinese word (小-small, 子-person) can be used.

The beautiful translation of the Ming dynasty story "Du Zichun Goes to Chang'an Three Times" by Shuhui Yang and Yunqin Yang is more of a paraphrase translation with limited explanation of ideas and the contexts (Yang and Yang 862). We will examine two examples from these stories. The term *poerqi*婆兒氣in English means a long-winded, indecisive speech. The literal translation of *poerqi*婆兒气would be an annoying, sentimental blabbering of a grandmother or an old woman. This phrase was used to describe the Daoist priest's speech. In the English translation by Yang brothers it was simply translated as a speech by the old man. But in our English translation we kept the term as *poerqi*婆兒气 intact in the text and with that we have provided with a footnote which describes the context and the meaning of the term. The explanation will also lead us towards a very culture specific idea of long and useless introductory speech. This is to familiarize the readers with such terms in Chinese and also to ensure that the cultural sense remains intact. In Bengali translation of *poerqi*婆兒气will be *gauracandrikā* গৌরচন্দ্রিকা or *bhaṇitā* ভনিতা, a long introductory prologue having no such specific use. For Indian readers such explanatory and annotated translation can establish the cultural and linguistic proximity between the China and India.

There are many Buddhist concepts used in both the stories. A suitable example will be the translation of the word 修行 *xiuxing* and修道*xiūdào*. *Xiuxing* and *xiudao* in all the translations by Huntington and Hightower and also Yang brothers have been translated as self-cultivation. *Xiūdào* 修道and *xiūxǐng*修行refer to the Daoist or Buddhist ways of meditation and self-cultivation. In the Hīnayāna, *Xiūdào* 修道is the stage from *anāgāmin* to *arhat*. In Mahāyāna Buddhism it is one of the bodhisattva stages. 見道 *jiandao* is the stage of beholding the truth (of no reincarnation) , which means the phase of the *śrāvaka* and the first stage of the Bodhisattva. The second stage is 修道 *xiudao* or cultivating the truth and the third 無學道 *wuxuedao* means completely comprehending the truth without further study. Another such word is *xiūxǐng*修行which also refers to self-cultivation, cultivate one's moral character by examining one's conscience. The Sanskrit transliteration of *xiūxǐng* 修行 is *caryā* (Sanskrit) meaning conduct or to cultivate oneself in right practice. It is preferable to translate the word as *xiuxing* and a detailed annotation shall be provided. *Xiuxing*修行is an idea borrowed directly from Hindu and Buddhist philosophy. This has the meaning of meditation and *Dhyana* embedded in it and then it was translated into Chinese when it traveled to China via Buddhist scriptures, primarily the *Tripitaka*. The annotation has its source meaning from the Indian philosophy as well as the Buddhist idea of *Dhyana* and renunciation. In Bengali while *xiūxǐng* 修行 can be translated as *sādhanā* সাধনা, 修道 *xiudao* can be translated as *kṛcchasādhana* কৃচ্ছসাধন which has both meditation and renunciation ingrained in the meaning.

There are many such examples and as I translate from classical Chinese into Bengali the familiarity between Bengali, Sanskrit and Chinese becomes more evident. Both stories refer to time as *Shí* 时 / 時and *gēng* 更. The Sanskrit and Bengali equivalent to the idea of *Shí* as expressed in the stories are *samaye* (Pali: *samayaṃ*) or *prahar* (প্রহর) meaning a session or the division of time during day and night. The stories also refers to the idea of *bāshí* 八時 or অষ্টপ্রহর a Hindu and Buddhist division of the day into eight "hours", four for day and four for night. While mentioning the time *gēng* 更in Bengali, the word like *prahar* প্রহর has been used. Another example will be 仙人 *xianren*. *Xian* 仙 has its meaning embedded in the idea of a solitary ascetic having supernatural powers. In the stories this mostly refers to the Daoist immortal. *Xianren* 仙人 can be aptly translated into *ṛṣi* (ঋষি) ঋষি. Again, according to Buddhism, *zhèngguǒ*正果the right fruit, is the direct reward or the proper consequence of a regulated life in this world. This word can be accurately translated as প্রাপ্য কর্মফল *prāpya karmaphala*. While semantically translating it the Chinese term should also be footnoted explaining the history of linguistic exchanges.

Both the stories mention *liùgēn* 六根 or six senses, a Buddhist term for the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. According to Buddhism, in order to achieve Nirvana one needs to discard these six sensual pleasures. This is a metaphor for apathy. This can be aptly translated as the ষড়রিপু *ṣaṛaripu* which conveys the meaning immediately to the readers who are familiar with Hindu and Buddhist philosophy. The Ming dynasty story mentions *chéngēn*塵根, a Buddhist concept that refers to the external sense organs ইন্দ্রিয় *indriẏa*. *Chéngēn* produces the sixth consciousness, causing all sorts of trouble. In the translation, the word ইন্দ্রিয় *indriẏa* should be annotated in details illustrating what

this mean in Chinese Buddhism. Another word *guīyī* 皈依 , originally a Buddhist term but also closely associated with Daoism, is the ceremony when someone believing in the religion joins. Because he expresses allegiance, attachment to the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, it is also known as 'Three Refuges' or the ত্রিরত্ন *Triratna*. Later on it mostly referred to the sincere trust in Buddha's ways. While translating we had footnoted it but also explained the equivalent Sanskrit term ত্রিরত্ন *Triratna* that would bear more meaning to the readers from South Asia. Such examples are abundant when it comes to the cross-linguistic exchanges in the literary history of China. The White Horse Monastery *baimasi*白馬寺, one of the best known Buddhist temples in Henan is such an example. Here *baima* is a transliteration of *padma* (Liu and Wang, 1).

Problem with footnotes and annotations is that the readers mostly dislike stumbling upon the them repeatedly. Indian readers are phenomenally aware of the ideas such as *gouchandrika* গৌরচন্দ্রিকা or *bhaṇitā* ভনিতা, and *Kricchasadhana* কৃচ্ছসাধন unlike the western readers. So even if the reader chooses not to read the footnotes, they can have an idea from the context of the story what the meaning of *poerqi* and *xiuxing* might be. This exercise of translating the source text from the source language (here Sino-Tibetan group) into a different group (Indo-Aryan) of target language made me experience the nuances of transferring the meaning, the sound and the rhythm through translation. All the stories discussed here have their origin in sutras from *Tripitaka* and *Purana* and the inspired adaptations in Chinese have lexicon, syntax, sound and ideas that are closely associated with Sanskrit or Pali lexicon. While Buddhist sutras were being translated from Pali and Sanskrit into Chinese, the process created a completely new range of lexicon in Chinese having Sanskrit terms that went through a phonetic translation. For example moment or刹那*chànà* is a phonetic translation of *ksana*, a denominator of time. So the word moment or 刹那*chànà* (translation of *ksana*) is derived from刹*chà* which means Buddhist monastery. The word 刹*chà* is an abbreviation of刹多羅*Shāduōluó*, the Sanskrit word *ksetra* and it is interesting how *ksana* or moment as introduced to China by Buddhism retains the sound effect of the Sanskrit word. Again禪那*chánnà* is a phonetic translation of *Dhyana.* 禪*chán* is a phonetic translation of Dhyana (Sanskrit) keeping the sound effect intact with the concept of 禪那*chánnà*. This only explains how the Chinese lexical canon was exposed to such philosophical, ambiguous and arbitrary ideas about life and the world when Buddhism arrived in China and eventually the lexicon became sinicized over the centuries. This process brought up a paradigmatic shift in the semantics of Chinese language by introducing culture-specific and religion-specific concepts and expressions into the Chinese lexical canon. While the *Tripitaka* sutras are closer to Buddhist Sanskrit expressions, the stories from the Tang dynasty contain expressions greatly adhering to an amalgamation of Buddhist and Daoist lexicons. The inclusion of detailed annotations of the essentially Chinese cultural, historical and aesthetic concepts in the translations will not only do a justice to the source text but also will showcase the wonderful contactual (Durisin 107) and intellectual exchanges between China and India. Unlike other translators, I preferred to retain and recreate the cultural spaces the original contained by keeping the Chinese terms intact. By keeping the word *xiuxing* and not translating it as self-cultivation directly in the text, I wanted to transfer the cultural and philosophical context as faithfully as possible.

Amongst several unique experiences with this translation from Chinese to Bengali, the most challenging one was translating the real time events in both the stories. In the Tang dynasty

tale "Dù Zichūn" the time sequence is real, that is, when the story actually occurred. This is written in a form of reporting and therefore the events are described accurately and precisely. The Ming dynasty story is narrated by a third person narrator. The narrator also enjoys the story along with the audience. Therefore he makes it lengthy with ornate descriptions of the personality of the protagonists and their attire, locale and ambience. The change in horizon of expectation of the audience becomes evident in both the stories. The Ming dynasty audience wanted to relish every detail about the story. The demand from an urban public made it necessary and possible for the vernacular literature to become more widespread than ever before.

For example: the Tang dynasty chuánqí reads like this:

> "After he squandered all his fortune, he went to his relatives for seeking aid."

The Ming dynasty *huàběn* portrays it in this way,

> "As you know[1], from his childhood Dù Zichūn was raised on the piles of gold and silver. This made his hands slippery. It was like even for a short while if he does not have silver to spend, he is unable to get on with life."

Translating the psychological development is an interesting part of this translation process. The intricate and detailed description of the psyche of the protagonist Du Zichun and others in "Dù Zichūn Goes Chang'an Three times" reveals extends the narrative duration. Soliloquy and commentary are inserted in the story.

Another noteworthy aspect of this translation exercise is, while translating from classical Chinese into Bengali it becomes a relatively comfortable process as we find similar linguistic suggestivity and context and most of the time it was very easy to find an intimate proximity with the Chinese concepts. The reason is, many of the Chinese words used in these stories are transliteration of the Sanskrit terms and Bengali is a language that mostly borrowed from Sanskrit. Henceforth finding words belonging to the same semantic range is easier in Bengali language than in English. This experience of translating Classical Chinese texts has enable me to discover a way of dealing with both cultural and linguistic translation and find a means that will help the Indian readers avoid dislocation from the cultural and historical milieu.

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The Reality of Assam Tea of the Colonial Period: A Coolie's Struggle as Represented in Literature

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Abstract

Colonialism paved the way for many new changes around the world and tea was one product that was circulated globally owing to colonial trading enterprises. The succulent two leaves and a bud has changed many country's futures forever: especially India and China. With the opium wars going on the British had to meet the European demand for this favourite beverage in some other way and that is the reason they chose the Indian colonials landscape as their realm for growing tea which subsequently started one of the most lucrative and economically benefitting business, but at the same time caused havoc and much destruction among the people of India. The colonial tea plantations made way for inhumane working and living conditions and similarly took a significant part in increasing the import of indentured labourers. This was true for plantations all over India. In this paper, I will focus on literature based on Assam's tea plantations, the state where this tea industry of India started. In this paper, I want to emphasize on the most essential as well as crucial asset of a tea garden-its labourers or the coolies (as the indentured labourers were referred to) and they were viewed both by the Britishers and the Indian authors. This paper explores the condition of the indentured labour system or the coolie system in the context of the tea estates of Assam during the British domination of India by navigating through these three texts- *Bagichar Kuli* (1938) by Labanya Kumar Chowdhury, *Cha Kulir Atma-Kahini* (1901) by Jogendranath Chattopadhyay and *A Tea Planter's Life in Assam* (1884) by George M. Barker. These three texts provide three unique perspectives that further reflects the actual condition of the tea garden workers. These diverse perspectives reflect the various spectrums of life in a tea plantation of Assam rather in any Indian tea plantation. These three texts will further reveal the realities of tea gardens from the perspectives of both the colonisers and the colonized.

Keywords: Indentured labourer, Coolie, Assam, British India, Tea plantation, Colonial period

"Bring me a cup of tea and the Times", these were the first words of Queen Victoria (the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and the Empress of India till her death) after she ascended the throne in 1837. Indeed, tea has been the British people's favourite drink and colonialism paved the way for tea to be marketed to the various corners of the globe. Tea has become very much of a symbol of the Great Britain's domination and its supremacy over the erst of the world. Tea makes Britain looks culturally superior among its peers and among its colonies (Bhadra 5). With tea began a history of political upheavals, annexations, and power. This soothing and refreshing beverage has beguiled people for centuries and has changed the course world history. Tea or *Camellia sinensis* first originated in China and there are many myths regarding its origin. There are Chinese legends as well as Buddhist legends associated with its origin. Scholars believe that tea originated in the south western part of China. Chai, as tea is known in India, is deemed to be the national drink of the country hence tracing its origin to a foreign country almost feels like committing blasphemy. Not only India, but many countries and their cultures are integrally intertwined with the culture of drinking tea. Tea is more than a drink-it is a symbol, an identity. It is an icon of post-independent India. Indians like the Britishers even started writing out

manual for preparing tea and advertising tea. It was not just the British, but when it came to advertising, even the elite Indians were one step ahead (Bhadra 13). The advertisements varied through ages and were well-suited to the Indian diversity. It catered to the pluricultural diverse society of India and from children to old people, everyone was mesmerized by them. This was to increase the selling and production of tea and in turn helped the British planters to continue running their inhuman conditions inside the plantations. Ironically tea on the other hand became very much the symbol of Indian nationalism against British Raj and hence even the Indians promoted the consumption of tea (Bhadra). The capitalist mode of production made tea consumption a necessity. It was promoted very much for the selfish motives of the capitalist, bourgeoisie British Raj. However, the only people left behind among these circuses were the tea garden labourers. In the context of India, even renowned American Indologist, Philip Lutgendorf, said in one of his articles,

> "*Chai, garm chai*!" On my first visit to India in 1971, I regularly succumbed to the railway hawkers' cries ("Tea, hot tea!")1 and acquired an enduring habit—for, like millions of other people, I begin the day with a dose of sweet, strong, and milky tea, infused with the robust "CTC" leaves that (even in Iowa) I obtain from a local Indo-American grocery. But whereas I initially supposed tea-drinking to be as Indian, and perhaps as old, as the Vedas, I have come to know that it is, in the *longue durée* of Indian history, a very recent development; one that (in many parts of the country) did not much precede my first visit, or that even followed it. (Lutgendorf)

In Great Britain also the culture of drinking tea rapidly increased during the 19th century and that led the British to start tea plantations in India as they couldn't control the Chinese tea production and with the opium wars, they had to find a replacement to the Chinese tea production. The colonial abuse continued in the form of the British usurping the local power systems and hierarchies, displacing traditional power structures and established an exploitative power regime in their favour. From causing the opium wars to creating a new industry in India to changing global politics forever, tea has created a cataclysm around the world. The history of the most loved drink in the world is very complex and spread over countries over a millennium of centuries. Apart from the romanticized history there is also a gruesome history of the development of tea plantations around the world and it is related to capitalism and its subsequent effect of migration and indentured labourers. Tea is said to be 'blood tea' by many because of the association of tea plantations with severe labour abuse since the British period. The masters changed, although conditions did not. The blood of many innocent souls has mixed with the soil of the tea plant and as time progresses many aspects of the tea industry has changed for the good, but the living and working conditions of the tea garden workers are yet to grow for the betterment of our society.

The holy grail of Indian tea is Darjeeling tea. However, Assam produces the largest amount of tea. *Camellia assamica* is the indigenous variety of tea that grows in Assam. The other variety, i.e. *Camellia sinensis* which grows in Darjeeling was brought from China. In the present scenario, the tea growing states of India are- Assam, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, West Bengal, Bihar, Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh, Orissa, Uttaranchal, and Tripura.

The first British tea garden was established in the modern-day state of Assam in the year 1837 in the town of Chabua. Robert Bruce, a commander in the first Burmese war, first discovered the *Camellia assamica* strain of tea plant in Assam in 1826. The British Government of India also

formed a committee in the year 1834 for investigating the prospects of cultivating tea in Assam. This experiment proved to be unsuccessful. Later, the Assam Tea Company was formed in 1839. This company is considered as the first tea grower company of India and since its inception Assam has not looked back. This Assam Tea Company was under the corrupt East India Company itself and this made the former to oppress the people of the subcontinent. This oppression manifests itself even to this day apparent in the downtrodden condition of the tea garden labourers. In the beginning, the plantations were run by the local indentured labourers, although labourers were later brought from various parts of India. The adivasis of the area served as the indentured labourers of the tea plantations. They were exploited by the colonial masters to reap maximum benefits by utilising cheap labour. Later, when labour numbers were found to be not sufficient for tea plantations labourers were recruited from other parts of the country mainly the Chota Nagpur plateau region as uprooted labourers would easily obey commands because they will not own any land. Apart from labourers from various adivasi communities, there were labourers from plains or semi-plain areas as well. The heterogenous community of the tea garden helped in developing an intermediary language which allowed the people to converse with each other and this later became the foundation of the tea garden culture of the various plantations of India. The labourers were oppressed previously by the British East India Company and then by the private British businessmen (with the full support of the crown) who created inflexible structures to exploit these labourers. Tea plantations reaped the highest profit possible while exploiting labours as much as possible; from employing labours to the living circumstances of the labours, every facet was done in a manner that will benefit plantation owner. Labour unrest has been a frequent event in the tea gardens. The coolies have gone on strike and opposed the unjust colonial policies and regulations that dominated the tea gardens. However, there was not much change that happened during the colonial period. This inhumane treatment of the labourers made it easier for the British Raj to control parts of Bengal and Assam for a long period. Indentureship was a substitute for slavery. The mass migration and uprooting innocent people from their land caused a havoc in their lives and the host societies as well. The British were clearly thinking only about their economic benefits and not about the lives of these thousands of people who would eventually lose so much to gain a little.

Tea is a familiar theme in both Indian as well as British literature. Nevertheless, the perspective of the British and the Indian authors vary on tea because of their hierarchical position. In this paper, the focus is on both the aspects of the tea labour industry of the colonial period when the British sun was at its zenith in the east. Both the perspective is equally important to understand what exactly happened with the tea garden labourers of the colonial period. This paper will deal with these three texts- *Bagichar Kuli* (1938) by Labanya Kumar Chowdhury, *Cha Kulir Atma-Kahini* (1901) by Jogendranath Chattopadhyay and *Tea Planter's Life in Assam* (1884) by George M. Barker to understand the real challenges and the workings of the tea estates. The focus of this paper is to bring at the forefront how the British and the Indian authors viewed the Coolies of Assam's tea gardens; here Barker himself was a tea planter whereas Chattopadhyay in his text has narrated the experiences of a tea coolie with whom he had interacted once. On the other hand, Chowdhury's text describes not only the life of a coolie but also that of an Indian tea planter who bought the estate from a British planter.

The word coolie originally had different origins. In the British period, labourers were often termed as coolies. It was a negative racial term hinting at the people who used to do menial jobs

or low wage jobs. "Several dictionaries define "coolie" as "an unskilled labourer employed cheaply, especially one brought from Asia." Several also flag it as pejorative. A few go deeper, to qualify it as a term used by Europeans to describe the non-European workers they transported across the globe" (Bahadur xx). The word also referred to men who worked at the port. Later, the word became an umbrella term for any person who did tedious and work. The term was a mislabel and a very much of an offensive term. Indentured labourers migrated from various parts of India to various imperial colonies and within the subcontinent as well. Both these migration type consisted of labourers who were called coolies. In literature as well the term coolies can empower the people who suffered from indentured servitude. Hence, using the term can empower them with a distinct identity; an identity that was once racial but now it can act as providing a sense of unique identity to the indentured labourers.

One of the most important Bangla novels on tea garden coolies named *Bagichar Kuli* was written by Labanya Kumar Chowdhury and was published in the year 1938. Chowdhury who was born in Sylhet and later shifted to Calcutta has weaved a different fabric altogether in his novel. This novel is not only about the coolies but also about the planter-the Indian planter. Deepak, the Indian planter, and his subsequent change in his mindset towards the coolies is one of the major attractions of this novel. This novel sets up the hierarchical chain in a different manner altogether. The draconian labour rules also apply here nevertheless at the top sits an Indian planter not a British planter. Change comes here almost with a gust of wind that shakes the garden from its core. The exploitation of labour is contested by Deepak's well-read and well-travelled friend, Birinchi Rai. Birinchi's Marxian approach towards the labour force of the garden stirred everyone. The other Bangla novel is by Jogendranath Chattopadhyay, who was a very learned novelist. His work *Cha Kulir Atma-Kahini* was published in 1901 and the full title is *Sotyoghotona obolombone rochito cha kulir atma kahini* i.e. based on a true story of a tea coolie's memoir. The novel starts with the author-narrator describing his visit to his maternal house at Baghanda village in the Hooghly district of Bengal, meeting his childhood friend Sarat, then his eventual meeting with Sarat's servant Girishchandra and then Girishchandra narrated his story recalling his life as a tea coolie in Assam. There is a frame tale structure in this novel and the second narrator Girishchandra finishes the novel while narrating about his escape from the tea gardens of Assam and his life after being a tea coolie and his subsequent meeting with the narrator's friend, Sarat. Jogendranath's work brings out the inhuman agonies faced by the coolies through the voice of Girishchandra. The frame tale structure has further helped in bringing out the reality of the coolie's life by handing over the mouthpiece to the coolie-a rare occurrence in life and literature. This novel is both a novel and a memoir and both the genres overlap with each other. This overlapping further helps in justifying the claims of the author that this novel is based on true events. The aforementioned texts are in Bangla while Barker's text is in English. I have not delved deeper into the politics of language while comparing these texts, but mainly on the style and the content. *A Tea Planter's Life in Assam* by George M. Barker was published in the year 1884 when India was yet to become an empire under the British monarchy. In this book he has described everything he could sense from his five senses. From the starting of his journey till a vivid description of his Indian experience till the future of India tea, Barker was the quintessential planter who like many of his contemporaries and successors have intensely captured the British experience of India. Not much is known about Barker, but it can be said from his book that it is more of a travelogue and brings out the 19th century India (especially Assam and Calcutta) through its lucid words. The messy spectacle of

colonial India can be witnessed by any reader of Barker's account. *A Tea Planter's Life in Assam* captures brilliant details of not only cities and towns of India, but also of flora and fauna and natural landscapes. Every description has an objective point of view and therefore while talking about coolies his insensitiveness towards them are reflected very well in his work. There is curiosity and condescension at his tone of writing. The way he refers to the coolies echoes the coloniser's attitude of turning a blind eye towards the sufferings of the colonized.

George M Barker's very factual description of the Indian socio-cultural life reveals the curiosity of the colonizers to learn more about the culture that is very different than theirs and, in this process, more and more 'othering' the colonized culture. In addition, it reveals the tendency of the colonizers to look at everything with a humorous tone that does not include any respect for the colonized Indians. A 'coolie' for him is almost a non-existent, inanimate object. A coolie is not a person, but an object. The tea planter's or the manager's general view is like what Barker's book is all about. They never viewed his workers as humans, but objects to be treated with as much indecency as possible. The colonial masters established the hierarchical position of the master and slave very crudely. The master-slave dichotomy was forcibly imposed upon the coolies. The masters were the have's, and the coolies were the have not's in case of the plantations of Assam. Working for less hours on a very hot day was not allowed to the coolies. They had to remain oblivious to every material pleasure and comfort that life had to offer. They were treated only as labour power satisfying the need of the capitalist Planter Raj.

> Both men and women are lazy, and require a great deal of looking after. Hot days are conducive to this spirit of idleness, and many small parties of coolies have to be routed out from under the grateful shade of the nearest tree, where they are to be found stowed away, enjoying the rest from toil. (Barker 138)

These lines reflect the way the planter's treated their labourers. Neither the physical exhaustion nor the mental exhaustion was considered. The labourers were not given the minimum respect of a human- for the planters they were just coolies. The 'barbarian', 'native', 'savages' were the responsibility of the British planters; they were the uncivilized child whom the British planter would make civilized. The coolies ranked lowest in terms of the 'barbarian' and hence it seemed a colossal responsibility of the British planter to make him a civilized person. The tea gardens become the ideal space for the British to experiment with his own lacking. The wanted to make something of the Indians as they themselves lacked certain qualities that almost drove them thousands of miles away from home to a foreign country in search for a living. The tea gardens were their temporal space through which they could humanize the barbaric natives and in reality, they did that by dehumanizing them.

> The metaphors of cultivation, of gardens, and indeed of the Eden to be planted in the new colony create a template of colonial inscriptions about tea plantations in northeastern India. There was a paradise to be gained, new fields of edenic cultivation: of landscapes to be "settled" and made "human" through a vision of empire and light on a "savage" frontier. So the "gardens" were planted, harnessing people for the hard task of cultivation, making an even, emerald landscape—which to this day remains curiously unpeopled from the distance of the road. The bushes stretch undulating and green, bordering the paddy fields, against the Himalayan foothills (Chatterjee 17).

Although the Bangla novels are written by Indians and henceforth has a more sympathetic understanding towards the other, but at times they also create the self-other binary dichotomy in terms of India's age-old division of society-caste and class. There is a discriminatory tone in the authors voice in *Bagichar Kuli* where at every point he almost judges the coolies and their lifestyle. In the beginning he talks about the coolie girl Moniya and how she is dark but beautiful (Chowdhury 9). This Indian obsession with fair skin and discriminating based on melanin pigments has in part imported from the colonial rulers but was originally present in the country's mindset as well in the hegemonic mythologies surrounding the fair skinned Aryan who is superior and the dark skinned, inferior Dravidian. The inherent racism of biasing against skin colour has been ingrained in our brains Whenever we observe someone who looks or behaves differently, then we start 'othering' that person. This trait of human beings also became one of the foremost reasons for their racist mentality and then to prove their points humans will add up reasons on why dark skin tone is equals to a slave.

> Skin pigmentation plays the role of a regulator of UV-B rays. In tropical Africa, where as per current knowledge the origins of the Homo Sapiens are said to be, the high intensity of UV-B rays led to more production of a compound called melanin to serve as a natural sunscreen and, consequently, darker skin (Tumbe 3) .

This simple concept of melanin leaves people's mind and the most rational and intelligent creature in earth starts behaving like the most irrational and unintelligent one. There is prejudice in Chowdhury's narrative when he says in a disapproving manner about the coolie Bhuluya's several marriages after his daughter Moniya's mother died; the number of times a coolie gets married was viewed in a derogatory manner by the upper caste Hindu society still it approved this system because coolies are supposed to belong to the lower strata (both in caste and class) of the society. Although the upper caste Kulin Brahmins of Bengal and adjoined areas could marry as many times as they wanted. However, recently with the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955, polygamy has been banned. The hypocrisy in the caste system led to the criticizing of the lower caste whereas the upper caste could get away with any amoral and corrupt work. It is very much an upper-caste point of view that is reflecting even in the text that ought to be only about coolies. When it comes to Barker's viewpoint it essentially criticizes the coolies as a race and in Chowdhury's novel the angle of caste politics comes to the forefront. In *Cha Kulir Atma-Kahini* the protagonist Girishchandra introduces us with the various workers of the tea estate where he used to work. He introduces us with the head manager of the estate, Goodman, whom Girishchandra describes as a very vicious person from inside while gorgeous and attractive on the exterior. Girishchandra says any white man (indicative to the British colonial authority) looks beautiful while Goodman was good looking among the whites as well. The earlier reference to the Indian's obsession with the 'fair' skin is once again mirrored in Girishchandra's outlook. "The follies of racism and the solar links with skin pigmentation" (Tumbe 4) are getting finally steeped into people's consciousness, though, this was not the scenario in the colonial period with the colonial controllers always reminding his/her subjects of their imposed inferiority by pointing out their skin colour.

In all the texts we can find the inhuman and treacherous way the sardars (the coolie recruiters as well as their leaders) applied to recruit coolies in the gardens. These texts reflect the socio-political scenario of the Assam tea plantations. Unlike history, in literature, the reflection is provided by describing the way of life of the coolies and not by diagnosing it with in a very

materialist sense. These texts not only lend credibility to the coolie's life and they are not just objects to be treated or research about. They are human beings whose lives changed in a mass movement of indenture. In the indenture labour system, the coolies were recruited from various villages near the plantations or from the adivasi villages of Chota Nagpur plateau. They were forced into the indentured labour system or brought into it precariously. They were given false hopes and promises of a good life and job and the reality would hit them when they were already deep into trouble and the girmit (corrupted term for the English word agreement) would not let them leave the plantations. This system enforced itself unto thousands of Indians who were transported to various parts of British colonies all over the world and they were lured into the trap with the offer for a better life that they never got anyway. The middlemen, recruiting agents like sardars and arkathis would ensure the stringent system of indenture keep alive. They were the one to blame initially as they were responsible in trapping people and make them lose their home and identity. Both the private and government form of recruiting went on that allowed indentured servitude to live for a long time. The sardari system trapped innocent villagers into its web and the local markets were the places where the arkathi would honeytrap common village folks. Even married women and children were kidnapped from the Chota Nagpur region and the number of arkathis simultaneously increased during this period (Behal 78). These people (under the sardari system) would do such atrocious acts to earn some wages, but in reality, all they did was create a mass movement of indenture system that changed the lives of thousands and even their own. They were just puppets in the hand of the imperial rulers and they happily played their role without giving a care about their own kin and countrymen. Home became a complex concept for the coolies, and they struggled to cope with their new life. In Chattopadhyay's *Cha Kulir Atma-Kahini,* Girishchandra was lured into the tea plantations of Assam by his own relative. Girishchandra himself was innocent at all as he agreed to help the recruiting agent, an arkathi, Umeshchandra (his sister's husband) to help with reciting coolie men and women from his own village. However, little did he know that he will himself be sold off as a coolie by his own relative. Chowdhury's novel *Bagichar Kuli* also refers to this same trap that the poverty-stricken villagers of India face that ultimately lured them into the plantations. Deepak's servant and the head coolie of Kalyanpur, Bhuluya was born and bred in the tea garden although his parents were brought from some remote village of Bihar by the arkathis in a similar misleading manner. Coming back to Barker's work, *A Tea Planter's Life in Assam,* Barker has described with details how coolies are recruited for the plantations- "either to recruit or obtain them through the Government agents in Calcutta" (Barker 154). Barker described in detail the way recruiting agents would gain people's trust and then tempted them to work in the tea plantations. The benefits the recruiter reaped was much more than any coolie can gain just by working in a plantation. Both Chattopadhyay's Cha Kulir

> A recruiter who has found his men returns with them to his garden, assumes a higher place, has his pay raised, and bears himself like the successful man that he is, looking forward with certainty to the time when he shall again be paid for five or six months' idleness. (Barker 156)

The same benefits were availed by Girishchandra's sister's husband, Umeshchandra by deceiving his own family member in Chowdhury's novel. The labourers will become a guinea pig of the indentured labour experiment out of their sheer willingness to migrate to distant lands for work opportunities. The bonded coolies under indentureship are one of the most prominent examples of global inequalities under the British Raj. When it comes to indentureship, there is a blurred

boundary between forced migration and voluntary migration. The coolies were coaxed into taking up bondage and rarely were they forced. However, on entering indentureship they would realize what is really going on with this form of labour recruitment. Both *Bagichar Kuli* and *Cha Kulir Atma-Kahini* unfolds this dilemma. Be it Girishchandra's acquaintances and friends in the former text or the coolies working under Deepak in the latter text, they themselves got entangled into indentureship. However, it was beyond their understanding as to what was really happening. Hence, they are not to be blamed, but the sardars and also the arkathis are to be blamed. Indentured servitude in this context can be termed as voluntary slavery. However, there were instances of both kidnapping and forced slavery found in the historical context (Tappe and Lindner 15).

The way the coolies were transported by trains and steamers under the middleman or the recruiting agent's supervision is mentioned in all the texts. A doctor will also accompany them to make sure the coolies survive the hard journey. In each of the texts we find the description of how the steamers will be filled coolies from various parts of the country and how they will struggle for some space inside the steamer. Coolies were a part of the global trade network that mainly operated along water bodies and hence the transportation of coolies via steamers of other forms of waterborne vessels becomes very important. While in Chowdhury's and Chattopadhyay's work we can see how the events takes place inside the steamer or the train, in Barker's travelogue like guidebook we can find minute details of coolie life inside a steamer-from what the coolies were wearing to their food habits to the games they played while travelling by a steamer. In *Cha Kulir Atma-Kahini*, so many important events unfold inside the steamer- from Girishchandra getting cheated by his own relative to his decision of staying with his friends as a coolie while he himself was not registered by the officer and he could easily escape, but his conscience didn't let him leave his friends whom he had try to deceive earlier. In *Bagichar Kuli*, Bodlu and Moniya, two former coolies of the same estate met in a steamer and Bodlu's life will change for better from this journey. The pitiful condition of the coolies travelling by the steamer are also recorded while this event unfolds. As per Baker, he has written the condition of coolies travelling inside the steamer in a very descriptive and objective manner as if he is describing a "It does not occur to the planter, perhaps, that in the disorderly ship hold are the future workers of his plantation realm, the subjects of his fiefdom" (Chatterjee 73).

Physical punishment of the coolies was a very common place occurrence inside the plantations. Cruelty reached its zenith inside the plantations and the treatment of the coolies by the managers or supervisors. The body of the coolie was treated as an object that can be thrashed or flogged anytime. The planters believed they were reinforcing discipline by hurling abusive languages or by beating the coolies. Barker said, "Various forms of punishment-from a good thrashing to making him do two or three times the amount over again-are inflicted…" (Barker 131). Apparently, these forms of punishments seemed normal for the British planter. Whereas Chattopadhyay's protagonist Girishchandra said how he got beaten by the senior officer while he was asking for the money order that his family has sent for him. The life of the coolies was dictated by these planters, managers, supervisors etc. and the treatment bestowed upon them was more than what a prisoner bear during his jail time (Chattopadhyay 54). In Chowdhury's *Bagichar Kuli*, the young planter, Deepak, was touched for the first time when one coolie woman was beaten by a supervisor of the garden and in these circumstances, he recalled the other dreadful events that have transpired in the plantation in the past; how the original British owner, Johnson, kicked one

pregnant woman and she died while giving birth to her still born baby or how his own father broke the tooth of one coolie out of anger (Chowdhury 19). All these forms of extreme torture were widespread among the plantation managers and their subordinates. The body of the coolie is separated from the mind of the coolie and therefore such horrendous inflictions of pain could survive among the tea gardens. On another note, the mind of the coolie was never given any importance; its existence never taken into account- the reason was both racial (in case of Barker) and hierarchical (in case of Deepak). Thus, 'disciplinary power' is consciously or subconsciously practiced upon the body of the coolies to produce 'docile bodies' that will maintain the hierarchical chain and the coolies could be utilised to obtain maximum benefits for the planters. These 'docile bodies' will further be easy to control and they can be useful to the colonial masters. The body becomes the site through where the regimes of power enter inside. The body of the coolies "now serves as an instrument or intermediary: if one intervenes upon it to imprison it, or to make it work, it is in order to deprive the individual of a liberty that is regarded both as a right and as property." (Foucault 11)

The coercive strategies employed by the colonisers helped in creating divide among the Indians. The famous divide and rule policy were employed by the British planters in the tea garden to ensure the coolies can never revolt. In *Bagichar Kuli*, we can see how Deepak along with his companions, Chhaya and Birinchi tries to set up an organisation for the coolies that will improve their living conditions and will transfer a certain amount of power that can eb exercised by the coolies for their rights. However, some British planters from nearby tea estates employed men to create divide among the coolies of Kalyanpur and these men succeeded when certain coolies like Modhu sardar revolted against the Indian planter, Deepak, and his companion's honest initiative. At the same time the British planter, Thomas, of a nearby garden named Firingimara, along with others caused mayhem and confusion among the coolies when all the coolies were gathered for a meeting called Deepak and his associates. The destruction cause by the colonial police and the army killed many including Deepak's close ally, coolie Bhuluya. The colonial power structures at every level were controlled by the British in ordre to reign over the Indian people. In *Cha Kulir Atma-Kahini*, one coolie woman Rebati had affair with Sarada, Girishchandra's close friend with whom the latter has come to the tea garden. Rebati used to live under the protection of one sardar and this affair created a stir among the coolies and the sardar made the plantation manager punish Sarada mercilessly for his illicit affair. The coolies used to turn against each other when the question of a woman used to arise, and the British authority took advantage of this situation to keep a tab on them. The sardari system also reflects the material conditions of life of the coolies inside the tea gardens. The sardar controlling everything from recruitment to punishing the coolies ensured that the coolies never had a proper life. However, Barker in his *A Tea Planter's Life in Assam,* said that the planter or the manager sahib (a colonial term for calling the 'white' European man) had to keep much caution while judging the coolies and their disputes and they had to exercise diplomacy so that they can keep in control both the complainant. However, the most gripping example of destroying the indigenous people occurred at the hands of the sardars or managers or the planters regarding the women. Women suffered multiple forms of oppression mainly because of their gender and because they were the colonial subjects. There are several instances found in these three texts regarding the exploitation faced by women in the realm of the tea plantations. Barker has described the Indian women in a curious way- he has mentioned their love for silver jewellery, their long-plaited hair and their swaying gait that seems charming in the eyes of the

British. There is a tone of objectification in his voice. The coolie woman occupies the lowest rung of society and she is whom Spivak calls the 'subaltern' i.e. the woman who has no space from where she can provide her testimony neither she has a platform from where she can speak. She is squeezed between the patriarchy of her own society and culture and imperialist ideas. Even in the other two novels by Chowdhury and Chattopadhyay, major form of oppression is implemented on women. In *Bagichar Kuli* there are many instances where women are tortured by both their husbands and the Indian garden managers and then again by the British planters. In case of Moniya, as mentioned above, she was caned by the garden supervisor because she refused to bed him and Phoolmoni, another coolie woman, was tortured by her husband every night when he got drunk. There are numerous instances where even the coolie man and woman believe it to be natural and therefore, they revolted against Birinchi when he tried to stop the alcoholism rampant among the coolie communities. Alcohol and other intoxicants were taken regularly by the coolies as it helped them to forget their wretched existence and gave them enough energy to provide the labour their planters wanted from them. The intoxicants become their way of escaping their hard reality; be it Girishchandra or Bodlu, everyone relies on alcohol or other intoxicants. Even the planters or managers would get drunk and abuse the coolie woman as evident in Phoolmoni's assault by a British manager in Firingimara tea estate. (Chowdhury 115) While from Barker's perspective, "love of drink" was one of the curses that was prevalent among the coolies. If intoxicant was a curse of the coolies, then unnatural lust towards the women coolies was a curse of the British planter. In *Cha Kulir Atma-Kahini,* two young coolie companions of Girishchandra and his friend Sarada, Sundori and Gopi, were taken by the British sahib and they got forever detached from their friends although their living conditions drastically improved. It was commonplace occurrence to have one's living condition improved in return of sexual favour.

Filled with colonial superiority of race and class even Barker showed concern towards the treatment of the coolies and the whole immigration system. In his words, "No; there are several screws loose in the system of immigration, which require an immense amount of rectifying, and the sooner a commission of inquiry, or some less ponderous and more quickly moved body, is appointed to examine into the existing shortcomings of the present working of the system, the better for all parties…In thus encouraging willing labourers to be independent, and to seek for their own means of obtaining a livelihood, the authorities would benefit the whole India race, and prevent those disastrous famines that are for ever recurring, besides assisting an industry in which voluntary labourers are badly wanted." (Barker 169, 170) The same sentiment is echoed in a fiercer tone in Birinchi's conversation with Chhaya. Birinchi said how to build a new structure by destroying the old "imarot" they need to follow the three traits of "organisation, revolution and reconstruction" (Chowdhury 106). Birinchi wanted to bring revolution into the garden by implying his ideologies he learnt during his travels to Europe and Russia. This change was not beneficial for the European planters and this made them even arrest Birinchi. Change does not always come easily and most of the planters feared any change as it would decrease their chance of making profits by wringing the energy out of innocent men, women, and children. The plantation system at the same time made the children carry out labour work. This was another reason why the children would pick up intoxicants at a young age and by the time they will turn adults they will become alcoholic or addicted to other drugs. *Cha Kulir Atma-Kahini* describes the adventure filled life of Girishchandra who did not want to be a coolie but then again circumstances ensnared him, and he had to face many atrocities in the tea garden and even while he fled from the garden his

problems did not end. Girishchandra talks about how coolie system needs to change; the cruelty of the *sahibs* underneath the "bahyik soundoryo" i.e., external beauty there was not a single ounce of humanity left. This accidental trap made him realize the state of the tea plantations and through him, we, the readers, are also facing the reality of the tea plantations of the colonial period.

Colonialism bought a lot of positive changes in the Indian subcontinent in the form of education, infrastructure, technology and much more and these changes mainly influenced the urban elite not much the rural impoverished population. Moreover, the indentured labourers suffered instead of gaining from the colonial enterprise. The tea associations and organizations extracted resources from the indigenous population of the country for their selfish advantages. Reading from a perspective of the once colonized one need to keep this detail in mind. Analysing the Assam tea plantation's socio-politico-cultural condition can be done by comprehending the severity of the situation formerly under the Company Rule and latter under the all endorsing supervision of the Crown. This approach helps in understanding the greater issue of the effects of colonialism on the Indian subcontinent. There was a time when people would look forward to going to Assam to live their dream and Assam disappointed them and gradually the people stopped dreaming. After years of getting freedom from British regime finally the day must come when a person who sings "chol mini assam jabo?" can ultimately fulfil his/her dream and Assam can keep its promise of providing opportunities and not misery.

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Locating *Thailand* in Early 20th Century Bengali Travel Writing*:* Towards an Anti-Indianised History of Southeast Asia

Pratim Das

Abstract

Bengali Travel writing on Thailand historicizes cultural interaction between Thailand and Bengal and it creates a counter narrative against the historical approach of the Bengali nationalist historians. Bengal and Thailand have a long history of cultural exchanges. In ancient times, relations between India and Southeast Asia reached a new dimension with the spread of Hindu-Buddhist ideology. India had a strong influence on the various linguistic and literary traditions of Thailand. Since ancient times, epic such as *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, and the *Panchatantra* (animal stories) or the *Jataka* stories migrated to the land of Siam and took new forms subsequently. Especially, *Ramkien* can be mentioned here which is the national Epic of Thailand. Thailand was well connected with Bengal since ancient times and instances of their trade exchanges is very much prevalent. During the colonial rule, a group of Bengali historians and scholars became particularly interested in Southeast Asia, including Thailand. The spread of nationalist ideology led the Bengalis to write a new history and the Bengalis envisioned Southeast Asia as part of Greater India. Nevertheless, their representation of Thailand and the rest of Southeast Asia was coloured by nationalist thinking. With the establishment of *Greater India Society (1926)* an attempt has been made to write a new history of India to reclaim the antiquity of Indian civilization. In addition, this new national imagination created an interest among Bengali people about neighbouring countries. As a result, travel to Southeast Asia increased and a number of travel writings emerged in the sphere of Bengali literature. But these travel writings, based on travel experiences in neighboring countries, actually challenged this nationalist project of the *Greater India Society (1926)*. This paper will try to explore an alternative history through Bengali travel writing on Thailand which was completely different from the propaganda of the Greater India Society. By drawing upon Nationalist framework of history this paper will present an anti-Indianised history of Thailand. This paper will also challenge the nationalist appropriation Bengali nationalist scholars and how Bengali travel writings on Thailand contested against this Indianised approach of Bengali nationalist historians.

Keywords: Bengali Travel Writing, Thailand, Southeast Asia, Greater India Society

The history of Southeast Asian exchanges with India is about two thousand years' old. Thailand and India have a complex relationship since ancient times and India has a significant influence on Thai culture. Indian migration to Thailand was one of the main reasons for India's influence on Thailand. Traces of Indian immigration can be found throughout present-day Thailand dating back to the early Christian era. The spread of Indian culture in Southeast Asia began with maritime and mainland trade. India maintained contact with Southeast Asia through both waterways and land. The geographical location of Bengal widened the way of Indian communication with Southeast Asia. Bengal's position was one of the most important points in maintaining contact with Southeast Asia. Due to this advantage of geographical location, trade between Bengal and Southeast Asia on both land and sea has increased since ancient times. Bengal's unique geographical location along with the sea routes has made it a gateway of the Southeast and it became an important point of connection between India and the mainland and maritime Southeast Asia. These trade routes

between South and Southeast Asia have an immense contribution to India's cultural interaction with countries like Burma, Thailand, Malayasia, etc. Through these commercial trade routes, it became possible for the Bengalis to connect with their nearest neighbors. Since ancient times, the trade relations between Bengal and the Indian subcontinent, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, and other parts of China were very much prevalent. Greco-Roman literature gives us an account of this trade in the Gangetic plains and waterways. According to the book *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, written in 60 AD, shows that there was a port called Ganga at that time and this port was famous for its aromatic oils and cotton cloth. This same port is also mentioned in the book of the famous historian and oriental scholar Nihar Ranjan Roy. Nihar Ranjan Roy in his book *Bangalir Itihas; Adi Parba(1949)* According to Nihar Ranjan Roy, the name of this port was Gangabandar which have been used for maritime trade. (Ray 98) Nihar Ranjan Roy's book gives a detailed account of the commercial and cultural relations of Bengal with other provinces. The history of India's contact with Thailand, especially the Bengalis, is also known from the accounts of these historians. Haroun-er-Rashid, historian from Bangladesh has claimed that Thailand's relationship with Bengal is long-standing. According to him, Bengal had deep connection with Thailand from the third century BC and he traced the routes of communication between them. (Haroun-er-Rashid 28) On the other side contemporary historians such as Ranabir Chakravarti in his Book *Trade in Early India* (2004) argued that evidence of horse trading depicts the long time contact between Bengal and Southeast Asia. Analyzing the archaeological specimens found at Chandraketugarh, Chakravarti claimed horse trading business rose to prominence during that time and Kharosthi-Brahmi inscriptions from *Chandraketugarh,* Thailand and Bali bears witness that coastal Bengal had connections with Thailand, Bali etc. (Alam 102) Even Suvarnabhumi one of the earlier name associated with Thailand was also a port. Suvarnabhumi was an important point in sea trade and this port was well connected with Ceylon, Muscat port etc. It is not difficult to infer from this evidence that Thailand's exchange with Bengal was long overdue.

Thai Bengal Connection in Ancient Times

Thai Bengal interaction or the cultural tie between Thai and Bengal can be traced from early age. Numerous inscriptions such as Kalyani inscriptions bears the evidence of the role of Bengal in commercial and religious-cultural activities in Southeast Asia. Even in terms of scripts both provinces have some striking similarity. Historians also gave examples about the similarities of the Bengali script with the Thai script to explain the cultural affinity between the two countries. Haroun er Rashid states with examples of similarities in the pronunciation of the two scripts that the Brahmi script was prevalent in Bangla during the Gupta period and it had a profound effect on other contemporary and traditional scripts in Southeast Asia. History also shows that the ancient Shailendra dynasty of Thailand had regular contact with Bangla. Evidence of this connection with royal family can be found in Kelaruk inscriptions. King Dharanindra of Shailendra dynasty had a Bengali *Rajguru* or head priest in his court and his name was Kumaraghosa. According to Akasadul Alam, it is said that Kumaraghosa came from a place named Gauda Dvipa and from this name it can be assumed that the inscriptions is referring her Gaudbanga which is now the Bengal. (Alam 103) At that time Bengali Hindu *Rajguru* was appointed in the royal courts of different countries of Southeast Asia. In this context we can later mention the royal court of Burma where another Bengali Rajguru named Radhikanath was appointed. Even, popularity of Mahayana Buddhism in Southeast Asia also strengthened Thailand's connection with Bengal. The various Buddhist inscriptions found in Malay, Java, Cambodia, etc., give details of how Buddhism

spread in this region and it also depicts the role and influence of Pal dynasty in this propagation. This exchange also had an impact on art and architecture of Thailand. Through the bronze statues of Phong-Tuk and Khorat or the unique cruciform pattern of the temple architecture can be mentioned here in this context.

Thai-Bengal Relation during British Rule

During the British rule, Bengal maintained various contacts with Thailand. In this context, it should be kept in mind that Burma was a British colony during that time. Being a close neighbour of Burma, Thailand had a strong link with the British at that time and there have been several instances of the arrival of a British envoy in the Thai royal court. For example, in 1825, the East India Company sent its envoy Henry Burney to Siam's royal court to discuss trade and to determine the border between Burma and Siam. During the British Raj, Calcutta was the capital of British India and Calcutta played an important role in the Siam-India connection. Mr. Apirat Sugondhabhirom, Minister and Deputy Chief of Mission of the Royal Thai Embassy, New Delhi has commented about this connection:

> ……during the reign of King Phutthaloetla Naphalai or King Rama II of the Chakri Dynasty (Bangkok era), an English envoy by the name of John Crawfurd went to the royal Siamese court in 1821, commissioned by "the ruler of Bangkala" (i.e. Marquis Hasting, the then Governor-General of India) to go over to promote ties with Siam. Later in 1872, one of the most illustrated Kings of Siam, King Chulalongkorn the Great or Rama V, – the Great-Grandfather of the present king, came to visit Calcutta (from 12 – 22 January and then from 22 – 26 February) as a young ruler early in his reign, wishing to learn about the British modern way of public administration. (Sugondhabhirom)

The details of the king's arrival in Calcutta are found in the article published by the Thai Embassy. King Chulalongkorn meeting with the Viceroy, Lord Mayo and his visit to jute mill and other places highlights the history of Thai-Bengal interactions.

Thailand also had a significant contribution in Indian freedom movement. The Gadar Party of Punjab had a direct connection with Siam during the British rule. The Gadar Party played a major role in the Indian independence movement. With the help of this branch of Gadar Party, Bengali revolutionary Rashbehari Bose later founded the Indian Independence League. Also, in this context of Bengal's interaction with Thailand the name of Prafulla Kumar Sen can be mentioned here, who later became an ascetic and became known as Swami Satyananda Puri. His ashram was the heart of Bengali and Indian culture in Thailand. He played an important role in organizing the Indian independence movement in Thailand. (Charoenpong) This is how interaction between Thailand and India happened during the British rule in India.

Early Bengali Writings on Southeast Asia: An Indianist Approach

The interaction between India and its neighbouring Southeast Asia from the second half of the nineteenth century has been an important subject of research for Indian historians. Tracing the cultural influence of India in the field of art, architecture, religion, language of Southeast Asia is called Indianization. Contemporary historians considered Indian immigration to Southeast Asia

is one major aspects of Indianization. Lipi Ghosh and Kanokwan Jayadat in their article *Thai Language and Literature: Glimpses of Indian Influence (2016)* presented three theories of this Indianization:

> There is the first Kshatriya theory, which presumes that Indian cultural expansion was to the seminal influence of the Indian warriors and conquerors, who migrated in large numbers to Southeast Asia. Secondly, the vaisya theory postulates that Indian cultural diffusion began with traders, who intermarried with local women and impressed the indigenous people with their goods and culture. The third theory, commonly known as brahmana theory, accorded primacy to the local initiative: native port patricians and rulers enlisted the service of brahmans to buttress their political authority through Hindu ceremonies and rituals. (Jayadat 138)

Since early twentieth century a trend is emerged among the Indian historians where they started interpreting and exploring India's connection with Southeast Asia from a biased perspective. Their approach towards this interpretation is very India-centric and they tend to believe that it is India that shaped Southeast Asia. But why this growing concern of Indian people about Southeast Asia. The probable answer could be the rise or the advent of nationalistic consciousness. The Indian nationalist movement played a major role in this upheaval. Historians had a hidden agenda of building its own history with Southeast Asia. The main purpose of this nationalist historiography was to prove the antiquity of Indian civilization and at the same time to prove that Indian civilization is far ahead of Western civilization. Bengalis played a major role in writing this nationalist history at that time. At that time, a society emerged in Bengal called the Greater India Society. Caroline Stolte and Harald Fischer Tine in their article *Imagining Asia in India: Nationalism and Internationalism (ca. 1905-1940)* have claimed that-

> "The members of the Greater India Society, established in Calcutta in 1926, were without doubt inspired by Tagore 's concept of Asia, but developed it in another direction. Two of its founders shared an exceptional academic background, which was crucial for their views on Asia." (Fischer-Tine 82)

To further this argument on Greater India Society they have mentioned some of the works of Indian nationalist historians such as Kalidas Nag, P. C. Bagchi and lastly R. C. Majumdar and they have explained how imagination of Southeast Asia were negotiated in history book by Bengali nationalist historians. The establishment of this Greater Indian Society and its workings were particularly well received by a number of Bengali intellectuals of that time. Rabindranath Tagore himself was a supporter of the vision of this greater India. He himself wrote an essay called *Brihattara Bharat* (1937) which was later compiled in *Kalantar* and there he expressed the view that all Indians should be engaged in discovering the spirit of the nation in a wide arena. (Tagore 301) Acharya Sunitikumar Chattopadhyay also had the same idea and much like nationalist historians, preached about the antiquity of Indian civilization and idea of greater India in his writings. In his essay *Hindu Sabhyatar Pattan(1944),* he argued that the Hindu civilization of India was ancient than the rest. In an another essay of his book *Bharat Sasngskriti(1944)*, he argued that India's imagination remains incomplete without understanding the cultural exchanges that have existed in India and Southeast Asia since ancient times. (Chatterjee 88) Even, Bengali scholar Dinesh Chandra Sen's

Brihat Banga (1935) presented the same idea and followed the footsteps of nationalist historians. He himself was engaged in writing this nationalist history by completely denying all the historical narratives and books written earlier. In the introduction to his book, he criticizes the history of Bengal written by Muslims. He further added that only the details of war, bloodshed and victories of Muslim kings can be found in these books. According to Sen, these history books did not even mention the history of the development of Bengalis. (Sen 7) Needless to say, Dinesh Chandra Sen also started writing a nationalist history with the Bengalis and that history was infused with the idea of a greater India. The members of the Greater India Society were deeply inspired by the thoughts of all these Bengali scholars.

One of the main activities of this society was to propagate and write about Indian nationalist ideology. Their India-centric approach towards writing the national history gave birth of the concept of greater India. In order to establish superiority of Indian Imperialism Bengali historians claimed that long before contact with Europe, India was not only an advanced civilization, but also a hegemonic and civilized power in Asia. Though some scholars argued that the idea of greater India came into being much before the birth of Greater India Society. In this context Bhaswati Mukhopadhyay has argued that:

> "As early as in 1849, *Prachin Hindudiger Samudrayatra* by Akshay Kumar Dutta was published in Tattabodhini. Long before the formation of the Greater India Society, there was the idea of India expanding outward. The nationalist movement in India played an important role in Indian writing on Southeast Asia." (Mukhopadhyay 2)

The main purpose of Bengali historians was asserting the superiority of Indian civilization and propagate the national pride. However, this nationalistic thinking came from Europe. The idea came from European Indologists and it had a profound effect on the Indian historians in defining the life and languages, artistic forms of Southeast Asia. Bengali nationalist historians like R.C.Majumder , Radha Kumud Mookherjee opined that the Indians influenced every aspect of Southeast Asian culture. Nationalist pundits held the view that Southeast Asia was plunged into the darkness of barbarism until it encountered Indian civilization. These historians included Southeast Asia as an Indian Colony and referred it as a part of greater India. Historian R.C. Majumder in his book *Suvarnadvipa: Ancient Indian Colonies in the Far East (1937)* has expressed the same attitude about this issue. According to him, Southeast Asia is just a mere colony of India. (Majumder 68). This group of Bengali historians placed more emphasis on finding Indian elements in the art and culture of Southeast Asia, and the role of Southeast Asia was presented in such a way that they were mere receivers. They strongly rejected the notion of indigenous Southeast Asian cultures. Historians also did not want to give any credit to the locals for the famous architecture of Southeast Asia. Such as Borbudur, one of the best architectures of Southeast Asia is described as best architectural specimens of the Gupta period. Overall, it appears that the nationalist Bengali historians emphasized how they had civilized the people of Southeast Asia and ignored the process of evolution of their own indigenous cultures. In a nutshell it can be said that this history of Southeast Asia was coloured by the assumptions made by Nationalistic historians and it was written within the Indian nationalist framework. In this context Arun Chandra Dutta's *Prachyer Jagaran (1932)* can be named also. However, it would be wrong to say that only Bengali scholars had this attitude. Oriental Scholars had the same attitude towards the Southeast Asia. From the

writings of Bengali Nationalist historians as well oriental scholars one thing is clear that they are considering Southeast Asia as sister colonies of India and for this attitude the dialogue between South Asia and Southeast Asia was one sided. It can be assumed here that these historians had the same attitude towards Thailand also. Though, it was the only country which did not accept the subjugation of any foreign power.

Bengali Travel Writing on Thailand: An Anti-Indianised Approach

Indianization of Southeast Asia was one of the major trends among the Bengali people during the 19th and early 20th century. However, it would be wrong to claim that everyone had the same attitude towards it. Many rejected the notion that Indian influence was responsible for the early socio-economic development of Southeast Asia. Even historians like Himanshu Bhushan Sarkar, who was initially a supporter of Indianization theory, expressed a different opinion later. Whatever theory was put forward in this context; it was a one-way approach. Bengali historians have repeatedly explained Southeast Asia by some of their conventional ideas or through some preconceived notion and here lies the significance of the Bengali travel writing written about different countries of Southeast Asia. Bengali travel writing on Southeast Asia represents an alternative narrative which is different than the Indianised narratives of Bengali historians. During the nineteenth century along with other literary genres such as novel, autobiography etc. travelogue as a literary genre emerged in Bengali literature. Though, this whole genre is not at all alien to Bengali people. Before the arrival of the British in India, travel literature existed in Bengali literature. Bengalis were differently acquainted with this literary genre. This literary genre was very popular among the Bengalis. Initially, the description of travel that we find in Bengali literature was a journey somewhere for religious and spiritual reasons. The concept of traveling to a new country without any intention or any religious and spiritual purpose came much later in Bengal. Besides there was an urge among the traveller also and that is align their own experience with the description written on the history book. In this way, Bengali travel writing presented another narrative about our neighbour outside the history. Sarvani Gooptu in her article identifies travel writing as an important source of Indian History. With the advent of nationalistic thought in Bengal in 19th century, the rise and spread of education among Bengalis increased. At the same time interest in foreign countries and reading travel stories about them became one of the exciting elements of Bengali pastime. She states:

> The first popular travel writings in the Bengali magazines were in western countries but gradually from the beginning of the 20th century, the focus came to be Asia. This was related to a sense of nationalism that developed in most of the Asian lands. In Bengal, the discovery of Indian political and cultural influence in south and southeast Asia through the archaeological and philological discoveries of the French and German scholars invoked a deep pride and nationalistic fervour. (Gooptu 397)

This is especially true in the case of Southeast Asia. Bengali travel writing about Southeast Asia denies the approaches made by Bengali nationalistic historians and presents to us a different picture in front of us. In these travel writings Southeast Asia is presented in a new manner, not just a mere miniature form of Indian civilizations. Early Bengali travel writing on Thailand such as *Rabindra Sangame Dwipamay Bharat O Shyamdesh (1960)* offers an alternative history of Thailand.

Though, it was not completely free from the nationalistic perspective. However, this travel writing has refuted many statements of Bengali historians. Similarly, the same thing can be noticed in other Bengali travel writings too. Bengali authors such as Bimal Mukherjee, Ramnath Biswas rejected nationalist approach in their writing. In their description, Thailand is not just a distant cousin or a sister colony of India. They acknowledged Thailand's own individual identity and its indigenous culture.

Rabindra Sangame Dwipamoy Bharat O Shyamdesh: Tagore's Voyage to the Thailand

One of the foremost Bengali travel writing about Thailand is *Rabindra Sangame Dwipamay Bharat O ShyamDesh (1960)*. The details of Rabindranath Tagore's travels to various countries in Southeast Asia can be found in this travelogue. Shri Sunitikumar Chattapadhyay recorded Rabindranath's experience of traveling to Southeast Asia including Thailand in 1927. Despite ancient interactions between Thailand and India, Bengali people always have a special spot for Thailand even during the British rule and one can assume the reason for Tagore's interest and curiosity about this province. Besides, another intention was there. Tagore visited to Thailand with an intention to raise money for Visva-Bharati. Suniti Kumar Chaterjee's travel writing contained every detail information of Tagore's travel. Although this travel writing did not include Thailand at the beginning. It is worth noting that Thailand has been given a separate place here and it was added in the second edition.

Now from the title of the book one thing is clearly evident that Acharya Suniti Kumar Chatterjee here referring Southeast Asia as "Dwipamay Bharat" or Islands of India. So, it may seem natural that Suniti Chatterjee has the same attitude as the Bengali historians. Actually, it was Tagore who had a much bigger role than Sunitikumar Chatterjee in imagining Southeast Asia as part of Greater India. Tagore had a close affinity towards Greater India Society. He was one of the main patrons of this society and even inaugurated the Society's Journal. In the foreword of the Journal he even expressed his opinion about the relevance of travelling:

> To know my country in truth one has to travel to that age when she realized her soul ,and thus transcended her physical boundaries; when she reveals her being in a radiant magnanimity which illuminated the Eastern horizon making her recognized as their own by those in alien shores who were awakened into a great surprise of life and rot now where she has withdrawn herself within a narrow barrier of obscurity, into a misery pride of exclusiveness, into a poverty of mind that durably revolves round itself in an unmeaning repetition of a past that has lost its light and has no message so the pilgrims of the future.(Tagore 1)

In addition to Tagore's desire for travel it is evident from the abovementioned lines that it is Tagore who speaks of the relevance of traveling to imagine a Nation beyond its physical boundaries. However, unlike nationalist historians, however, Tagore did not believe that Southeast Asia was created only because of migration from India. Although he imagined the countries of Southeast Asia as part of greater India, but he did not deny their heritage and individuality. The main purpose of his visit was to explore the influence of ancient Indian culture in Southeast Asia and how Indian culture blended with Southeast Asian culture to give birth to a hybrid culture. At

the same time, he was well-versed in the culture of Thailand at the time and did not have the same views of nationalist historians, as evidenced by his request to visit Ayutthaya and Lopburi. These two cities were the capitals of the ancient kings of Siam and Khom. Sawitree Charoenpong in her article *Rabindranath Tagore in Thailand: His Visit and its impact* has stated that Tagore has considerable knowledge of Siamese history and the relations between India and Siam. His request to visit Ayuthia which is named after the Ayodhya and ancient town Lopburi which has some of the impressive temples and architecture of Khom people depicts that how much admiration Tagore had for this ancient culture. (Charoenpong) One of his aims was to open India's doors to the world. He called for international cooperation in arts, education, and culture. He was steadfast in his pursuit of cultural exchanges and international coexistence. During his stay in Thailand in an interview with Siam Observer Tagore expressed his thought upon this:

> ……My aim is the unity of man…… to bring about the internationalism of education. You may ask why it is that I have sought to develop my scheme in India. The answer is that India in her long history has been a cultural centre. ..India therefore, is the centre for such an institution that aims at the unity of man, a unity of cultures, Eastern and Western, so necessary if the various civilisations are have to peace.(Observer 3)

Instead of narrow patriotic nationalism of Bengali historians Tagore expressed his opinion about Indo-Asian Humanism. He was particularly influenced by the idea of international co-existence and he wanted to find the unity between the differences. So, his description of Thailand is in stark contrast to that of extremist nationalist historians. Even the same thing is reiterated in Tagore's *Java Jatrir Patra (1929).* He acknowledged the process of localization which was previously rejected by Indian historians. He mentioned the case of that people of Southeast Asia accepted some of the elements of the Indian culture but Indigenous element also there. Tagore advocated for the localization of Indian culture in *JavaJatrir Patra* instead of accepting the theory of Indianization (Tagore 6) The same opinion is reflected in the travel writing of Sunitikumar Chatterjee. He also advocated for the theory of localization of this culture or the fusion culture of Southeast Asia which is developed in the presence of Indian culture. It is important to remember that China had an equal contribution to Thai culture, not just India. Nationalist historians never acknowledge that. In Dwipamoy Bharat, Suniti Chatterjee mentioned that aspect of Thai culture. He quoted Fra Rajdharma Nidesh's statement in this context:

> We have a lot in common with the Chinese. The Chinese came to this country and got married and within few years then turned themselves into the natives of Siam. We are Chinese by race, Indian by culture. I think in this way the identity of Siam people and civilization can be explained in a nutshell. (Chatterjee 518)

The contribution of the China to Southeast Asia has been deliberately omitted by Bengali nationalist historians in their books. Apart from it, *Dwipamay Bharat* contains some other information about Siam which strongly denies the majoritarian discourse about Thailand as well as Southeast Asia. Whether it is the story of Hanuman and May Macha in Ramkien, or the popular proverb about the white elephant in Thailand, all of them represent Thailand's own culture in Suniti Chatterjee's Travel Writing. Both Brahmanism and the idea of Buddhism came to Thailand from India. However, not all people in Siam are Hindus or Buddhists; animism or worship of

nature was an element of faith among many people. The aborigines believed in the existence of spiritual beings. Over time, Hindus and later Buddhists converted Thais, but this animist belief was reflected in Thai art culture. According to the descriptions of Sunitikumar Chatterjee, the characters of various idols collected in the museum are inspired from Ramayana Purana. But there is no abundance of their ornamentation. Sunitikumar Chaterjee even mentioned that unlike Mysore, these idols are characterized by the minimal ornament and they stand upright. Influence of Thailand's own culture and belief are very prominent in these sculptures. Not only the triumph of the Indians, in this travel writing Chatterjje gave equal attention in presenting ancient history of Thailand. In order to introduce the Bengali reader to the rich heritage of Thailand, he has mentioned about ancient Sukhotai kingdom who ruled Thailand long before long before the Indians came in contact with it. His account reveals how King Indraditya of Sukhotai kingdom freed the Thai nation from slavery. Along with it he gave details description of king Rama Gamhaeng:

> Indraditya's second son Raja Rama Gamhaeng was a man of rare talent, his talent was truly versatile as well as his activities. At a young age in the war, he showed bravery, courage and leadership. He was able to further expand the boundaries of his kingdom. Under his leadership, the dominance of the Thai nation spread across much of Siam. (Chatterjee 524)

Sunitikumar gives beautiful example of shared culture or localisation in his travel writing. While buying sculptures for the Santiniketan Museum in Thailand, he noticed that almost all Thai deities had shoes on their feet, which is rare in Indian culture. He said in this context that except for the only sun god among the gods, most of the deities in India have bare feet where the presence of shoes can be noticed on the feet of all the deities of Thailand. The interaction or the cultural assimilation of two cultures can be evident here and unlike his predecessor historians, Sunitikumar did not avoid these subtle differences between the two cultures or did not try to forcibly Indianize these issues. Sunitikumar's Dwipamay Bharat thus became relevant in the context of Southeast Asia, including Thailand, which challenged the nationalist history of Bengali historians.

Thailand in the eyes of Bengali Globetrotter: Towards a new identity

The same thinking is reflected in other Bengali travel accounts written about Thailand, especially in the travel writings of Bengali globe-trotter. Narrow nationalist ideas were completely excluded in these travelogues. In this context globe-trotter Bimal *Mukherjee's Du Chakay Duniya (1986)* can be mentioned here. Bimal Mukherjee was the first Bengali globe-trotter to travel around the world on a bicycle. From 1926 until 1937, more than 11 years, he went to visit different parts of the world by bicycle. In the introduction to his book, he gives a detailed account of his travels. He started his journey in 1926 and travelled to various countries including Europe, Japan and America. He took various odd jobs to make a living during his journey. According to his descriptions, he travelled to South-East Asia at the end of his world tour. He probably travelled to Thailand in 1937 and came to Thailand by road from Cambodia. His description of Thailand was completely free from the effects of Indianization. In his description Thai identity, the impact of India is almost non-existent. In his description of the origin of Thai people he has said-

> "The Thais, like the Vietnamese, emerged from southern China. A few thousand years ago they spread as far south as Indochina, Thailand and Laos, and further south they spread to Malay and Java. There has been a fusion of different race." (Mukherjee 304)

He has completely rejected the Indian contribution in this context. He talks more about how Chinese culture influenced Thailand than Indian culture. According to his description the Thais were heavily influenced by the Chinese. He gave a detailed account of how other Southeast Asian countries besides China formed Thailand. He recounted –

> "In two centuries, a group of Thais formed the Nan Chao Kingdom in southern China. They occupied as far as Indochina, Laos, Cambodia to expand the kingdom. Vietnamese also came from southern China and settled in Indochina, Laos, Cambodia. Then Thai moved to further west and formed Thailand." (Mukherjee 305)

In this way, his travel account reveals another side of the history of Thailand which was completely different from the narrative of the majoritarian discourse of Bengali historians. The same effort can be seen in the travel account of another Bengali globe-trotter, Ramnath Biswas. In this context, the name of Ramnath's travelogue is particularly noteworthy. In his travelogue *Sarba Swadhin Shyam* (1949) he wrote about his travel experience in Thailand before World War II and he mentioned Thailand as an independent country. Apart from the literal meaning of the word 'Thai' which means independent Biswas tried to imagine Thailand as an individual entity, not just any sister colony of any nation.

He gave a detailed explanation in this regard at the beginning of his travelogue. He explains why Thailand is independent with the example of the social structure of a village in Thailand. He referred to the two posts of Kamnan and Pujaiban in the Thai Gram Panchayat and showed how independent the Thais are. Thai villagers can elect their Kamnan and Pujaiban and had the power to dismiss them at any time and the king has no authority and power to question about this decision. (Biswas 7) At the same time he gave the example of the Thai marriage system and mentioned that the priest had no role in it. Even the people were not obliged to pay taxes to the king. Ramnath tried to present the dichotomy between two cultures by using reference from the panchayat system to the marriage system. In this way he wanted to introduce Bengali to the real essence of Thai culture instead of blindly appropriating Thai culture as an extension of Indian culture.

The social structure of Thailand did not follow the patriarchal structure of Indian society. In Thai society, women were not all dependent on men. Ramnath asserts –

> "In Siam, women are independent. Because they are not dependent of their husband's earnings. They work according to their qualifications - from farm work to soldiers with rifles." (Biswas 12)

Even in Thai theatres, women used play all roles. Men had no place there. Men only used to play different musical instruments. He also highlighted China's influence on Thai civilization. Elaborating on his Thai travel experience, he said that in Parang Busar, the Thai language was used

as well as the Chinese language on the boards of various shops. The contribution of Chinese civilization to Southeast Asia has been repeatedly ignored by Bengali historians in their writings, but in his travelogue Ramnath pointed out this flaw of nationalist historiography. In his travelogue *Sarba Swadhin Shyam* (1949),

Ramnath Biswas mentions about the erroneous history of Thailand which was written by both Oriental Scholars and Bengali nationalist historians. During a conversation with Ramnath, Bipul a character of Biswas's travelogue has pointed out this issue:

> See Mr. Biswas, Europeans have written a history that the people of Central China came to this country in ancient times and became known as Khun Thai. They further said that the Austroasiatics did not allow Indians to enter the country. They were defeated by the Khun Thais. Then who established the Khun-Thai kingdom? This history is just a fabrication of whites. (Biswas 77)

Traveling through various villages in Thailand, Ramnath discovered exactly how different Thailand is from India, despite its Indian influence. Ramnath's travel writing also depicts that there was no caste system in Thailand which is very unusual in comparison to India. Inter caste marriages were very common in Thailand and Brahmin have the liberty to marry a Buddhist. There were no strict rules in the society about this. On the other side caste system in Bengali society was very much prevalent at that time. This is how Ramnath separated Thailand from India in his travel writing. He equally highlights the differences between the two civilizations. Instead of just glorifying the influences of Indian culture, he discusses the coexistence of cultures other than Indians in Thailand. In this way his travelogue sheds light on Thai-India interaction which was detached from the one-sided narratives of Bengali historians and helped to understand Thailand in a new form.

During nationalist movement, India Imagination of Southeast Asia was a conscious attempt taken by Bengali historians and scholars. The main intention was to erase the individual rich history of Southeast Asia and attempts were made to present Southeast as a part of greater India. This sort of nationalist historiography of India had a deeper purpose. In order to imagine India as a great nation, ancient than the western civilization they included Southeast Asia in the national history. But there were many flaws in this nationalist historiography that they never wanted to admit. Instead of looking at the contact zones or the points of mutual affinity of South and Southeast, their biased perspective and one-sided narrative gave birth to a kind of ignorance about the countries of Southeast Asia. They ignored the influence of indigenous tribes, Chinese impacts, local craftsmanship etc. in their description of Southeast Asia, which created a certain gap in understanding of Southeast Asia from a Bengali perspective. Bengali travel writing on Thailand tried to fill those gaps and historicizes Southeast Asia in a new light. These travel writings on Thailand presented a new narrative about Thai-Bengal interaction and exchanges. A counter-national narrative against Indianised version of Southeast was created by these travel writings. Hence, it can be said that during colonial rule Bengali travel writing on Thailand created a new dialogue in the history India-Southeast Asian interactions.

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Strategical Mysticism and Translation in Amitav Ghosh's The Hungry Tide: "Because Words are Just Air"

Indrani Chakraborty

Abstract

Romanticizing the subaltern by the locus of power problematizes the issue of the subaltern's being heard in a twofold way. Firstly, it occludes the very fact that the Other is really *not* present in the discursive context to articulate his/her subject-position. Secondly, what the dominant discourses produce on their behalf are certainly not their original selves. Those are the projections of the power that theorizes the subaltern. The subaltern's presence becomes no more than a discursive simulation, a version among many versions. In *The Hungry Tide* (2004), Amitav Ghosh makes Fokir, the illiterate, poor fisherman, the central character of the text. He purports to make him speak in a vocabulary that will get a hearing in the institutional locations of power. Interestingly, Fokir, the representative of the unrepresented dominoes, does not speak.

As observed by Kanai and Piya, who represent the urban, "bhadralok" side of India, Fokir's silence has only one explanation - he is *unknowable*. Precisely from this juncture his silence becomes a political stance. Fokir is projected as the eternal, timeless, mysterious Other in a dark bibliocosm that resembles the *Incredible India* way by having an exotic hero in the true sense of the term, silent, childlike, mysterious, sexually attractive, "unknowable", and most importantly, the saviour of the Western outsider. The paper intends to investigate how mystifying the Other helps the dominant discourses to occlude the voice of the Subaltern and thus problematizes the issues of translation.

Keywords: Subaltern, Translation, Power, Simulation, Occlusion

Introdution

> […] what often happens with certain kinds of imperialist forces is that they dress up their economic and political impulses in a moral rhetoric. In a way that the problem with this kind of unilateral forces is [...] who is to police the policeman. That is the difficult question. (Ghosh, in a 2008 Interview with Manoj Nair)

Generally considered as one of the leading figures in contemporary literature, Amitav Ghosh posits a stance of exposing and questioning our era's most fundamental assumptions about the relationship of the individual to history and society.

As his statement quoted above shows, these assumptions have been produced by, and are the foundational principles of, the covert imperial forces that he perceives to be concealed within a *moral rhetoric*. With the charged question "who is to police the policeman", the discursive domain of his project becomes clear - he is conscious of the forces that constitute the locus of power, and he is also aware of the stakes involved in sustaining the *moral rhetoric* which is a construct of power. The statement makes it clear that his position as an author is not to reinforce the marginalization of the Other - it is, rather, to undercut it. In *The Hungry Tide* (2004), Ghosh makes Fokir, the illiterate, poor fisherman, the central character of the text. He purports to make him speak in a

vocabulary that will get a hearing in the institutional locations of power. My paper aims to problematize the representational strategies deployed by the author that aim to give voice to the silenced Subaltern. My argument is that the apparently counter discursive representations fashioned by the author have their own occlusions and silences that ultimately subvert his liberal project.

In her seminal essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak argues that subaltern groups always stand in an ambiguous relationship to power – subordinate, but never fully consenting to its authority, refusing to adopt the hegemonic perspectives or vocabulary as expressive of its own identity (Spivak 2194). Because subalterns exist outside the privileged segment of society, the dominant discursive practices have consistently misrepresented them. They are romanticized, Spivak argues, by the Leftist intellectuals who essentialize them and thus replicate the colonialist discourses they purport to critique. A person's or group's identity is relational, it is a function of its place in a system of differences, not a homogeneous characteristic deeply rooted in a particular geospace that announces the person's or group's 'essential' being. Unless there is a discourse that names the alternative discourses as 'Other', there is no existence of the Other in the first place. It is the dominant discursive practices that create, describe, theorize and interpellate the Other – there is no pure or original Other beyond the discursive paradigm (Spivak 2194). As Mahasweta Devi brilliantly shows in her novel *Right of the Forest ('Aranyer Adhikar'*, 1977), the civilizing mission actually serves as a subordinating mechanism that marginalizes the tribal people with its missionary claims, hoping to render them docile and wonderstruck at the magnitude and benevolence of the powerful Master.

The Sundarbans, as most of the tour and travel guides (including Internet sources) announce, is a mangrove forest, one of the largest such forests in the world.

It lies on the delta of the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna rivers on the Bay of Bengal, straddling the border between the Indian state of West Bengal and Bangladesh. The site is intersected by a complex network of tidal waterways, mudflats and small islands of mangrove forest, and presents an excellent example of ongoing ecological processes. The area is known for its wide range of fauna, including 260 types of birds, the Royal Bengal tiger and other threatened species such as the estuarine crocodile and the Indian python. What is systematically less discussed is the inconvenient fact that the Sundarbans is not only a 'beautiful garden' but also a densely inhabited region, a populated 'abaad' (fertile land with human dwelling), bursting with human as well as animal life. And the reason behind this almost constant elision is, as the author observes, the fact that "the impoverished people dying are extremely poor and don't have a voice". And precisely from this point of view *The Hungry Tide* posits a perspective that anticipates a reversal of vantage points, a perspective that projects the plight of the people living there through a representative of these marginal people themselves - Fokir, a fisherman in the watery labyrinth of the Sundarbans who is one of the main characters in the text. This chapter aims to scrutinize the representational strategies of the author that aspire to confer *voice* to Fokir, the emblem of the poor islanders. Ghosh has said:

> I felt that I had to reconcile the divided nature of my own experience. That aspect of the rural and this aspect of the urban, they are both part of my experience. I felt that to write truthfully about it, I had to include both. (Interview with Hasan Ferdous)

As we see from the text, the rural aspect is represented by Fokir, while Kanai and Piya represent the urban, "bhadralok" side of India. Fokir's encounter with these two people gradually reveals deeper stratifications of their mutual approach to each other's worldview and clarifies our understanding of the subject-positions underlying *The Hungry Tide.*

From the very first page, Piya's foreignness is highlighted through the gaze of Kanai:

> It occurred to him suddenly that perhaps […] she was not an Indian, except by descent. And the moment the thought occurred to him, he was convinced of it: she was a foreigner; it was stamped in her posture, in the way she stood […]. (Ghosh 3)

Thus Piya undoubtedly is an 'outsider', who seems totally out of place standing in a south Kolkata commuter station, waiting for the train to Canning. At the same time Kanai's foreignness is underlined by the direct agency of the author, when he clarifies – "Kanai was the one other 'outsider' on the platform and he quickly attracted his own share of attention" (Ghosh 4). It is interesting to note that the author keeps the word 'outsider' with single quotation marks, inferring that he does not mean it literally – or in other words, Kanai is an insider. Fokir, whose identity is never overtly discussed, meets Piya (and the reader) in quite a colourful way. Piya, while surveying the river from a rented launch, falls into the water and is saved by Fokir. Then she decides to continue her work in Fokir's boat. As she joins Fokir, we first view him closely:

> Now it was the fisherman who was in front of her, squatting on his haunches and looking into her face with an inquiring frown. Slowly, as her shivering passed, his face relaxed into a smile. With a finger on his chest, pointing at himself, he said, "Fokir". (Ghosh 63)

As their journey in the boat continues, we first notice that Fokir, the representative of the 'unheard' is almost silent. However, to say that he is silent is an oversimplification of the situation. He does have his language, but it is not being heard by Piya. Therefore the agency of interpreting his unspoken words, the play with the signifiers and the signified begins:

> The sum she had counted out was small, no more than she might elsewhere have paid for a few sandwiches and a couple of coffees […] As it happened, apart from his wet loincloth he was wearing nothing but a small cylindrical medallion tied to his arm with a string, just above the bicep. Unable to think of any other expedient, she twisted the notes into a roll and thrust them under the medallion. His skin, she noticed, was bristling with goosebumps and she could not tell whether this was a reaction to her touch or to the chilly evening wind. (Ghosh 64-65)

It is remarkable to note that we do not have any sign from Fokir, neither a word nor an action unnoticed by Piya but noticed by the omniscient narrator, to validate either of the possibilities thought by Piya. His part of the story remains unknown.

Fokir astounds Piya with his knowledge of the river. He shows Piya the dolphins when she was least expecting to see them:

> This baffled her still more: how could he have known that they would run into a group of Orcaella, right then and right in that place? It was possible of course, that dolphins

> frequented that route and were often seen in this stretch of water – but even then, how could he have known that they would be there on that day, at that time? (Ghosh 113)

It must be noted that two kinds of knowledge are being contrasted here through Piya's astonishment at Fokir's understanding of the movements of dolphins – laboriously gathered scholarship and the perception that comes from closeness to nature which Piya tends to denigrate by labeling it 'instinctive' since it is also 'learnt,' though not from books. This is the contrast between erudition and the experience that could have underscored Fokir's voice. Through his knowledge of his surroundings, rather than through the discursive knowledge represented by Piya, Fokir could speak to us if the author was not so intent on establishing Fokir's knowledge as "baffling", whereas, he presents Piya's activities with her futuristic gadgets as being perfectly comprehensible. Each instrument and its functions are minutely explained; so that we do not have any room to think that Piya's scientific activities backed up with empirically verifiable data is "baffling". Fokir's knowledge bears Fokir's uniqueness in the eyes of Piya; he becomes the "dark god" of a young woman's prayers and dreams (Ghosh 158). From this point of realization, she starts believing that she understands Fokir. The author empowers Piya by arguing that this understanding happened precisely because they could not speak to each other:

> The two of them, Fokir and herself, they could have been boulders or trees for all they knew of each other: and wasn't it better in a way, more honest, that they could not speak? For if you compared to the ways in which dolphins' echoes mirror the world, speech was only a bag of tricks that fooled you into believing that you could see through the eyes of another being. (Ghosh 159)

Two points are necessary to note here. Firstly, it is quite problematical to take the author's intrusion at this point as an exploitation of the narrative technique known as 'free indirect discourse', where the author points out to the reader that the character may be fooling himself/herself, that Ghosh is not using words literally, but is aiming instead to raise a smile at Piya's romanticizing of Fokir; primarily because in spite of gently ridiculing Piya, Ghosh does not in fact enable Fokir so that we can have a real dialogue. And secondly, Fokir not only keeps silent with Piya, but also with Kanai, who could surely follow something of what Fokir says. The comparison between the speechlessness of a dolphin and that of Fokir also strikes us as ambivalent. Fokir is not speechless in the sense that a dolphin is - that his speech is not understood by Piya is not reason enough to say that Fokir resembles the dolphins because both of them are silent. It is also significant that Piya never acknowledges her incomprehension; she keeps explaining each of his actions on his behalf. For example, after rescuing her from drowning, Fokir made a shelter in his boat and "motioned to her to go in." Piya does not take it as a common human reaction from a fisherman who, having a fully drenched woman in his boat, would naturally ask her to go and change her dress. Rather the proposal comes to Piya wrapped in complex cultural significations:

> It was not just that he had thought to create a space for her: it was as if he had chosen to include her in some simple practiced family ritual, found a way to let her know that despite the inescapable muteness of their exchange, she was a person to him and not, as it were, a representative of a species, a faceless, tongueless foreigner. (Ghosh 71)

We will see as we go on that Fokir's side of the story is never told. Indeed, the enigmatic Fokir seems to be emblematized by his very name – the word 'fokir' means both 'mystic' and poor' in Bengali.

The use of Bengali words is a unique feature of this text. Sometimes the author keeps them in inverted commas, sometime he glosses them. However, when Piya suddenly encounters a 'gamchha' in Fokir's boat, she frantically gropes in her childhood memories to locate that article in her known world, to get it associated with its meaning. Piya's discomfort with her inability to associate the object with its signifier (i.e. its name) in Bengali leaves her restless until the author devotes an entire chapter to "Words" (Ghosh 93), explaining her childhood connections with 'gamchha.' The explanatory chapter makes it clear that the author is unwilling to leave any part of Piya's story opaque or unknown. Fokir, on the other hand, is not only mysterious to Piya, who cannot understand his language, but is alien for Moyna, his wife, as well:

> "[…] whatever other people do, he does just the opposite. The other fisherman - my father, my brothers, everyone – when they're out there at night, they tie their boats together, in mid-stream so they won't be defenseless if they are attacked. But Fokir won't do that; he'll be off on his own somewhere without another human being in sight."
>
> "Why?"
>
> "That's just how he is, Kanai-babu," she said. "He can't help himself. He's like a child." (Ghosh 155)

The reason behind Fokir's stunning knowledge of the waters of the Sundarbans is thus apparently his wander-lust. It is important to note that he always takes his son with him in the water (perhaps to pass on his knowledge as a form of alternative education), much to the anguish of Moyna who wants the boy to get a regular education at school. However, it is never explained whether Fokir's wander-lust is an expression of his love of the unknown, attachment to the river, affection for the marine animals - or a refuge from his wife who, being an educated, working woman, represents the *centre* to him; whereas, Piya's motivations are recorded in the text with vivid lucidity:

> She had never had high aspirations for herself as a scientist. Although she liked cetaceans and felt an affinity for them, she knew it was not just for the animals that she did what she did. As with many of her peers, she had been drawn to field biology as much for the life it offered as for its intellectual content – because it allowed her to be on her own, to have no fixed address, to be far from the familiar, while still being a part of a loyal but loose-knit community […] And yes, it was true that whatever came of it would not revolutionize the sciences, or even a minor branch of them, but it was also true that if she were able to go through it – even a part of it – it would be as fine a piece of descriptive science as any. It would be enough; as an alibi for a life, it would do; she would need to apologize for how she had spent her time on this earth. (Ghosh 126-127)

This is the time when we start registering that though not talking to Fokir, she is not silent. Her states of mind, purpose of living, moments of anxiety, are all being communicated to us at regular intervals:

> Piya was now in a state of anxiety and expectation that she knew she would not be able to sit still and wait for the hours to pass. Instead, she decided to spend the rest of the afternoon mapping the riverbed to see whether or not there was an underwater 'pool' where the Orcaella had gathered. She had some experience of this kind of mapping and knew it to be a simple, if painstaking task: it would require her to take depth-soundings that could be linked together to create contour lines. […]
>
> But how was this to be explained to Fokir? (Ghosh 138)

Later on the author reports that she is quite successful in explaining that complex geological positioning procedure to Fokir – "[…] it had proved possible for two such different people to pursue their own ends simultaneously…" (Ghosh 141). However, we are never sure of the possibility suggested by the author. That Fokir's "end" is also pursued simultaneously with Piya's is never shown in the text. We find him catching crabs for his and his son's meal while Piya is busy with her work after reaching her destination. Catching crabs could be Fokir's means of survival on the water, but probably not his "end". Fokir's "end" is, as we see, never disclosed. Fokir never tries to interpret Piya; she is never viewed from his perspective. Nevertheless, the author never makes Piya leave any gap. She always tells her part of the story in a mode of scientific detailing. Even the complex human emotions felt by Fokir are sought to be decoded by Piya (with the aid of the author):

> […] once, when her glance happened accidentally to cross Fokir's, she saw something in his expression that told her that he too was amazed by the seamless intertwining of their pleasures and their purposes.(Ghosh 141)

The reader's attention is drawn to Fokir's *pleasures and purposes* by the author, but it is never made clear what they actually are.

Fokir's interaction with Kanai is a charged area of the text. Kanai is a professional translator who introduces himself as an "interpreter" as well – "I am an interpreter and translator by profession" (Ghosh 198). He translates and interprets Fokir for Piya and for us. As certain theories of translation show us, translation is never innocent. Translation aims to be, as J. Vermeer's "Skopostheorie" advocates, primarily a "cross cultural transfer" (67), often producing an entirely different text in a "target setting for a target purpose and target addressees in target circumstances" (Toury 4). For example, Piya requests Kanai to translate for her a song that Fokir often hums. That song, according to Kanai, "lives in him [Fokir] and in some way, perhaps, it still plays a part in making him the person he is" (Ghosh 354). It is important to note that when Kanai finally translates the song, he wants to be a "visible translator":

> This is my gift to you, this story that is also a song, these words that are a part of Fokir. Such flaws as there are in my rendition of it I do not regret, for perhaps they will prevent me from fading from sight as a good translator should: for once, I shall be glad if my imperfections render me visible. (Ghosh 354)

The 'flawed translation' that would make Kanai visible, would at the same time make the meaning of the source text all the more invisible, as Venuti argues – "The more fluent the translation, the more visible the writer or meaning of the foreign text" (56). Therefore we cannot

take the story translated by Kanai as the story of Fokir; when the translator aspires to visibility, the translation becomes – "[…] a rewriting of an original text […] Rewriting is manipulation, undertaken in the service of power" (Bassnett ix-x). This reminds us of the notorious remark of Fitzgerald, the well-known translator of *The Rubaiyyat of Omar Khayyam* – "[…] it is an amusement to me to take what liberties I like with these Persians who (as I think) are not poet enough to frighten one from such excursions and who really want a little art to shape them" (3). Therefore it is quite an uneasy task to take the translated Fokir as his own self via a consciously visible translator. This is why to Piya Fokir's song in Kanai's translation remains ambivalent – "Although the sound of the voice was Fokir's, the meaning was Kanai's […]" (Ghosh 360). Even more problematic is the *interpreted* Fokir. Kanai's role becomes more pronounced when Moyna instigates him to put "such things" (whether or not Fokir loves Piya) onto Fokir's lips (Ghosh 258). The reason she gives Kanai is:

> "Kanai-babu, there's no one else who knows how to speak to both of them – to her and to him […] *Their words will be in your hands and you can make them mean what you will.*" (Ghosh 257; emphasis added)

This in spite of the fact that, at their last meeting Moyna had told Kanai something very curious, that he did not understand Fokir:

> "[…] *I* wouldn't understand?" he said sharply. "I know five languages; I've travelled all over the world. Why wouldn't I understand?"
>
> She let her *achol* drop from her head and gave him a sweet smile. "It doesn't matter how many languages you know," she said. "You're not a woman and you don't know him. You won't understand." (Ghosh 156)

However, it becomes quite clear as the text goes on, that it is not because Kanai belongs to the male species that he fails to understand Fokir. There are some deeper, more complicated reasons that do not depend on Kanai's capability but his creator's strategy:

> Silence is something that really intrigues me [...] it's at the heart of The Hungry Tide – Fokir, the central character, is almost mute. And the reason he is, is because *I think in some way he is unknowable.* (Ghosh in an interview with Denis Welch)

Therefore, the reason behind Fokir's unpredictability, his silence, his mysterious behaviour, his unsurpassable strangeness has only one explanation - he is *unknowable*. Precisely from this juncture his silence becomes a political stance. His silence is neither his defense mechanism, nor his antipathy for the unknown. He is silent because words are means of communication, and Fokir's words are not to be heard in order to retain his 'unknowableness', his Otherness. Fokir is unmistakably projected as the eternal, timeless, mysterious Other in a dark bibliocosm – where the exotic male is simultaneously looked at and displayed, with his appearance coded for strong erotic impact. He is isolated, mysterious and sexualized from his very first appearance. As we see, Piya thinks about Fokir's attraction for Moyna in pure physical terms:

> The couple would have first set eyes on each other when they were seated at the sacred fire and even then the girl would not have looked up: she would have kept her eyes

> downcast until it was night and they were lying beside each other in the mud-walled room of their hut. Only then would she allow herself to look at this boy who was her man and thank her fate for giving her a husband who was young, with fine clean limbs and wide, deep eyes, someone who could almost have been the dark god of her prayers and dreams. (Ghosh 158)

We find Moyna validating Piya's speculation:

> "You're a bright girl Moyna", Kanai said. "If you knew what he was like, why did you marry him?"
>
> She smiled, as if to herself. "You wouldn't understand," she said. (Ghosh 156)

It is important to note that Fokir is *almost silent*, not mute. It all the more problematizes the issues of representation. What Simone de Beauvoir observed to be the predicament of women is also true for this 'almost silent' Other:

> But what is commonly referred to as the mystery is not the subjective solitude of the conscious self, nor the secret organic life. It is on the level of communication that the word has its true meaning: it is not a reduction to pure silence, to darkness, to absence; it implies a stammering presence that fails to make itself manifest and clear. To say that woman is mystery is to say, not that she us silent, but that her language is not understood; she is there but hidden behind veils; she exists beyond these uncertain appearances. (1410)

Fokir cannot be understood not because his behaviour is too ambiguous; it is because he cannot deliver his word himself to anyone. The author deliberately chooses to elide the perspective of Fokir who apparently never sees, understands, and talks about anything – he is always an object to be seen, understood, translated and interpreted by others. He *essentially* remains an Other and essence tends to homogenize existence. We never know anything that is related to Fokir's existential realities, everyone 'understands' Fokir in respect of what they consider to be his essential being – the mysterious Other. For example, when Fokir takes Kanai to an island and Kanai encounters the greatest horror of his lifetime there, he sees in Fokir's "unreadable eyes":

> […] not himself, Kanai, but a great host of people – a double for the outside world, someone standing in for the men who had destroyed Fokir's village, burnt his home and killed his mother; he had become a token for a vision of human beings in which a man such as Fokir counted for nothing, a man whose value was less than an animal. In seeing himself in this way it seemed perfectly comprehensible to Kanai why Fokir should want him to be dead – but he understood also that this was not how it would be. Fokir had brought him here not because he wanted him to die, but because he wanted him to be judged. (Ghosh 327)

This extremely poignant realization does not get any support from the text. It is true that Kanai represents the 'centre' to Fokir, but so in relation to him were Piya and Moyna. If Fokir was aggravated by the injustice of those who marginalized him and his people, then Piya should share the same wrath that Kanai encounters. If we are to take this as Fokir's essential wrath, and not a

more individualistic sexual jealousy, then it undoubtedly needs some words or actions from Fokir that would validate his subject-position. Being ventriloquized by Kanai is not sufficient.

Fokir has no means of articulating his own emotions. His feelings, sentiments, activities and perspectives are highlighted through varying vantage-points, as held by the particular observer at that point in time. As he does not actively validate any of these interpretations, one interpretation is no truer that the other. There is only one instance where we find that Fokir holds the position of privilege, when he and Kanai visit the island:

> "Don't be afraid," said Fokir. "It's for the jungle. Don't you want to go and see if we can find the maker of these marks?"
>
> Even in that moment of distraction, Kanai noticed – so tenacious were the habits of his profession – that Fokir was using a different form of address with him now. From the respectful *apni* that he had been using before, he had now switched to the same familiar tui Kanai had used in addressing him: it was as though in stepping on the island, the authority of their positions had been suddenly reversed. (Ghosh 325)

This situation could explain that the mystery does not belong to Fokir himself, but to the situation. But this episode also fails to make Fokir heard. The author gives a detailed account of what is going in the mind of Kanai at this sudden reversal of hierarchies, how thoroughly wonder-struck he is at Fokir's behavior, and his speculations about the possible explanation of Fokir's strange conduct; but not a single explanation do we get from Fokir himself. He leaves the island silently and fetches Piya and others to rescue Kanai. What made Fokir leave Kanai in the dangerous island alone, stuck in the mud, remains a mystery forever. Kanai connects this with Fokir's sense of cultural, social and geographical isolation. Piya doesn't ever try to discover the reason, and Fokir never speaks out, even to Moyna or Tutul. The only discernible explanation is Fokir's essence as the Other – an essence that does not exist, as to ascribe 'essence' to any individual to explain his/her apparently inexplicable existence is an "objective resistance for a subjective deficiency of mind; instead of admitting his ignorance, he perceives of a 'mystery' outside himself: an alibi, indeed, that flatters laziness and vanity at once" (Beauvoir 1409). Thus the entire existence of Fokir gradually moves towards an essentialist, larger than life portrait divorced from his existential reality – until finally he is made into a myth by the authorial agency.

The description of Fokir's death poses many disturbing questions. Fokir and Piya take shelter on an island to escape a cyclone. Piya survives, but Fokir perishes. The death not only adds a new dimension to the inescapable Darwinian truth, the survival of the fittest, but also gestures towards many unsettling elements by exposing who is the 'fittest' in this bibliocosm. From their very first meeting, Fokir was Piya's savior, literally and figuratively. He not only dived into the water to save her life, but had also shown her every creek and gully where he had ever seen a dolphin, representing "decades of work and volumes of knowledge" (Ghosh 398) to Piya. She had felt a sense of fascination for this "dark god" who never seemed to her to be an ordinary rural fisherman. From the very beginning, her innermost response had radiated a covert sexual attraction for Fokir. For example we can pause at the moment when Piya, after taking a bath in the sheltered part of Fokir's boat, was looking for a towel and suddenly found a gamchha. Her reaction is significant:

> When she touched it, to pick it up, she had an intuition that this was what Fokir had been wearing when he had dived after her […] when she put it to her nose she had the impression that she could smell, along with the tartness of the sun and the metallic muddiness of the river, also the salty scent of his sweat. (Ghosh 86)

Then there is the description of Piya's gaze while Tutul was bathing his father:

> After Fokir had stripped down to his breechcloth, Tutul upended streams of cold water over his head […] Piya could see the bones of Fokir's chest, pushing against his skin […] The water made patterns around him, sluicing off the contours of his body as though it were tumbling down the tiers of a fountain. (Ghosh 85)

The sense of attraction is further indicated by her reaction at seeing Fokir's wife:

> Piya's attention drifted away from Kanai to the woman who was Fokir's wife. She felt a twinge of envy at the thought of her going back to Fokir and Tutul, while she returned to the absence upstairs. This embarrassed her and to cover up she smiled at Kanai and said briskly, "She isn't at all like I expected." (Ghosh 196)

What is unmistakable in this is the hint of embarrassment that Piya feels when she registers the fact that she had developed a special feeling for Fokir, which does not seem to be a result of moral scruples that a woman generally feels towards a married man. Piya not only rewards Fokir in banknotes for saving her life, but also hires him for her next expedition as "[…] there was no one else that she wanted to work with – especially if the alternatives were men like the forest guard" (Ghosh 211). Therefore, Fokir is chosen due to his intensive, outstanding knowledge of the waters and not because he is Fokir – the person, the savior of Piya – it is evident that Piya's ambiguous approach to Fokir is influenced by her own positionality. It is this gap between Piya's different approaches to Fokir that their relationship does not go beyond the culturally permissible limits. All her feelings for Fokir remain to be mere daydreams, the fascination for the powerful. The charm vanishes when Fokir is on solid ground, and she does not fail to notice that – "[…] there was a grin on his face now and for a moment it was as though he had become, once again, the man she had known on the boat, not the sullen, resentful creature he evidently was on land" (Ghosh 211).

From the manner of description of their 'union' and Fokir's death, it seems that the union was eagerly desired by both of them, though it could not be fulfilled for various practical reasons; Piya never shunned this attraction in water, she resisted it when she was on land, or with the people who represented land, like Kanai:

> "I'll tell you what Moyna thinks," he said softly. "She believes you're in love with Fokir".
>
> "And what about you?" Piya shot back. "Do you believe that too?"
>
> "Well are you?"
>
> […]

> "I don't know, Kanai. I don't know what to tell you – any more that I know what to tell her. I don't know the answers to any of these questions you're asking." Raising her hands Piya clamped them on her ears as if to shut out the sound of his voice. "Look, I'm sorry – I just can't talk about this anymore." (Ghosh 336)

As we see, Piya is horrified at the possibility of Fokir's feelings towards her. She even raises her hands to "shut out the sound of his [Kanai's] voice" – this overreaction makes us think, probably not without justice, that her horror is an instinctive urge to deny the possibility that she herself knows to be true. It is as if Kanai had articulated the words that were floating inside her, and being forced to face up to them was something beyond her capability – as those words were clearly unwelcome to Piya. She could take her passive, secret fascination for Fokir as a piquant feeling on the river, but to face up to it someone who reminds her of the practical realities of terra firma, demands something more. It demands that Piya declare herself to be a part of Fokir's world, a possibility that leaves Piya shocked to the core.

Piya was happy with the Fokir who could see "right into the river's heart" (Ghosh 267), which made her declare to Kanai that language was never a problem between her and Fokir as – "There was so much common between us it didn't matter" (Ghosh 268). But all these ideas are shattered when Fokir takes an active role to kill a tiger that was captured in a village. When Piya to her horror finds that the villagers have caught a tiger and are attempting to burn it alive she frantically looks to Fokir to help her save that animal; but to her surprise she finds him in the front ranks of the crowd, helping a man sharpen a bamboo pole:

> But instead of coming to her aid he put his arm around her, pinning her to his chest and carried her away, retreating through the crowd as she kicked his knees and clawed at his hands. Then she saw a knot of flame arcing over the crowd and falling on the thatch: almost at once, branches of flame sprouted from the roof of the pen. (Ghosh 295)

This incident unsettles Piya's strong conviction in the ecological symbiosis where every animal belongs to a grand design serving the bio-natural pyramid. Her idealization of an ecosystem where a group of dolphins share fish with human beings (Ghosh 168) is completely inapplicable in the Sundarbans where Darwin's Law prevails, where one cannot survive without killing another, where nature is red in tooth and claw. In such an alternative ecosystem, it is very difficult to be convinced by Piya's ideas about the similarity between herself and Fokir. The difference in their perspectives is more that apparent. When Piya sees some crabs, her romanticizing starts at once:

> Didn't they represent some fantastically large proportion of the system's biomass? Didn't they outweigh even the trees and the leaves? Hadn't someone said that intertidal forests should be named after crabs rather than mangroves since it was they – certainly not the crocodile or the tiger or the dolphin – who were the keystone species of the entire ecosystem? (Ghosh 142)

To kill this "keystone species of the entire ecosystem" is Fokir's means of livelihood. The difference between Piya and Fokir's approaches to the environment is further amplified in Fokir's active participation in killing the tiger and Piya's instinctive recoiling from it. Culturally, ideologically, existentially there is no similarity between Fokir and Piya, and it seems that Piya is

well aware of it. We do not have Fokir's view as the author does not provide any access to his thoughts. Piya attempts to obscure that knowledge in order to champion the essentialist view of the Other. There is no more effective way to exoticize him than to mythologize him, and it is precisely what the author does with him finally. He is elevated from his prosaic, mortal, ordinary existence, to an unforgettable, immortal being who perishes to save the privileged, so that she survives to tell *her version* of the tale. If Fokir survived, the tale would remain untold, as he has no voice, no one understands his language, and he is never heard. Like all marginal people, he is silenced (and not silent); his reality is nowhere to be seen. There are situations when we do not understand Piya too. For example, Piya at one time considers her vocation as a cetologist– "as an alibi for a life" that would justify her existence on the planet, and at another time, she expresses her frustrations to Kanai about her job – "I have no home, no money and no prospects. My friends are thousands of kilometers away and I get to see them maybe once a year, if I'm lucky. And that's the least of it. On top of that is the knowledge that what I'm doing is more or less futile" (Ghosh 302). Her feelings towards her job are either that it is "an alibi for a life" or "more or less futile" – never a calm acceptance. Similarly, Kanai also baffles us at times. For example, we do not understand what he really feels after his experience on the island, when he was left alone by Fokir stuck deep in mud after seeing a tiger that entirely changes his disposition. He proposes to Piya, loses his "usual expression of buoyant confidence" (Ghosh 333), translates the song sung by Fokir that he previously thought to be untranslatable, and is motivated to write a letter to Piya that is shockingly unlike him in respect of feelings and expressions. It remains a matter of speculation exactly what impressions were left by his experience on the island that actually made him a new man.

The character of Moyna is also full of contradictions. She emphasizes the fact that Fokir has an irresistible attraction for every woman, implying that she included herself among the women who are fascinated by Fokir. It was for this reason that she, in spite of knowing everything about his strange personality, married him in the first place. Her insecurities about the closeness of Piya and Fokir also infer her deep attachment towards Fokir. Nevertheless, in a conversation with Kanai, Moyna destabilizes all those inferences. When Kanai asks her jovially, if she had to choose between him and Fokir, who would it be, she answers that - "He's my son's father, Kanai-babu […] I can't turn my back on him" (Ghosh 258-259), and when Kanai asks her whether she ever wonders what it would be like to be with a different kind of man, she replies:

> "Kanai-babu, you're just making a fool of me, aren't you? You want me to say yes and then you will laugh in my face. You'll tell everybody what I said. I may be a village girl, Kanai-babu, but I'm not so foolish as to answer a question like that. (Ghosh 258-259)

The answer and the underlying anguish, both imply one possibility, that Moyna *does* wonder what it would be like to be with a different kind of man, and it is her domestic bondage ("He's my son's father, Kanai-babu… I can't turn my back on him") that keeps her steadily non-committal to such curiosities. Therefore, all the principal characters share the same protective shelter that renders them 'baffling' to the readers. There are moments when we do not understand them, a factor that underlines the truth of human existence – "Each is *subject* only for himself, alone: from this point of view the *Other* is always a mystery" (Beauvoir 1409; italics in original). What distinguishes Fokir from the rest of the characters is that he is not a mystery *for* us – he *is* inherently,

objectively, essentially mysterious – "unknowable", as the author refers him, and it is the reason behind his silence. Silence is not the cause of his "unknowableness"; it is because he is "unknowable" that he is silent. The mystery *belongs to him*, not to the observer. The subjectivity of perspective reminds us Foucault's arguments concerning the goal of power, which is - "the accumulation and useful administration of men" (Foucault 1618), conceived as docile subjects. Power produces and civilizes subjects in order to better control. Famously, he states that "Power is exercised, rather than possessed" and insists that power is not repressive but 'productive' (Foucault 1618). Power thus produces 'truths', as some discourses manifest themselves as more powerful than others. It leaves no space for any free-standing field of opposing, diverse, Other voices as the disciplinary power pervades and triumphs over those resisting voices so that independent agency appears impossible. As a result, many intellectual activists who purport to oppose the dominant discourses reinforce the empire rather than contesting them. The line of communication between the dominant discursive orders and the silenced subalterns is thus thoroughly occluded. Either it is a missionary claim to civilize the Other (as in Kipling's *The White Man's Burden*), or it is an essentializing project that romanticizes the Other, as in the historical and ideological processes whereby false images and myths about the Eastern or "Oriental" world are produced.

As we see, everyone in the text talks about Fokir in different terms. For Piya, he is the 'dark god' who "sees right into the river's heart" (Ghosh 267). For Moyna, who is the representative of the 'centre' inside the jungle, "He's like a child" (Ghosh 155). The comfortable and widely popular tendency of viewing the Other either as a demon or as a child, both of which need a lot of disciplining and controlling, is thus replicated by Moyna, whose aspirations validate the norms standardized by the centre. As a result, she shares the same fascination for the "unknowable" that draws Kanai closer to him. For Kanai too, he is the absolute Other, "childlike" and "unformed". When Kanai asks Fokir if he can remember his mother, Fokir replies that her face is "everywhere"; Kanai's response to this answer is worth noting:

> The phrasing of this was so simple to the point of being *childlike* and it seemed to Kanai that he finally understood why Moyna felt so deeply tied to her husband, despite everything. There was something about him that was *utterly unformed*, and it was this very quality that drew her to him: she craved it in the same way *that a potter's hands might crave the resistance of unshaped clay*. (Ghosh 319; emphasis added)

Kanai was attracted towards the Other, who was unformed, therefore subject to multiple interpretations, quite an irresistible object for a person whose passion as well as means of livelihood is interpretation, as Said observes – "A certain freedom of intercourse was always the Westerner's privilege; because his was the stronger culture, he could penetrate, he could wrestle with, *he could give shape and meaning to the great Asiatic mystery*" (44; emphasis added).

Nirmal responds to a question of Fokir regarding crabs by reciting Rainer Maria Rilke's Elegy (Ghosh 206). Their "conversation" implies that Fokir is merely a means to keep Nirmal talking, the listening part enacted by Fokir – is only that of a puppet of a ventriloquizer. His role in the conversation does not *mean* anything. For Nilima, again, who represents the centre with its entire burden to civilize the margin – Fokir is, as usual, mysterious. When Piya told her that all the

routes that Fokir showed her, is stored in her hand-held monitor that is connected to the satellite of the Global Positioning System, Nilima is stunned at *Fokir's mystery*:

> "My goodness!" said Nilima. Her eyes strayed to the fragment of sky that was visible through the nearest window. "So you mean to say it's all preserved up there?"
>
> "Yes. Exactly."
>
> Nilima fell silent as she pondered the mystery of Fokir and his boat, writing a log of their journeys and locking it away in the stars." (Ghosh 398)

All of these observers' thought, articulations, and speculations *about* Fokir serve to mythologize him in the end. Apparently it gives the idea that it is Fokir, who is the central character of this "non-fiction cloaked in fiction", but the actual case is much more complicated. The eternally silent, "unknowable", mysterious, childlike, unformed Fokir – is actually an unreal objectivity. We have a cluster of idealizations, a set of symbols, a source of the Oriental marvel that do not allow the object to speak for himself, rather he is interpreted, translated, understood and sublimated. Fokir's harsh material realities, why does he aimlessly float on the river; what are his actual experiences with Kanai, Piya and Moyna; why did he left Kanai in the lonely island stuck deep in mud; why did *he* marry Moyna, what does he actually feel for her; how it felt to utter the names of his wife and son at his beloved's ear while taking the last breath in attempting to save her – his part of the story is left unheard. Instead, he has a memorial, "on earth as well as in heavens" (Ghosh 399), by the joint venture of Piya and Nilima, "The taste for eternity at a bargain, for a pocket-sized absolute […] satisfied by myths" (Beauvoir 1413).

Representational strategies that romanticize the subaltern problematize the issue of the subaltern's being heard by the dominant discourses in a twofold way. Firstly, it occludes the very fact that the Other is really *not* present in the discursive context to articulate his/her subject-position. Secondly, what the dominant discourses produce on their behalf are certainly not their authentic selves. Those are the projections of the power that theorizes the subaltern. The subaltern's presence becomes no more than a discursive simulation, a version among many versions. Is it possible, then, to endow the subaltern with an authentic and autonomous voice? Gayatri Spivak's blunt answer is – **'**No**'** (Spivak 2194). However, Deleuze and Guattari's contribution to this debate in "Towards a Minor Literature" is worth discussing. They introduce the concept of 'minor literature' to grapple with the issue of subaltern speech:

> How many people today live in a language that is not their own? Or no longer, or not yet, even know their own and know poorly the major language that they are forced to serve? This is a problem of immigrants and especially of their children, the problem of minorities, the problem of a minor literature, but also a problem for all of us: how to tear a minor literature away from its own language, allowing it to challenge the language and making it follow a sober revolutionary path? How to become a nomad and a gypsy in relation to one's own language? (Deleuze and Guattari 1601)

Deleuze and Guattari make two important points here. Firstly, that the minor literature is created *within* the major language – "A minor literature doesn't come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language"; and secondly, that it is not to be

deciphered but *disentangled* from the major language – "[…] to tear a minor literature away from its own language". The authors attribute three fundamental characteristics to minor literature. To begin with - "[…] the first characteristic of minor literature in any case is that in it language is affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialization" (Deleuze and Guattari 1598). This implies that though the author is writing in a dominant language, s/he can introduce into it elements of minority discourse and culture, thereby undermining the discourses of power. The second characteristic is – "[…] everything in them [minor literatures] is political. In major literatures, in contrast, the individual concern (familial, marital, and so on) joins with other no less individual concerns, the social milieu serving as a mere environment or a background […] Minor literature is completely different; its cramped space forces each individual intrigue to connect immediately to politics" (Deleuze and Guattari 1598). This second trait opens up possibilities for dialogism – the fictional characters, now empowered to acknowledge their existence as 'political,' can engage the locus of power in terms other than subordination with vocabularies of distinct articulations. The moment the 'individual intrigue' becomes representative of group interests, it transcends the personal - "The third characteristic of minor literature is that in it everything takes on a collective value […] The political domain has contaminated every statement" (Deleuze and Guattari 1599). Therefore, minor literature in this sense is a heterogeneous space where polyvocalic articulations attempt to contest dominant discourses. It aims to present the competing ideologies, antagonistic values, unheard voices, and different vantage points of the subalterns by projecting their 'voice' as a marker of their empirical presence in the text. None of these empowering tools is practically exploited in the narrative method of the present text to rescue it from the condescending and exoticizing gaze of a *Bhadralok*.

To conclude, Fokir's silence from the very beginning that continues till the end of the text, infers the author's problematic of representation. As he declares in an interview – "For any kind of deeper, resonant communication, language is essential. All such communication is always deeply embedded in language" and "Someone who has experienced non-communication must try to represent it in some sort of truthful or interesting way" (Ghosh in an Interview with Hasan Ferdous) – and the "interesting" way resembles the *Incredible India* way marketed by tourism Corporations by having an exotic hero in the true sense of the term, a silent, childlike, mysterious, sexually attractive, "unknowable", and most importantly *the saviour* of the Western outsider. As Khaled Hosseini tells us in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (2007), the most attractive and assuring cult for human being is the cult of the saviour:

> That summer, *Titanic* Fever gripped Kabul.
>
> [...]
>
> .*It's the song,* they said. *No, the sea. The luxury. The ship.*
>
> *It's the sex,* they whispered.
>
> *Leo,* said Aziza sheepishly. *It's all about Leo.*
>
> "Everybody wants Jack," Laila said to Mariam. "That's what it is. Everybody wants Jack to rescue them from disaster..." (126-127)

Fokir saves Piya and thus becomes the most powerful cult in the collective unconscious. The death of Fokir and the establishment of Piya's project sponsored by the environmental groups of New Delhi and the Government, which would be named after Fokir, implies the fact suggested by Annu Jalais, about whom the author enthusiastically said in the Author's Note of *The Hungry Tide* – "[…] her research into the history and culture of the region will, I am certain, soon come to be regarded as definite" (Ghosh 401), that – "Even people deeply committed to working for the welfare of the poorest of the area believe that they are fighting a losing battle and that the Sundarbans is best 'returned to tigers' (337). As a consequence, people like Fokir are either exterminated like they *were* in the Morichjhapi massacre, or eternalized through the agency of myths as they are in 'representative' texts like *The Hungry Tide,* both ways their existence is liminal and their only way with words is silence; as everybody knows, the subaltern *cannot* speak.

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Exploring and Integrating Trauma in the Selected Stories of Ismat Chughtai

Pragati Gupta

Abstract

The issues of pain and trauma revolving around womankind have long been elided in the Third World countries. Ismat Chughtai, through her narratives, materialises the prioritisation of such issues where the agony and pain that later takes hideous forms of traumatic history meted out to woman look for a channel of articulation. The female body, a site for patriarchal repression and hegemonic regulation, emerges as a wielder of power without expecting any kind of reconciliation. In this paper, I have addressed all such issues that have been revolving around non-Western context and often get marginalised or negated due to Eurocentrism. The stories I have opted for in my paper are 'the Quilt', 'Touch-Me-Not' and 'the Invalid'. The stories are at the crossroads of tradition and modernity where the womankind is invariably objectified, reducing it to no more than a signifier of docility and subservience in the face of patriarchy.

Keywords: Trauma, Pain, Female body, Patriarchy

Ismat Chughtai has explored the question of female sexuality bringing in light various facets that are mostly elided from the mainstream considerations. The time frame within which Chughtai and her contemporaries were writing can be called as days when the Muslim women writers could have a share of education and thus could be led to the field of writing and reading that got accelerated by their induction into the growing consciousness of upper and middle class Muslim household. The transition that took place in their awareness made it possible for Chughtai to modernise the old structure of thought and writing, infusing her wit and humour to bring about a revolution with pen and ink. The shorter fictions of Chughtai precisely deal with the evolving idea of female body and the individual trauma that the female characters go through. The "insidious trauma" in the words of Laura S. Brown as mentioned in Craps and Buelens provides a coherent understanding of the same. In her words, we read "insidious trauma" as "the traumatogenic effects of oppression that are not necessarily overtly violent or threatening to bodily well-being at the given moment but that do violence to the soul and spirit". (3) Chughtai in her shorter fictions propounds the way in which memory and pain evoke a traumatising effect on the minds that have been confined or restricted free movement for a considerable span of time.

Ketu H. Katrak in her book *Politics of the Female Body* (2006) addresses the area of female sexuality where she frames the idea which has invariably been treated with silences of domination, oppression and repression. She chalks out the way in which patriarchy exerts its utmost influence on the female body, making it an active and direct site where repressive and dominating ideologies clash and clutter making it a paradigm of study and research. There are innumerable ways cited by writers time and again that focus on the female body as a space, a cultural mark which opens forth channels to re-search and re-interpret the existing hierarchical structures that have apparently proved to be harmlessly at peace with the struggles of and policies for women in social and cultural context. Women and their bodies[1], in the Third World, have often been seen in terms of territorialisation where women and their suppression are perpetuated with the help of colonial education and local traditions. Here remains a lacuna between the actual treatment of the Third World women and the task of freeing them from this apparently secure bondage. The patriarchal

influence that exerts compelling laws on female bodies carries out the same in the name of rape, sexual domination, tradition, culture, sacrificial attitude and often in terms of female foeticide. Interestingly, we see that pain and torture inflicted on the female body rise from a convergence of the dominant ideology and apparatus required to keep the bodies in regulation. This regulation carries out activities in the name of abortions and mistreatments and stands appalled as women and their bodies defy any kind of determinism associated with their existence. When a body tries to decolonize itself from the clutches of oppressive factors, breaking open the fetters of fear and trauma, the female body undergoes searing pain that goes unchronicled in most cases. Katrak opines about this working of politics:

> A politics of the female body includes the constructions and controls of female sexuality, its acceptable and censored expressions, its location socioculturally, even materially, in postcolonial regions. Third World Women writers represent the complex ways in which women's bodies are colonized. Similar to anti-colonial struggles for independence on the macro political arena, women resist bodily oppressions by using strategies and tactics that are often part of women's ways of knowing and acting. A geographical deterritorializing that forces colonizers to depart parallels how women attempt reclaiming their bodies from patriarchal domination…. Continuing decolonizations include the reality of decolonizing female bodies occupied by colonial education and local tradition that perpetuate women's subordinate status while ensuring male privilege. (8)

Elaine Scarry writes that physical pain does not necessarily resist language but actively destroys it and it brings about a state anterior to the learning of language. In this context, she creates a room for the teller of the traumatic events, ones who have personally never undergone such mental stress that becomes obsessive disorder but narrate such stories on behalf of the sufferer[1]. She says, "Because the person in pain is ordinarily so bereft of the resources of speech, it is not surprising that the language for pain should sometimes be brought into being by those who are not themselves in pain but who speak *on behalf of* those who are**."** (Her italics)

The narrators in the stories of Chughtai are mostly tellers of the traumatic, present either as witnesses of the sequence of events, peeking into the consciousness of both victims and perpetrators, where at times the victims are protagonists themselves. Such traumatised sketches of characters carry within them an impossible history[2]. They even become symptoms of history which they fail to grasp in totality. Assuming that the narratives of gendered violence, be it physical or psychic, would lose a fraction to forgetfulness, translation and reinterpretation, trauma studies seek to address these gaps, aporia, in the narratives of domesticity where heteronormativity collapses and an alternative space for female articulation is created. In the story, 'the Quilt' or '*Lihaaf*', the shadows of a shaking elephant on the wall made by some unusual movements of a quilt triggers uneasiness and subsequent trauma in the mind of an innocent girl narrator. The diction used by Chughtai in her stories carries a great deal of subtlety and precision where the images formed on the wall and sounds as that of a cat licking up a plate create contortions of fear and the child seems tortured. The story is a re-memorising and reinterpreting of the events that took place at Begum Jaan's house one winter. It begins:

> In winter, when I put a quilt over myself, its shadows on the wall seem to sway like an elephant. That sends my mind racing into the labyrinth of times past. Memories come crowding in. (15)

Women in the Third World have been grappling with silences within the four walls of their domestic space. Chughtai's narrator in 'the Quilt' reminisces on a sojourn she have had at Begum Jaan's place. This particular 'homely' structure becomes a site for protestation and resistance as the girl projects her thoughts before the readers. She admits in clear terms that she fails to integrate the traumatic past, being etched in her memory like 'the scar left by a blacksmith's brand'. (15) Before taking to analyse the idea of female body, I would like to draw attention to the license granted to 'the man' and no questions raised per se. The man of the house, Nawab, has been a man of virtue and is considered charitable for he keeps an open house for 'young, fair, slender-waisted boys'. (16) His interests lie in chasing the gossamer shirts while incarcerating his wife all throughout. However, through the lens of a young girl narrator, the writer exposes the roots of sheer dichotomy that prevails at all layers of social contract.

A mere mention of quilt leads the girl narrator to go back a good deal of days in the past and take an unwanted peak where the vigorously shaking quilt carries traumatic overtures. The lady of the house, Begum Jaan, whose existence is mostly negated by her husband, Nawab, blooms forth fervently with the touch of Rabbu, her female masseur. Lesbianism, we read, readily challenged the heteronormative norms that forced patriarchy on women and tried to emancipate them.[3] This emancipation embraces a rejection of patriarchy and establishes women as the wielder of power. However, lesbianism has often been declared as 'western' and 'inauthentic'. Sridevi K. Nair in her book *Writing the Lesbian: Literary Culture in Global India* (2009) speaks of the real anxiety on addressing lesbianism in Indian literature. She says, "Lesbian desire and lesbian relationships would remove patriarchal control and seek gender parity in the nation, both in terms of women's access to the paid public sphere and the threat to the primacy of male desire". (3) Therefore, lesbianism attempts to historically situate lesbians, to make a haven of their own that safeguards their rights and interests and renders them an identity. Instances of child abuse present in the story bring about a sense of uneasiness for the girl narrator who fails to comprehend the daily chores. In Rabbu's absence, Begum Jaan exhorts the narrator to rub her back, opening her straps and a little harder, going by her commands. The story records:

> She expressed her satisfaction between sensuous breaths. 'A little further…' Begum Jaan instructed though her hands could easily reach that spot. But she wanted me to stroke it. (22)

A little later, the girl child recounts:

> I wanted to run away, but she held me tightly. I tried to wriggle away, and Begum Jaan began to laugh loudly. To this day, whenever I am reminded of her face at that moment, I feel jittery…. She was pressing me as though I were a clay doll and the odour of her warm body made me want to throw up. (23-24)

Urvashi Butalia clarifies while conducting her interviews moments came when "…having begun to remember, to excavate memory, words would suddenly fail speech as memory encountered something too painful, often too frightening to allow it to enter speech…" (133) as mentioned in Jill Didur's book. Begum Jaan and her absurd ways as decoded by the narrator were more terrifying than all the rowdy male acquaintances the girl ever knew of. The story rounds off with description that unsettles one's mind and heart. The language in which the girl informs herself

and the readers leads to a storytelling of traumatic events that creates a communitarian space for all such narratives to be re-told.

> The elephant started shaking once again, and it seemed as though it was trying to squat….once again the quilt started swinging. I tried to lie still, but the quilt began to assume such grotesque shapes that I was shaken. It seemed as though a large frog was inflating itself noisily and was about to leap onto me…the elephant somersaulted inside the quilt which deflated immediately. During the somersault, a corner of the quilt rose by almost a foot….I gasped and sank deeper into my bed. (26-27)

'Touch-Me-Not' is one such narrative where the body writes its own history and present and remains nonculpable till the very end. Bhabijan, whose body is a "…veritable advertisement for amulets and talismans", suffers two miscarriages despite the unmitigated vigil of patriarchy. When "…the shell cracked before time and expectations drew a blank", praise is to the lord for the body is required to blossom forth new fruits. Thankfully, the third time Bhabijan seems alright and is kept under strict surveillance.[4] The writer says "the third time round, matters took a grave turn. The poor thing was choked with pills and syrups. A sick pallor gave her the look of a sweet potato turned bulbous." The question of trauma in this story has two strands, one of psychic trauma and the other is physical agony that adds up to an unconscious, traumatised experience. Bhabijan's body, a site that would redeem her by allowing her to cherish the ideals of motherhood, is vulnerable enough to let go the burden to keep the patriarch's lineage going. The period of gestation is skilfully charted out by the elders to ensure a safe delivery of the child. This one desire for progeny, decidedly 'male' for the members take this without even saying, adds to an unnatural stress on the female body which is unable to stand against the male command to uphold its name in the society. The second strand of trauma, we notice, is again rooted in the way the bizarre pregnancy took place in the train in front of Bhabijan which becomes a foil to Bhabijan's so-called watchful delivery. The peasant woman's face filled with tearing, excruciating pain that accompanies every journey towards motherhood stands as an ironical mention where "giving birth [should have been] as easy a job for women as getting on or off the train is for Bhaijan." The story records:

> The intensity of pain made her restless, and she clutched at the bathroom door with both hands. Her breath came in gasps and perspiration appeared on her forehead like dewdrops on cool ground…The woman could not reply as fits of pain swept over her. Her face turned pale and tears trickled down her dilated eyes. (68)

This pain of delivering the child is disjunctive in case of Bhabijan who subverts the heteropatriarchal expectations by bearing forth "an unborn child" getting cold feet even before it could enter into this world. The trauma of bearing forth an unborn child this third time would definitely rise up to the talk of her husband's second marriage, a search for a new carrier, a stronger shell.

'The Invalid' is one of Chughtai's shorter fictions that is replete with instances of traumatic and tortured male hood, giving rise to spirited and free femaleness. The story begins with a pained, confined existence of the man of the house, "His fever would rise. The teeth would make a constant clatter. It seemed as though the bones rattled, and the whole body burnt to a cinder…then he got drowned in repeated fits of a wracking cough." This happens to be the state of patriarchy in this fiction that once enjoyed unwarranted promiscuity and freedom. The man's disability makes

his existence moan at his tasteless tongue and queer dullness. The thought of death perpetually haunts him and he appears to hide his face under his quilt to escape the final chanting during funeral procession. His confinement traumatises him to such an extent that even unintentionally simple actions of animals, children romping around and that of blowing wind seem to smite his mind and body. The writer says:

> It [the wind] came through every chink and crevice and smote his body. It rustled as it entered through it ears, then passed through the gullet and finally froze his chest. In the summer, the wind brought sizzling particles of sand, plastered them to hid body and he savoured the feeling of lying in a furnace. (110)

We learn the way he is imprisoned by spiteful thoughts that act as an adder, winding him in its maze, suffocating him to death. Even though he sees his wife absorbed in daily chores of household, his feverish mind makes him drag the worst out of this state where he assumes that his wife must be thinking of the neighbour, wishing to confiscate his wife's freedom to think. His treacherous workings of the mind would make her a betrayer and him the victim with sharp claws. The vividness of his imagination makes him suffer incessantly:

> And then his temperature would shoot up once again, his withered shins throb, his lungs writhe like wounded pigeons, and his temples flutter. He wanted to catch his wife by the throat and wring it to his heart's content, breaking the windpipe. And then he would slash her nose…He liked to imagine that he had slashed her nose and was making fine squares on her face with the tip of the knife. (112-113)

The writer writes of the invalid's pain that grips him from all sides. Though language is supposed to be a hindrance in the ways of expressing or articulating pain, the narrative deftly tries its readers to get a scathing aroma and taste of this pain. This realisation of pain tries to fill the gap linking pain and the arousal of language that assists in the writing off the pain. However, it can lead us to think that though the writer tries to articulate the man's thoughts to us on his behalf, there remains a dichotomy, an unsolved equation, as to what extent the man's pain has been written off by such an expression of the same.

> If the eyes closed for a while he felt as though someone has poured bundles of cotton on him and he was diving through them, sobbing. Giant-like creatures danced on his chest. Someone seemed to lash his calf. Hundreds of withered, bony hands stretched out at him. Soft, inhuman fingers crawled on his temples. (113)

There happens to be a performance where his feverish self meets the treachery that he plans to execute every now and then. His dead relatives call him with outstretched hands and he refuses to take leave from this world. The germ of inferiority and that he is losing onto his 'masculine threat' (my quotes) are making things all the more unbearable for him. He suspects and brings forth hideous images where even his own children begin to resemble his big-moustached neighbour. The traumatic intensity aggravates, presumably, as he contributes to the most of it, weaving the pain within his mind like a web that becomes life-absorbing wires. Marital institution can as well be thought of a poisonous web. The story ends with the same torment, "And then his temperature would rise, the lungs swell up, the throat constrict, the bones rattle and he would drown in the sea of physical and mental torment."

Katrak in her book talks about the concept of 'internalised exile' where the body feels disconnected from itself, paralysed, as if it is powerless to act and does not belong to it. She extends her idea to literal and metaphoric connotations of exile where literal exile is what we understand by the external exile manifested in migration and geographical relocation necessitated by political persecution, material conditions of poverty. Metaphorical exile, in contrast, is an exile of the female body from the patriarchy. This leads to an intellectual silencing in the Third World countries where women are made to feel incapable, creating a hiatus in their efficient execution of femaleness. In the three stories, we notice the three given spaces that have been maintained to inflict pain on womanhood even when the woman self feels oblivious to the treachery building walls inside the man's mind. I, in no way, intend to project the masculine self in a villainous light unless the analysis demands it where even a man confined to bed actively participates in the perpetuation of psychic violence and trauma, being himself under a crisis.

In a society, where male desire is a 'given' construct and cannot be easily suppressed, female sexuality and its associations are pushed to the margins, neglected and kept in denial. Such a dichotomous depiction of reality in our civilised social living is scathingly treated by Chughtai where she tries to fix this paradox. She aims at following the mandates of the feminine that disrupts and dislodges the seat of patriarchy by creating an alternative discourse with her shorter fictions. Such a discourse has immense potential to disrupt and unsettle the dominant ideology that invariably gets adhered to owing to various socio-cultural and socio-political conditions. The rupture felt in the constructions of language, class and gender assists the readers and critics to decode a history of feminine writing that are signifiers of unacknowledged creativity and vast scholarship.

Endnotes

1. When Helene Cixous shares her idea in her essay 'the Laugh of the Medusa', where she speaks about women being initiated into history by shattering all notions of repression that connoted their existence, the bodies become significant markers in the process. She says, "By writing her self, woman will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her, which has been turned into the uncanny stranger on display-the ailing or dead figure, which so often turns out to be the nasty companion, the cause and location of inhibitions. Censor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time." (Cixous 880)
2. The "history" that I refer to here is the history that goes uncharted in the universal feminine discourse of interrelatedness. The theory of Post-colonialism with respect to C. T. Mohanty's essay, 'Under Western Eyes', goes on to discuss feminist concerns stating "…the construction of "Third World Women" as a homogeneous "powerless" group often located as implicit *victims* of particular socio-economic systems."(338)
3. The 'lesbian continuum' in this regard must be discussed as propounded by Adrianne Rich in her article 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence' where erotic mutual feeling shared between women is considered sick, diseased and socially unacceptable and cruelty played out in heterosexual pairing is all the more normalised despite it being a sexuality involving whips and bondage.
4. The idea of 'surveillance' imposed on female bodies stands in corroboration of the argument where femininity undergoes vigorous regulation as per working apparatuses

to inflect them within the cultural framework. We find the above mentioned theory of surveillance in Michel Foucault's text *Discipline and Punish* (1975)

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The Fallen Feudal: Disintegration of Feudal Patriarchy in the Works of Satyajit Ray

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Abstract

This paper aims to look at the use of the tiger as a variable motif in three particular works of Satyajit Ray, *Royal Bengal Rohossyo* (1975), *Chinnamastar Obhishaap* (1977) and *Hirak Rajar Deshe* (1980). The tiger, in all three narratives, signifies as well as exposes a major weakness in one of the important characters. Be it Mahitosh Singho Roy's inability to hunt, or Hirak Raja's anxiety about his diamonds, or be it the circus manager's ignorance of a tiger's submission to only one master- the docile nature of the tigers in all three narratives symbolises the apparent strength and internal shallowness of the characters. In addition to this, the paper would also attempt a detailed analysis of the tiger as a man-eater, and how it is that human society and its poaching causes an animal to target 'weaker creatures' like human beings.

Interestingly, this paralleling emerges to be more nuanced when contextualised. In the following decades after independence, the country saw the gigantic rise of the Communist Party of India (Marxist). Now, all three texts have been published around or after of the enactment of the land reform act in Bengal (1977); and in all three we find a land-owning (not explicitly in Chinnamastar Obhishaap), feudal patriarch as the protagonist: Mahitosh dictates over the people as the crownless Zamindar and a fearless hunter, Mahesh beats his servant to death and Hirak Raja gains intellectual hegemony over the people. Ray uses the motif of the docile tiger to burst this very display of power by these patriarchs, to expose the inner vacuity and infirmity of the feudal lords. Hirak Raja is insecure about his wealth and throne, which stems from his constant fear of revolution, and Mahesh suffers from his conscience as old age eats up his feudal masculine pride in anger. Psychoanalytically observed, Mahitosh's fractured hand resulting in his incompetency in shooting is an act of symbolic castration of the feudal 'father'. The either wounded, escaped or entangled tiger in all three narratives metaphorically represents these gradually weakening, anxious, insecure and incapable patriarchs, in the backdrop of the decline of feudalism in the country.

Keywords: Feudalism, Satyajit Ray, Feluda, Patriarchy

The paper is divided into two parts, one which analyses the fall of the figure of the feudal lord in the three texts we are analysing closely, and another which posits the notion of the castration complex in the main figures in these narratives, which are *Royal Bengal Rohossyo* (1974), *Chinnamastar Obhishaap* (1977) and *Hirak Rajar Deshe* (1980). In addition to the same text being chosen for both parts of the analysis, the primal feudal figure looms largely over these two apparently separate kinds of understanding. Whereas the psychoanalytic part sheds light on the workings of the mind in terms of the establishment of the castration complex, the feudal narrative takes into account the very background which went on to play a major part in establishing these characters who then go on to display castration complex in their own ways. Thus, in a kind of sequence, the feudal analogy and history set the ground on which the fragile tree of castration complex is built, and they complement and complete each other in ways which can only be understood while juxtaposed against each other.

Castration complex of a child, in the context of Freudian psychoanalysis, is related to the fantasy of castration. According to Freud, castration complex works along with the prohibitive function of the Oedipus complex. The Oedipus complex itself contains a prohibitive component; the castration complex works with that prohibitive component of the Oedipus complex, in case of both boys and girls, but in different ways. The other thing is that the castration complex in general accounts for a wide range of clinical consequences. It is at the root of the things like, penis envy, the taboo of virginity, and a lot of all of these in our country, like son preference, feeling of inferiority, and above all, a wide variety of castration anxieties. It is a very broad term and includes a large number of things, both in terms of men and women. Just like the Oedipal complex which never really fades away, the castration complex also raises its ugly head from time to time. In the works of Satyajit Ray under question, castration complex appears as several signifiers, and we would look at how some crucial moments from these narratives can be analysed as an expression of a particular character's castration complex.

In his book *On the sexual theories of children*, Freud shows how the child understands the anatomical differences between the two sexual organs of the male and the female, and how that leads to penis envy. Now, though that women characters are poorly represented in the works of Satyajit Ray, we can get a fair idea of how the castration complex functions in men in these works, by looking at their attitudes towards objects which trigger their castration complex. This paper would consequently go on to shed some light on the importance of phallic metaphors in Royal Bengal Rahassya in detail, therefore this proves to be a perfect opportunity to look at some other works of Ray to find out how this works. In another Feluda novel, *Hatyapuri*, Durgagoti Sen walks with a cane, but is too ashamed to admit it publicly. His dependence on the phallic symbol, and denial of it at the same time shows his ambivalent attitude towards his castration complex which had been triggered by his multiple injuries following the fall, which was an attempted murder on him.

In *Hirak Rajar Deshe* this symbolic castration occurs quite literally, at the dead-end of the film, when Udayan Pandit and his students, along with the brainwashed Hirak Raja bring down the phallic symbol of the statue. It is to be noted in this context that the phallus or the phallic symbol is not to be confused with the penis, because the penis is a biological organ while the phallus is a symbol, just like the statue of Hirak Raja is. There is a hidden message of communism in the narrative as well, insofar as Gupi and Bagha attempt at a redistribution of available wealth by bribing the guards with diamonds, upon being advised to do so by the Pandit. The role of the tiger as being dozed with medicine becomes significant in this context, if we take into consideration the fact that it was the to-be-castrated Hirak Raja who dozed the tiger. He keeps the tiger hidden, but it is meant to protect his treasured diamonds from looters, which is precisely what it fails to do. This is the beginning moment of the symbolic castration of the autocrat, because that is when his empire starts falling apart. The point laid out by Charandas via his song in the first half of the movie, the evil sits on the throne, while the labourer does not get two square meals a day starts to be altered as the guards for the diamond mines are given diamonds as bribes (if not the miners themselves whom Charandas referred to in his song) and there is a general awareness among the subjects. The slogan at the end, which translates to "Pull the string, overthrow the king", comes equally loud from the subjects as from the king himself, which goes on to show that castration as a symbolic phenomenon involves the active participation of the one being castrated. There was an attempt at a partial castration before, when a rebellious student aimed a pebble at the nose of the statute. That moment, in one way, was the first signifier of castration in the narrative of Hirak Raja.

If we take a Lacanian perspective here, the building of the statue and its subsequent demolition gain a new perspective altogether. The object of desire, in this case, complete domination and anarchy, is never truly achieved, but it is constantly replaced by one signifier after the other. Thus, in the beginning, the autocrat bans education in his state, wreaks havoc among his menial labourers, and increases the tax of the farmers, all to suit his greedy needs. However, like a true Lacanian object of desire, this also is never really achieved, because it is situated beyond the symbolic and the imaginary. Thus, he remains sceptical even in the day of the inauguration of his supreme state, and like the no of the father, Udayan Pandit comes in and swoops away the day with his phenomenal idea of brainwashing the king using the same machine which he used to brainwash his own subjects. Thus, he was paid back in his own coin, or, to put it in a more psychoanalytic term, he was inhibited by the paternal metaphor which then went on to become an essential component of his castration complex.

In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Sigmund Freud points out in a footnote added in 1914, "A tooth being pulled out by someone else in a dream is as a rule to be interpreted as castration". (Freud, 1900, 397) In several other places in this book, and elsewhere, Freud has pointed out the fact that the destabilisation or fall of the phallic symbol is almost always a symbol of castration. If we recall the case study of the Wolf man, this would become immensely evident, wherein the child thought that he had chopped off his finger, but it later turned out that he had not. The fact that Freud incorrectly diagnosed the Wolf man as a neurotic, which was later corrected by Lacan to prove that he was a psychotic, who foreclosed castration to begin with is also an important anecdote in this context. The protagonist, a faux tiger-hunter and writer, Mahitosh Singha Ray, accidentally injured his arm (again, a phallic symbol, and a very common one at that) while jumping off of a tree to watch the arrival of a tiger, and it was the arrival of a tiger at the end of the narrative that exposed his injury. Thus, in this text, castration complex is intricately linked to the tiger, mostly because a large part of the narrative revolves around the man-eater and the landlord Mahitosh, who were supposed to complement each other, but were both compromised in the end.

The text shows us how the character of Mahitosh tries his best to hide his castration complex, among other things. Even when he sees his weakness being exposed, he still orders Feluda to leave the place, so that the latter does not get a visible confirmation of what he had already inferred from his deduction skills. Throughout the text, the readers are told how the landlord never hunted in his own jungles, because of the apparent fact that his grandfather and his father were killed by tigers in that very jungle. However, we later come to know that the reason he does not do so, is to ensure that the façade of lies he has built up, with the help of his friend Shashanka and his secretary Tarit are maintained till the end of the line. Mahitosh, at the beginning of the narrative, even denies the existence of the man-eater, knowing fully well that the presence of a tiger would require him to perform his role as a veteran hunter, which he would be incapable of doing. His worldview is shattered to pieces when Feluda explains how the treasure of the Singha Ray family went missing from the place where it was actually hidden by Adityanarayan, and in the process Feluda also exposes the façade of Mahitosh.

Another important trope in this narrative is that of the pen, something which shakes at the hand of Mahitosh Singha Ray. This fact is pointed out by Feluda at the beginning of the story. The pen, like the arm or the rifle is yet another phallic symbol, and the castrated Mahitosh fails to use it to perfection. Feluda gives him the benefit of doubt at the beginning, thinking that he has aged recently, or has suffered an injury after the government banned the hunting of tiger. However, it does

not take him long to figure out that his incompetence, which comes from an incident in childhood, has led to a castration complex in him, which he is desperate to hide. He pays his secretary a hefty amount of money, which is way more than his deserved salary, just to ensure that he keeps shut about the fact that Mahitosh cannot use the pen. His friend, Shashanka, who hunts down tigers and other animals on his behalf in the jungles of Orissa and Assam, does so out of a sense of sympathy. The relation to Mahitosh's descent is very important in this context, as he confessed to Feluda later in the novel that he wanted to uphold the image of the hunter which ran in his family from the time of his grandfather.

The most significant signifier of the phallus in *Royal Bengal Rahasya* is the sword of Aditya Narayan Singha Ray. This sword is the symbol of masculinity in the lineage of the Singha Ray's, and it is using that very sword that Aditya Singha Ray foolishly wanted to kill a tiger. A detail from the narrative becomes an interesting anecdote in this context, namely the fact that Aditya Singha Ray started to kill tigers after his dog was killed by one of the tigers in a nearby jungle. Thus, the signifier of the phallus, the rifle, is picked up (or raised, as it were) after a literal and metaphorical alienation from an object of desire. His masculinity tries to overpower itself, and in a moment of what might be termed as a psychotic episode, he tries to conquer a tiger with an "impotent" phallic symbol, and perishes in the attempt. Tarit Sengupta, after two generations attempts to flee his master, and digs up the treasure of the family. However, lightning strikes him and his corpse becomes easy meat for the already hungry tiger. The treasure, when Feluda comes to look for it, is not found in its usual place, but a hole appears there instead. It is noteworthy that in Lacanian psychoanalysis the hole is the signifier for the lost object, objet petit a. when Feluda solves the mystery, he asks for the sword and refuses the minted coins which are much more valuable. Thus, Feluda values the phallic symbol and takes it in his stride, because he is not afraid of castration.

The signifier of castration appears in a veiled manner in the novel *Chinnamastar Obhishaap*, where unlike the other two texts, there is no visual tearing down or malfunctioning of the phallic symbol, but there is the excess of it. As Freud had pointed out, "Dreams very often represent castration by the presence of two penis symbols as the defiant expression of an antithetical wish" (Freud, 1900, 421). The excess of the phallic symbol, in the likes of the rifle of Arun Bandhopadhyay, the rifle of the forest department officials and the two lashes belonging to Karandikar and Chandran respectively, accounts for the presence of castration complex in this narrative. However, the inherent weakness envisaged by the castrated subject, along with a moment of experiencing inferiority from the fear of castration, really happens to the second trainer of the tiger, Chandran, when he is injured by the escaped tiger, in an attempt to recapture the latter. What is interesting in this context is the fact that this does not directly happen in the text, but is mentioned in passing. Thus, the very signifier of castration and its execution is kept veiled from the readers. The castrated Chandran becomes afraid of the tiger from this point on, as Ray himself points out at one point in the narrative, through the voice of Topshey, that Chandran could not forget the fact that he was injured by this very tiger.

The figure of Karandikar, who later turns out to be the second son of Mahesh Chowdhury, is the one who can control the tiger, and it is he who facilitates its recapture at the end of the plot, which, in the golden words of Lalmohan Ganguly, made him forget all the past memories he had of watching a circus. It is to be noted in this context that another signifier of castration, and a pretty evident one at that, appears at the moment of the capture of the tiger. Feluda jumps next to Arun babu, and silently lowers down his rifle. Topshey points out that Feluda did this because he saw

the arrival of Karandikar before everyone else. Thus, the demasculinisation of Chandran, and to an extent of Karandikar happens at the sight of another person, the real trainer of the tiger, Karandikar. One might remember the detail from the first half of the story when Karandikar opened his shirt to reveal plenty of scratch marks all over his body. The question then arises, that why would the same kind of injury indicate castration complex in one, and not in the other? The answer lies in the fact that castration is not a physical phenomenon but a symbolic gesture, often without a physical manifestation.

Thus, castration complex in all these texts is tied by the singular yet strong thread of the lack of the object of desire in the dominating male figure, in a somewhat Lacanian sense. The object of desire in *Hirak Rajar Deshe* has already been established in this paper. If we take a look at how Mahitosh desired fame and popularity, we will understand that that was his missing object of desire. He was not satisfied by simply making Shashanka kill the tigers for him, he also had to gain popularity as a writer, and that is the reason he had to take recourse to double deception. In Chinnamastar Obhishaap, Karandikar's desire to be like Suresh Biswas surpassed his love for family, money, even his profession. Thus, he let ego come between him and his work. However, he is the only one who came close to any sort of closure in the context of dealing with his castration complex.

Now, looking into the question of the disintegration of the feudal patriarchy, from a socio-political and materialist perspective, the focus shifts to the questions of class, labour and alienation. In the following decades after independence, the country has seen the gigantic rise of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) that based the Leftist movement on the fundamental demand for land reformation, without which, putting an end to feudal exploitation was impossible. Coming into power, the Left Democratic Front in Kerala and the CPI (M) in Bengal passed the Land Reform Act in 1969 and in 1977 respectively, which materialised the abolishment of inheritance of limitless ancestral land by the then feudal lords. Interestingly, *Royal Bengal Rahasya* got published in 1974, while *Chinnomastar Abhishap* was published in 1977 –both following and during the enactment of these two land reforms. This point in the historical narrative of Bengal will serve as the foundation of our analysis.

We will begin with *Royal Bengal Rahasya* for reasons stated explicitly by Feluda himself. "যে ভদ্রলোক গল্পের প্রধান চরিত্র তার পদবিটা সিংহরায় করতে পারিস| ও নামের জমিদার এদেশে অনেক ছিল, আর তাদের মধ্যে অনেকেরই আদি নিবাস ছিল রাজপুতানায়, অনেকেই বাংলাদেশে এসে টোডরমল্লের মোগল সৈন্যের হয়ে পাঠানদের সঙ্গে যুদ্ধ করে শেষে বাংলাদেশেই বসবাস করে একেবারে বাঙালি বনে গিয়েছিলো |" (Ray, 1974, 100). [*You can make 'Singha Ray' the surname of the protagonist. Many Zamindars of our country had that surname, many of whom used to live in Rajputana. Many of them came to Bengal with Todormol's Mughal army and decided to settle here permanently, and became Bengalis.*] Now the two things that we can infer from the sketchy genealogy provided by Feluda about the *Singha Ray* surname are:- a) it's an upper cast community; b) they were originally Rajputs who had worked in the Mughal army--- which further specify their cast to be in all, probability*, Kshatriya*. To clarify Feluda's point, we need to look into the genealogy a bit more. The surname *Roy* was actually a 'Title' conferred to the social elite and the nouve riche of India as a token of honour by the British Government during the Raj; which later went onto become the surname of that family in the following generations. These titles were specific to the class to which it was conferred. For example*; Vidyalankar* was a title that was given for educational excellence and thereby usually to the upper caste Brahmins who had restricted education to a great extent within their own caste. *Rai* on the other

hand, or sometimes in its variations *Raay* which literally means 'The King' was given for martial prowess, and was conferred to the upper cast Kshatriya. *Singha Ray* was a one the variations of this very title *Raay* which was prevalent primarily in the North-Western part of the country.

Having done with cast, let us investigate the class position of *the Singha Ray* community in Bengal. As Feluda points out, genealogically Rajput, they came and settled in Bengal somewhere between the 14th (when the Parmar community came and settled as first ever group of Rajputs settlers in Bengal) and 16th century (during the time of Todormol). After settling in Bengal, they bought vast areas of arable lands, put the poor working class into farming and made huge amount of money through high rate interest in usury business and by exploitation of the labourers. Thus they became part of the emerging landowning, money-lending *Babu* class of Bengal--- the newly rich bourgeois. Calling them the " হঠাৎ অবতার" of nineteenth-century Bengali society Hutom remarks on their moral corruption and class exploitation; "যাদের হাতে উন্নতি হবে তারা আজ পশু হতেও অপকৃষ্ট ব্যবহারের সর্বদাই পরিচয় দিয়ে থাকেন... তারা যে সকল দুস্কর্ম করেন, তার যথারূপ শাস্তি নরকেও দুষ্প্রাপ্য |" (Singha, 1868, 133) [*People of that class of the society on whom rests the responsibility of its progress are now busy in displaying new signs of bestiality. Their evil deeds can never be punished enough even in hell.*] In *Royal Bengal Rahasya*, Mahitosh's grandfather Adityanarayan belongs to this very time when Hutom was writing.

Now, why this determination of the cast and class identity of Mahitosh Singha Ray is so significant as to trace the history of the two? This is absolutely rudimentary because while choosing a fictional surname, Feluda deliberately chooses Singha Ray, to hint at the feudal lineage, which Mahitosh's character is an ideal representative of. He is feudal bourgeoisie from both aspects: his family has been traditional landowning Zamindars and he himself owns Tea estates. This places him at the centre of a portrayal of a recently land-lost, disempowered feudal. It has to be analysed in the context of the recent land reforms, in the context of rise of late capitalism replacing Indian feudal system; and most importantly in relation to the recent rise of Marxism in Bengal. This calls for a class-based, caste-based and socio-economic analysis of the characters and events in the narrative.

There is more to hunting than a traditional display of masculinity. It actually is a marker of upper caste (Kshatriya), a sign of elite blood. Mahitosh himself clarifies this while unwittingly exposing his own hypocrisy; "শিকার টাকে স্পোর্টের মধ্যে ধরা হতো কিনা| আজকে নয়, আদ্যিকাল থেকে| পৌরাণিক যুগে রাজারা মৃগয়ায় যেতেন| মোগল বাদশারাও যেতেন| ইদানিং কালে আমাদের দুশো বছরের প্রভু সাহেবরাও যেতেন আর আমরাও গেছি |" (Ray, 1974, 118). [*Hunting has always been seen as a sport activity from ancient times. Mythical kings used to go for hunting, Mughals did the same. We and our lords of 200 years the Britishers were no exception.*] Same applies in case of taxidermy which is too recurrent in both *Chinnomastar Abhishap and Royal Bengal Rahasya* to ignore it as an elite interior designing. In, *Royal Bengal Rahasya*, we find a Trophy room, which is, "বাঘ ভাল্লুক বাইসন হরিণ কুমিরের চামড়া আর মাথায় ভরা একটা বিশাল ঘর" (Ray, 1974, 111). [*It was a room filled with the stuffed heads of tiger, beer, Bison, deer and crocodile*.]In *Chinnomastar Abhishap*, Mahesh's *tekka* Arunendra is an ex-hunter. And we find Topshey narrating, "এবারে লক্ষ্য করলাম ঘরের ঠিক মাঝখানে একটা চিতাবাঘের ছালের উপর বসে একটি বছর পাঁচেকের মেয়ে ..." (Ray, 1977, 213) [*Now I noticed a five year old girl seating on a skin of a leopard on the floor.]*

Hunting is thus a very significant cultural element in the superstructure of Indian feudal society. It plays a huge role in constructing the false consciousness in the working class regarding the prowess of the landowners. It immediately creates a grand narrative of masculinity and of romanticism

in the mind of the working class. To the question that the working class man asks himself:- "Who is more masculine?', this becomes an instant answer in favour of the feudal master. This hereditary continuity of this metanarrative of masculinity becomes a marker of cultural superiority which then works as a justification of their economic exploitation.

But does this marker of upper caste elitism find itself at its previous ease in the changing social framework of the post-independent country? Along with the Land reform Act of 1977, another very significant act got passed in India in the same decade that created similarly severe impact upon the Zamindar bourgeoisie class. Section IX of the Wildlife Preservation Act of 1972 legally banning all sorts of killing of any wildlife, disempowered the feudal bourgeoisie tremendously. From the Gramscian perspective, what the Land reforms did to the feudal system's base, the Wildlife Preservation Act did exactly that to its superstructure. It took away the typical feudal glory by banning a cultural production that used to mark a stark difference between the landowning feudal and the working class. Such a nationwide banning is actually a corollary action to the socio-political change taking place in the post-independent times, particularly pointing out the unsuitability of the century-old feudal glory of their cultural practices.

The passing of these two acts signals a drastic change in the Indian feudal system. For being in power the dominator has to exercise it in some way or the other. Interestingly, being thwarted in one cultural production, Mahitosh desperately jumps onto another, which is writing--- with the same aim of exercising power over the non-feudal readers. When the display of feudal masculinity is banned in practicality, he latches onto fictionality with the purpose of rebuilding the dilapidated feudal narrative. Feluda directly refers to it, " সরকার আইন করে শিকার বন্ধ করে দেবার ফলেই হয়তো ভদ্রলোক লেখার দিকে ঝুঁকেছেন |" (Ray, 1974, 104). [*He has probably taken up writing because of the banning of forestial animal slaughtering.*] In fact Mahitosh himself unwittingly exposes his insecurity; " এখন অবশ্য বন্দুক ছেড়ে একরকম বাধ্য হয়েই কলম ধরেছি |" (Ray, 1974, 108). [*Now we have taken by writing almost due to a compulsion*] This serves as a great proof of an alert feudalism, which is a greatly adaptable one.

Interestingly, the fact that his books are highly favoured by the reading community of Bengal at least, serves as the irony. Jung in his *Archetypes and Collective Unconscious* defines:- "While the personal; unconscious is made up essentially of contents which have at one time been conscious but which have disappeared from consciousness through having been forgotten or repressed, the contents of the collective unconscious have never been in consciousness and therefore have never been individually acquired, but owe their existence exclusively to heredity." (Jung, 1959, 42). Now, this servility to feudal narratives seems to have become a part of the collective unconscious so much that people fall into the trap of celebrating feudal masculine prowess, almost unconsciously. Enactment of land reforms, enactment of wildlife preservation--- all these efforts fall short in affecting the false consciousness of the non-bourgeoisie.

In their first meeting, Mahitosh points out to Feluda, "এক কালে মানুষের সঙ্গে যুদ্ধ করেছি, তারপর মানুষ ছেড়ে জানোয়ার ধরেছি ". (Ray, 1974, 108) [*In the ancient times, we fought with people, now we fight with animals instead.*] The idea of fighting, is used to both mean and conceal 'oppression'. His upper caste Kshatriya Rajput ancestors had century enough to oppress the Dalits and the working class, while their successors did the same after settling as bourgeoisie in Bengal. This class and cast oppression generate from the same root as do their practice of hunting. In the last three generations his clan has

extended similar oppression as the class and cast based ones, over the wildlife. In the case of Mahitosh, his twofold oppressions are complementary to one another. Ironically, his feudal glory of taming the 'wild' comes from the exploitation of the working class--- one who kills the tiger for him, and the other who celebrates it publically through narrativising it. In the climax, the forestial attacks the helpless incapable feudal, and it's Sashanka, the working class who saves him. It's not only the coming out of the reality that demolishes feudalism, but also the way in which the proceedings take place. Feudal masculinity gets completely subverted by the forestial, while he is at the mercy of the working class to save him. Of course, it turns the table against the oppressor but interestingly, it also thwarts the possible allegiance between two oppressed groups-- the forestial and the working class. The working class could not join in the forestial's revenge. But, why so? It's the deep-seated false consciousness in the working-class man that continues legitimizing oppression by calling it friendship.

It's important to understand that Sashanka's and Tarit's economic class position, which in all probability is middle class, is of lesser importance in this particular dynamics of power. It's the relation of power that they share with Mahitosh that is more functional here than their original economic class positions. Both of them may belong to the middle class, but their powered relation with Mahitosh is of a feudal-working class nature. They work under Mahitosh, in his factory or household, are economically dependent upon him. But what places the three in a typical feudal structure of inter-relationships is that both of them are not only exploited as labourers but are also alienated from the production. The valorous stories of hunting and the heroic masculine image of the hunter can be taken as the produced objects from which Sashanka is alienated. In case of Tarit, the books are the produced objects from which he, the labourer is alienated. Like a typical bourgeoisie land or factory owner, Mahitosh snatches the produced objects from the labourers, makes it a commodity by adding objective value to it, and then commercialises it. The producers of the product have no rights over anything regarding the object they produced. The humane contact of the labour with the object is completely destroyed, the value of labour is replaced by the commodified value. The labourer- consumer relation, is fractured not only in the materialist level, but also in the intellectual level, where there is absolutely no connection between the author and the readers. Thus it becomes an ideal sketch of a typical feudal system but located almost entirely in the intellectual plain rather than the materialist one. The rights or the depravation of the rights of the labourer shifts from a materialist property to intellectual property.

A grand development of the image of Mahitosh is strategic on Ray's part. He constantly harps on this appearance of him to make the final revelation of complete vacuity in Mahitosh's character a tremendously ironic one. For example, Feluda unsolicitedly praises his authorial qualities: - " আমার মনে হয় সাহিত্যের দিক দিয়েও আপনার লেখার আশ্চর্য মূল্য আছে." (Ray, 1974, 108) [*I think the literary quality of your writing is priceless in itself.]* The final exposition that under the heroic feudal appearance lays a pompous hollow man is not merely an individual trait; it functions rather as a metaphor of bourgeoisie feudalism itself. His face remains blurred while all the prominent elements in his book's cover are the physical specificities, inherited genetically from his feudal lineage --- that is all that he has. He is a copied version of the 'Form' of the nineteenth-century feudal glory, who is removed more times from the reality of post-independent India, than the 'deplorable' twice removed poets in Plato's republic. The metaphor hints at two levels of irony in the history of Indian Feudalism. Behind the millennial old celebrated vision of upper caste elitism, behind the grandeur of wealth and hereditary tradition, lays the exploiter of the working class, the perpetrator of social exclusion. The

second one is located in the contemporary context: The Land Reforms Act, which has stripped feudalism bare of all its past glory, and has made it economically 'dysfunctional,' socially ineffective.

Debotosh Singho Roy's characterisation is an analysis of the patriarchal oppression perpetrated by a man, over another man who is inside the structure of patriarchal family. This is a recurrent motif in Ray's short stories and Feluda series. Interestingly, it flowers beautifully in two of the three texts we are dealing with. Arun the son had seen his father Mahesh while committing the crime but was suppressed all through his life by the dominance of paternal authority so as not to divulge it ever. This is similar to *Royal Bengal Rahasya* as far as the pattern of suppression of a man inside patriarchal family structure by the patriarch is concerned. More significantly, in both the cases the tussle between oppression and resistance is paralleled by and has originated from repression and revelation of truth. The familial oppression gets finally broken down by the resistance, only when the repressed truth makes a successful return. Arun directly throws the truth on the face of his father, while Debotosh uses language to subvert the paternal signifier and finds expression for the truth. But there is a fundamental difference in the equation of power between the two novels.

Kate Millett while analysing how power functions in patriarchy in her *Sexual Politics* refers to this phenomenon:- " If one takes the patriarchal government to be the institution whereby that half of the populace which is female is controlled by the half which is male; the principals of patriarchy appeared to be twofold: the male shall dominate female, elder male shall dominate younger." (Millett, 1969, 25). The father-son power structure in *Chinnomastar Abhishap* falls seamlessly into Millett's model of paternal oppression. But the one we encounter in *Royal Bengal Rahasya* is a far more interesting and significant one because it proves paternal power to have a symbolic function rather than a biological one. Paternal power can function in all its entirety without any need for biological fatherhood or any social identification of fatherhood. Paternal authority works symbolically, and precisely for this reason, among others, patriarchy emerges as a complicated, multi-dimensional system of power. Anyway, Mahitosh thus plays the symbolic father to Debotosh, the symbolic son.

Mahesh and Mahitosh suppress another man in the familial structure of patriarchy to suppress their crime and their weakness, respectively, in social sphere. What they do in the social sphere, is a mirror image of what is happening in their unconscious. Both of them repress a tremendous amount of guilt in their unconscious. The societal revelation of their crime and weakness by Arun and Feluda, is a far more superficial one and is only a natural corollary to the revelation of the unconscious that precedes it. The guilt and insecurity repressed in the unconscious, has been made conscious by the interventions made by Arun and Feluda. They intervene at the precise moment by imparting the correct information about the events, and thus manage to reconstruct the repressed past successfully. Thus, they bring the elements repressed in the unconscious into consciousness.

A clarification is crucial at this point. The repressed does make a return in the social sphere through Debotosh as well. But Debotosh did not cause the interventions. They were caused by Arun and Feluda which made possible the return of the repressed in the unconscious of the two patriarchs.

However, these interventions are done almost exclusively through language. Therefore, it is the signifiers that have recovered the repressed materials from the unconscious to the conscious. Debotosh's use of riddles performs the same purpose. His seeming rambling are not

random at all, he deliberately breaks down the patriarchal language, twists it to subvert the paternal signifier. He in a way deconstructs patriarchal language to subvert it. Jacques Lacan's symbolic order in human unconscious is initiated and structured by language, when it enters the infant and is entered by him. So, the symbolic order is structured by signifiers. Now, these on-time interventions caused a symbolic castration in both the feudal patriarchs in the sense that it was caused by signifiers and it affected the symbolic order of them. These revelations completely devastated the 'ego' (using strictly the Freudian connotation of the word). of the two feudal patriarchs. But how does that happen?

While talking about the *I* function in his "The Mirror Stage as formative of the I function, as revealed in psychoanalytic experience", Lacan points out; " The jubilant assumption [assomption] of his specular image by the kind of being—still trapped in his motor impotence and nursling dependence—the little man is at the infant stage thus seems to me to manifest in an exemplary situation the symbolic matrix in which the *I* is precipitated in a primordial form, prior to being objectified in the dialectic of identification with the other, and before language restores to it, in the universal, its function as subject". (Lacan, 1966, 2) Lacan is really talking about three facets of the I function here:

The first is imaginary but situated in the symbolic; the second is imaginary, situated in the imaginary as well; and the third is symbolic and situated in the symbolic order. The I comes into being, first of all, through its primordial precipitation, as Lacan says, as the ideal-I, which is an imaginary self-image that appears within a symbolic universe. It's an ideal image that you see in the mirror, anticipatorily perfect and so on. But Lacan says that this imaginary ideal-I is situated in the symbolic universe.

First of all, there is, thus, the I as the ideal-I. Next, the I arrives in the form of the ego, or the I as the self-image, which is a more realistic self-image, rather than an anticipatory, unrealistic self-image or an ideal image. It comes as an opposition with the ideal-I because the ego is always inadequate compared to the ideal-I. So there's always a tension, compared to Hegel's master-slave dialectic, between the primordial identification or the ideal-I and the kind of secondary identification in terms of the identification with the ego.

Now, let us return to *Royal Bengal Rahasya*. A valorous hunter and a brilliant author, as a unit, is what makes up Mahitosh's ideal ego. Feluda's intervention devastates the ego by making it conscious about the distinction between itself and its ideal ego, by pointing out its inferiority as compared to the ideal ego. And therefore as far as the disempowerment of the feudal is concerned, the social revelation is much more superficial and only a servile mimesis of the events happening in the unconscious.

The sword of Adityanarayan plays a pivotal thematic role in the symbolic framework of the narrative. It's a symbol of the feudal glory of Singha Roy clan. There are three implications of this symbol. The fact that Adityanarayan died at the hands of a tiger while trying to kill it with this sword is a hint that the masculine heroism is failing, decaying. The sword is placed in the trophy room as a memento of Zamindari hunting prowess, but in reality, it lacks any effectiveness. It fails Adityanarayan, it directly kills Tarit. The proud hunter with 150 tigers in his list finally dies at the hands of one such beast. The forestial whom the patriarch has always dominated, has now finally taken the revenge upon him. Moreover, the fact that he died specifically because of his ultra-masculine pride that forced him to go out to kill a tiger with a sword, is a firmer proof of the vacuity and degradation of feudal masculinity.

The sword of the nineteenth-century literally means a glory that is long dead. The failure of the sword when Tarit uses it, proves this point even more. The sword, like the feudal 'man', may have had some efficacy, some significant reference 150 years back, but in the present post-independence socio-political scenario the feudal man and his sword have lost all his efficacy. He is completely out of time and out if place. He lacks any context, any referential framework to exist within.

Tarit's plan of retrieving the wealth informs us about his desire of becoming a member of the social elite, almost overnight. As he dreams of becoming an elite, he fantasies becoming Mahitosh himself (who is his ideal ego); it is clear that he does not want to remain a member of the middle class anymore. He therefore attempts a kind of revival, a re-birth of the feudal system. The excavation of the feudal property, of silver currency — taking it out from the grave — all of these symbolises Tarit's aim of recovering the decaying feudal prowess and the feudal age. And therefore, he imitates the feudal elite by using his sword. And like the elite himself, the sword fails Tarit too.

In *Chinnomastar Abhishap*, the sword is replaced by the skin of the Cheetah, though they symbolically mean the same dead masculine and feudal glory. The feudal system has lost all economic efficacies, social relevance is gradually withering and yet the 'stuffed' tiger shows the vacuity of desperate lingering on to the past pride that's long dead. The heroism of hunting has deteriorated into mere home décor for the stuffed men, for the hollow men.

The motif of the tiger plays twofold roles in the symbolic framework of the two novels, which are positionally oppositional but functionally similar. First, it symbolises the feudal bourgeoisie or social elite; second: the 'other' side of the bourgeoisie. On both these fronts, however, it symbolises weakening and disempowerment. In its bio-cultural identity, it's the forestial. From an understanding of class, the tiger's role as a forestial is where it assumes its subject position. Thus, its subject position is allied with the working class and against the feudal oppressor whom he subverts in *Royal Bengal Rahasya.* On the other hand the wounded tiger of *Chinnomastar Abhishap* reflect the feudal bourgeoisie or the social elite who are trapped in the post-independent Indian society that materialises Land Reformation. The traditional image of the tiger as fierce and aggressive breaks down, just as the image of the bourgeoisie and elites as controller of the social economy is rendered ineffective.

In *Chinnomastar Abhishap* the aggressive vengeful tiger of *Royal Bengal Rahasya* has degraded into a tameable one, submissive enough to surrender itself to human entertainment. It's interesting how possession of space becomes the signifier of power or disempowerment in both the tiger and the feudal bourgeoisie. The tiger, desperately trying to escape from the little space assigned to him in the cage to regain his unlimited possession of space or land in the forest, is metaphorical. Going by the scanty information given in the text about the genealogy of the two upper class families (the Sahays and the Chaudhuries), it can be inferred that none of them were landowning Zamindars but both were hereditarily upper class. There are plenty of references in the text to prove this, like the fact that these characters bought land and built mansions on them, among which the mansion at Hazaribagh is perhaps the most elegant. The intriguing part is precisely this — that two upper-class rich men buying lands, built their mansions in the countryside and not in a city, and that both the properties were bought before the passing of the Land Reformation Act. It's a probability, and a quite logical one that they chose Hazaribagh over a city to satisfy their desperate desire of owning a huge area of land which would be difficult in a populated city like Kolkata. The attachment and pride in Mahesh for the land and property that he possesses is reflected when he announces, "নো স্যার, আমার

প্ল্যান করা আমার বাড়ি , আমিই দেখাবো | " (Ray, 1977., 217) [*No, sir, It's me who had planned this mansion, it will be me who will show it to them.*] Interestingly, the tiger was finally caught, his liberty of possessing space was curtailed and it was made servile again. Does Mahesh meet the same fate?

Pieces of evidence of Mahesh's guilt is spread out in his diaries. Moreover, his guilt was articulated through his mentioning of Chinnomasta's curse looming over his head. Now, this can be his unconscious association of the idea of a curse and his guilt, or maybe he was consciously using metaphor for his guilt. His transfixion in front of the temple is the moment when his overwhelming guilt comes to visibility. Mahesh's guilt and his change can be well explained historically. He murders Dindayal, and after a few years, his second son leaves. Before these two events he was a typical patriarch, with huge emotional investment upon his own ego. He was immersed in narcissistic love. But these two events caused a displacement in the investment of love from the ego to an 'other' object. Two objects in fact — Shankar and Barendra. His radical change in nature is actually caused by this production of guilt, followed by the displacement of emotional investment from the ego to the other objects.

Kate Millett sees patriarchy is an interconnected, multi-faceted and all-inclusive structure of power. Now Birendra in *Chinnomastar Abhishap* was born at the centre of this structure — as an upper-caste and class man. By leaving his family and upper-class lineage behind, he de-classes himself, moves from the centre to the periphery of the class structure. He does away with the hereditary identification. There is even a spatial metaphor of it in the text itself. "বুলাকিপ্রসাদ আরো বললো যে সার্কাসটা নাকি আগে শহরের মাঝখানে কার্জন মাঠে বসত, এবারেই নাকি প্রথম সেটা শহরের একধারে একটা নতুন জায়গায় বসেছে|" (Ray, 1977, 202). [*Bulaki Prasad also told us that this circus used to happen on a ground inside the city arena, but now it is happening at a margin of the city for the first time.*] Mahesh's mansion is mentioned to be almost near the centre of the town, while Birendra stays at one corner of the town where the circus tents are. Like Birendra the circus also has shown a movement from the centre of the town to the periphery of it. The fact that there are aboriginal settlements nearing the circus tents further highlights this spatial rendering of the centre-periphery contrast.

It's evident that the greatest shock Mahesh has ever received was caused by Birendra's leaving home. His leaving property to Biren despite Biren's refusal to any emotional attachment with him, shows the amount of love he had for him. One can go on giving instances to prove that Biren was the greatest weak point of Mahesh. It was his refusal to paternal demand of love that proved to be the most decisive blow in disempowering the patriarch. Biren is the one who bosses the tiger into the cage, he is one who breaks down the patriarchal centre. Thus this father-son equation is actually a site of class oppression and resistance where the one from the periphery subverts the centre.

Now there is something that complicates this centre-periphery model to a great extent — and that is the cast aspect. Birendra de-classes himself; but does he really come out of the centre? Let us trace his surname historically. The surname Chaudhury is historically an upper cast surname, but most of the Chaudhury clans were not Brahmins. Chaudhury came from Sanskrit *catus* meaning four ways or all around; and *dhuriya* meaning undertaking a burden of responsibility. Chaudhury was a title given to Hindu and Muslim people who were the head of a community or cast. Now, it was not unusual that a Brahmin being the head of the community or doing administrative works. But Kshatriyas definitively had a clan itself called Chaudhury. So, there is a greater chance of Chaudhury falling under the Kshatriyas.

The given surname being done, let's look into the assumed surname of Birendra. Karandikar, the surname of the pseudonym he chose with complete liberty, (which means he had the liberty of placing himself anywhere in the cast hierarchy, of choosing his own cast in a way) is not only an upper caste one, but also a Brahminical surname. *Limaye* is a family name, common among the Chitpavan Kokanastha Brahmin community in Western Maharastra. The surnames Karandikar, Dixit, Khasgiwale among others belong to the Chitpavan Brahmin community of the same region. Karandikar thus not only refuses to de-caste himself, but rather placed himself deliberately a step higher in the caste ladder. Despite going away to the corners of the patriarchal structure, he lingers on to the upper caste Brahminical privilege.

Disempowerment of the patriarch has been done from some very interesting perspectives: textuality and construction of meaning is one of them. After showing the blank letter of Birendra, Mahesh tells Feluda, " শেষের দিকে ও তাই করতো| শুধু জানান দিয়ে দিতো কোথায় আছে | আগেও দু এক লাইনের বেশি লেখিনি কখনো|" (Ray, 1977, 227) [*That is what he used to do towards the end. Only telling me where he was, that's all. Even before that he never wrote more than a line or two.*] It is evident that Birendra is gradually stopping communication with his father. Now, this gradual reduction in communication between the father and the son is due to the steady disintegration of what Stanley Fish calls system or context. In his brilliant article *, Is There a Text in This Class?,* Fish Mentions something rudimentary about any kind of communication: " communication occurs only within such a system (or context, or situation, or interpretive community) and that the understanding achieved by the two or more persons is specific to that system and determine only within its confines." (Fish, 1980, 304) In this case it's the patriarchal upper class structure that serves as the context where the communication was located from the very beginning. The moment Birendra leaves the centre and moves to the extreme periphery of the patriarchal and class structure, he simultaneously takes himself to the corner of the system of communication (that he shares with his father) too, until finally leaving it. Thus the complete vanishing of communication as language fails in connecting between two points that are not even placed in one system.

Secondly, the absence of any written text, reveals the blank postcard as the text which it always was. Language as the referential field of communication fails to express and connect their emotional positions. So, language fails. And it's the absence of it, the blankness of the postcard – that is used to convey the meaning. Simply put, the blank postcard once liberated from words, becomes laden with meaning. And the one message that it surely conveys is that of the disintegration of the system of communication.

Thirdly, there is a shift in the signifiers from a linguistic one to an imagistic one. The image of the blank page is the referential ground, containing the visual signifier for the signified, for the content of the message.

All of these result in the deference of meaning in the text. There happens a shift from 'the discovery of 'THE meaning' (based on linguistic signifiers) to 'the construction of meanings' (based on imagistic signifiers). The linguistic signifiers still gave Mahesh some chance of comprehending the meaning, but the imagistic one demands meanings to be constructed which is where he fails. Add to this the disintegration of the shared system of meaning. The result is that the more he tries to construct a meaning, the more he fails in doing so. Thus, the meanings of the letters get eternally deferred. The father loses complete control over the son specifically because he can't make any meaning out of his son. He can comprehend and interpret his son which is necessary for

exercising dominance. He can't dominate him because he doesn't share the same system of meaning creation anymore.

The potentiality of writing and its lack of materialization is more directly functional in *Chinnomastar Abhishap*. The blank postcard of Birendra contains a potentiality of writing which is aborted; and such an abortion led to the collapse of the patriarch's hold over the next generation. But *in Royal Bengal Rahasya* the immaterialised potentiality itself is a part of the decline of the feudal glory of class-based idea of culture. Mahitosh renders his literary quality to hereditary inclination and practice of literature---"আসলে লেখাটা বোধহয় রক্তে ছিল| আমার বাপ্ ঠাকুরদা দুজনেই সাহিত্যচর্চা করেছেন| " (Ray, 1974, 108) [*Writing has always been in my blood. My father and grandfather both were writers*] Ironically, the hereditary literary legacy withers away through Mahitosh himself. All the cultural excellences of his clan completely break down through him, who not only is incapable of any literary production, but is in fact a plagiariser. This actually hints to two facets of the downfall of feudalism. First of all, Mahitosh fails in those two cultural productions his clan excelled in- hunting and writing, which shows the decay in feudal culture. But the later implication is much more materialist than literal. We have already discussed how Mahitosh's hunting tales are feudal narratives. Therefore this disruption through Mahitosh simply means the feudal narrative can't reproduce itself anymore. That very narrative which has the responsibility of constructing worker's false consciousness has ceased to be produced.

Ray uses the idea of *Shororipu* (six deadly sins) to particularly point out the aspects of moral degradation in and social exploitation by the social elite or bourgeoisie. The authorial position may seem to convey that, in fact, the upper class, upper-caste man is subjected to all the six enemies of human being. Thus the symbolic function of the *Shororipu i*n this text is to highlight the community characteristics of a particular caste and class of the society. It achieves that function by providing a commentary on Mahesh's inability to quit drinking, his uncontrollable rage, or Arun's greed. These adverse characteristics are possible only when one has the privilege of being middle-class or upper-class. Thus, Ray maintains the motif of *Shororipu* while simultaneously making the readers aware of the privileges of the characters.

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Countering Punishment: A Study of Nandini Oza's *Whither Justice: Stories of Women in Prison*

Subha Chakraburtty

Abstract

According to Bhabha, in the production of the nation as narration there is a split between the continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical, and the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative. It is through this process of splitting that the conceptual ambivalence of modern society becomes the site of writing the nation. If the nation tries to define the category of prisoners through its sea of regulations, statistics, Government records, legal documents and penal codes, then there must be some 'intervention' in the form of counter writing which will articulate an alternative pedagogy. Life stories in India, according to Arnold, help us "understand and analyze groups that are socially marginalized, and hence normally not heard" (Arnold and Blackburn 6). Through reading of Nandini Oza's *Whither Justice: Stories of Women in Prison*, I will then argue how micro narratives of 'criminals' depicted in this book are performatives where the victim is the subject of self-representation and signification.

Keywords: Nation, Narration, Crime, Women Perpetrators, Self-representation, Counter Writing

Whither Justice foregrounds the stories of women convicts in Indian prisons. These women are marginal among marginalized groups for several reasons. They are not only deviant because of their crimes but also socially deviant because of their challenge to traditional criminology where crime is predominantly a male preserve and women are supposed to be submissive. They are defying society's definition of women's space. They are imprisoned in the prison of societal customs, norms and once again in material prison of the State. These women are also not the privileged political prisoners but they belong to poor family background. Nandini Oza chooses "to recount the true lives of women prisoners as fictional stories" (xv). This narrative style is significant for various reasons. These are stories of not only Revli, Daayli, Rehana , Shakuntala, Sita, Budhva or Shabnam's but also of numerous unknown, voiceless women's stories behind the prison bars. So fiction is here masquerading facts and this ambivalent narrative technique is itself a challenge to the strict, universal, inflexible legal documents. Stories are fabricated, a mixture of facts and fictions but Government documents which subjectivize these women are always unbending and austere.

Storytelling makes possible a psychic or philosophical journey, which may or may not be therapeutic, and the articulation of a whole range of "voices". Oza's book is a synthesis of many voices—not a cacophony, but a polyphony through which we hear the unspoken agonies of the silent and invisible others. As Arnold suggests, "[N]early all of them [life narratives in India], in one way or another, demonstrate that Indians present individual lives within a network of other lives and that they define themselves in relation to larger frames of reference, especially those of family, kin, caste, religion, and gender. (19)" Pramod K Nayar following Kay Schafer and Sidonie Smith has argued that life narratives have the potential to affect, activate and aware. The genre can be aligned with other similar narratives in an "affective cosmopolitanism" that maps global

atrocity and suffering, thereby offering a truly global literature of human rights and also demand a formation of counter-publics through these narratives.

All the life narratives depicted in Oza's book are necessarily about their brutal and pitiful experience in prisons. But then the focus shifts towards the life before coming to the prison. Recounting their lives from the beginning then is a kind of alternative writing where they are the subjects of their own lives. They constitute a textual field that disrupts the hegemony of homogeneous and legal representations. For example, in the chapter titled "The Dam Shall not be Built", Revabai, an Adivasi woman of a village in the submergence area of the Sardar Sarovar Project complains about forced entry into her room, severe beating and rape by policemen. The Police Report concludes, "[the complaint of rape]…was done maliciously with an intention to discredit and defame the persons named in the F.I.R…[This was done in] sheer desperation by the NBA(i.e. Narmada Bachao Andolan), to create an international awareness against the Government of Gujrat and to put the administration under pressure…[therefore] though a poor adivasi lady, [she] cannot be called a simpleton…The circumstantial evidence does not support the theory of rape or assault because there were as many as eleven police officers/men and others present in two Jeeps near the scene of incident. Therefore three persons out of that indulging in any such act is a far-fetched story…" (Oza 161). The doctor of the government hospital reported, "It is difficult to say if rape has occurred after so many days. She is old and has had many deliveries. Her married life has been ling. Besides that she has also washed her clothes…"(Oza 162). The police inspector and the head constable at the Police Station commented, "You must have seen her photographs in the newspapers, she is a forty-five-year-old woman. Woud anyone rape her? It cannot be believed."(Oza 162). But the reality is completely different where there was no policewoman in times of arrest; he was kept in jail without food, water and denied medical help. It is through her narrative that we recognize a rebelling and counter-voice: "I was kept for one night in the N-police station where I asked the police for medical help, but they said nothing had happened to me. In the afternoon I was taken to B-[jail]. Here, with the excuse of examining me, I was stripped and humiliated. A bangle I was wearing was taken away from me. They tried to remove my anklets, but they did not come off. I was kept in jail for five days. I was given neither food nor water…The government wants me to leave my village and is using cruel methods to scare us. But we are not going to be scared. We are not going to move."(Oza 146-147). This is the typical story of postcolonial State where forced migration in favour of Industrial project is a regular phenomenon but what is untypical is the 'speaking back' against such violation and violence.

All the life narratives in the book are not only personal but stepped in the material and economic condition of poverty, unemployment, violence and domestic abuse, and sexuality. Prison life narratives constitute a "scene of strife … within the hegemonic struggle over so-called national identity" (Spivak 99).These narratives turn the prison into a significant site for observation and representation of the subaltern classes. In the chapter titled 'Homeless: Revli's Story" we see how poverty forces oneself towards crime. Revli lived happily with her family in the village. But again the water dam being built on the river to supply water to a city drowned her village. Then the involuntary migration to the city and job in informal sector and living in railway platforms forced them towards more poverty and finally to meet the expenses of her son she engaged in smuggling Charas. For the jail authority she is a smuggler, but in her retelling of the whole account of her life she is a victim rather than convict. The story of Shabnam's life also foregrounds the social context of her imprisonment. Shabnam's first transgression in life happened when she married a Hindu

boy. From the beginning she is then marginal in her own community. In order to save her marriage she joined smuggling in the border of Pakistan. State codes her as a terrorist and expects her to be in prison without voice. But Shabnam is not silent. In the very act of telling her story she said boldly, "I took up this illegal work out of a hopeless situation but the real culprits are the police. They robbed me of thirty [gold] biscuits from the total of forty that I had. Their offence is much bigger than mine. They are the real criminals, and not the poor like us who are driven to such crimes out of need. These policemen are in the wrong more than I. It is they who should be punished first."(Oza 187). The same brutality of the mighty state came in the chapter "The Real Culprit" where the writer lodged a complaint against a ragged woman pick-pocket with two children only to discover that the police stole the 'recovered' purse, while the woman is jailed for three years-with one of her children dead and the other snatched from her to be sent to a remand home. But in the life narratives of these women prisoners we find a kind of resistance. The woman categorized as a 'thief' "actually appeared sanctimonious, accusing us of crime. She was staring at me with contempt. I failed to understand her scornful smile or her cynical gaze" (Oza 6). Shabnam counters the State and its representative by snatching the flag from the minister's hand. At her trial Shabnam "scream[s] in protest" until she is dragged out (188). According to Pramod K Nayar, "Shabnam's behaviour in the court—an embodiment of the public sphere and the space of logical, reasonable debate—refigures that space. Her hysterics—affective narratives—significantly alter the nature of public space and constitute an excellent instance of the disruptive role of the affective victim life narrative" (Nayar 8).

Similarly, Shakuntala's story unearths the inefficacy of a postcolonial State where shutting down of factories leave its workers without any future and shatters the dream of the upward moving family. Shakuntala could not tolerate the dire poverty, children thrashed out of English medium school due to non-payment of fees and a frustrated husband. She attempted suicide with her kids. She was rescued and convicted for murdering of her kids but prison couldn't change her. She is physically alive in the Prison Census. But she is expecting release only to die. "The yearning for death alone gave her reason to live"(Oza 81). This yearning for death counters codes of prison which is a correctional home, according to the State.

Again it is not the individual women who are not responsible for their crime, but it is the very patriarchal society which often forces them to take recourse to violence. Women's prison narratives are then a kind of critique of patriarchy. A woman convict had murdered her second husband who had been sexually molesting her eight-year-old son. Another woman had killed her husband who came home with another woman and tried to evict her and her four children from land that was rightfully hers. Women are here fighting for survival, for their rights and fighting to save their loving children. The chapter of their narratives is then "Not a Man's World after All". They are just victims of circumstances. The crimes are here out of social, cultural and economic compulsions. Interestingly the articulations of the excluded are not always rational or logical but affective comprising hysterics, stunned silences, grief or irrational outbursts. But this affective mode is itself subversive in nature. While representations of the official history tend to be, rational, written, and logocentric, counter-history is oral, rhizomatic, intuitive and emotive, inspired more by individual experience. Women writers show great sensitivity toward subjects left out of official representations and readily create the other "versions" of history. This palimpsestic modality of writing is repositioning women's role as producers of history. Women writers have been unlayering

the palimpsest of the patriarchal. The female body as an object of writing is transformed into the female subject writing its own text(s).

The life story of Mukta is more interesting because of her position in jail. "As a sex worker, she was an outcaste among the convicts. It was as if the inmates, incarcerated and ostracized themselves, finally had a chance to condemn and censure someone else" (Oza 99).Even murderers declared her untouchable and immoral. The jail manual also clearly states, "prostitutes and procuresses" would be secluded from "women who have hitherto lived a respectable life" (Oza 99). This woman was also suffering from contagious diseases. But it is only through her life story we come to know how she was accused of being brothel-owner and pimp. This becomes a critique of patriarchal notion when we further come to know of her new customers who had political links. This whole narrative then critiques the sexual promiscuity of her customers and corrupted political linkages. Buddhva is an under- age and unwed mother who fails to take care of her new-born baby and abandons it. The baby dies and Buddhva is convicted. The court proceedings continue:

> The court asked my mother to support her claim of my being underage by submitting my birth certificate. But I had none. In our remote village, when my mother gave birth to me, there were no hospitals, no government offices and therefore no records. There was no way in which she could prove my age officially and the court did not believe the word of a mother. (Oza 141)

The narrative here functions as a critique of several social structures. First of all, the patriarchal social order where a man seduces her and abandons but the legal procedure was not taken against him. Secondly, As Pramod K Nayar argues that "the legal system that demands such documentation as cannot be produced for the simple reason that the state has not provided primary health care and therefore hospital records"(Nayar 9). It is then the inadequacy and inefficacy of social structures.

M. Edurne Portela in her book *The Poetics of Trauma in Argentine Women's Writing* considers women's prison narratives more powerful because of its intimate connection between the body and the carceral space. For Portela, "writing about imprisonment and torture is […] writing about the body" (29). Just as the female prison narrative can be said to be about both resistance and reaffirmation, Portela argues that the narrative can also be viewed as a process of erasure and reconstitution. If the traumatized body acquires a new relationship with the world after torture, then the narrative acts as a way to remove the pain inscribed on the body and as an attempt to reconstitute this new body in relation with the world. Women's prison narratives then act in multiple ways: as erasure of the pain, reconstitution and reaffirmation of subjectivity, and resistance of the silence that torture can impose. According to Foucault, in modern disciplinary system, society has depersonalized the body into an object in a network of power and economic relationships. The history of punishment belongs then to the history of the control of the body. This idea of corporal depersonalization is a restatement of the feminist tenet that dispossession of the body is a fact all women have historically endured. Imprisoned women oppressed have suffered double biological subjection once biologically and then by the disciplinary punishment. Female prisoners also resist the effects of imprisonment by creating a quasi-collective set of role relationships like pseudo-kinship ties. For example Daayli in Oza's book build a kind of kinship with unlucky children of the jail. The children, another set of marginalized characters who were punished along with their mothers for no crime of theirs are also often equated with the

helplessness of their mothers. They have no voice and they are forced to abandon their mothers and moved to remand homes after they complete five years of age. For a convict mother her son is brought up in an all female world where jail acts as a womb figure but will he survive the outside men's world? Prison is then a feminine space and also a subversive space from where convicts can critique the outside patriarchal world which is a more oppressive space.

Prisoners are relentlessly rewritten within the official 'power of writing', from interrogation and the making of a statement, through legislation and the political trial, to the regulations governing imprisonment. Within this process the prisoner's sense of self and world is undermined, pain is made visible and objectified in writing and converted into state power. Oppositional power of writing in the form of autobiographical prison narratives or prison life writing then writes against the official text of writing. It becomes a means of self-empowerment. Words replace life. Memory seeks to replace the loss of subjectivity in prison. In Oza's book we find a spontaneous tone whenever one convict retells her past. Memories create an experience of physical pleasure that erases momentarily the reality of her pained prison body. As David Schalkwyk in his discussion of the Prison Writings of Breyten Breytenbach and Jeremy Cronin comments:

> Writing becomes both a mode of survival and a form of guilt-ridden evisceration, a pure emission reminiscent of Barthes's intransitive ecriture, but without a trace of jouissance: "Writing took on its pure shape, since it had no echo, no feedback, no evaluation, and perhaps ultimately no existence" (142). Words constitute a labyrinth every bit as containing as the corridors of the prison; indeed, words replace and obliterate reality: Writing becomes a means, a way of survival. I have to cut up my environment in digestible chunks....But at the same time I realize that it becomes the exteriorization of my imprisonment. My writing bounces off the walls. The maze of words which become alleys, like sentences, the loops which are close-circuits and present no exit, these themselves constitute the walls of my confinement. I write my own castle and it becomes a frightening discovery.... (137) In this way does writing destroy reality, to replace it.... If it can be written about, it doesn't exist. (195, 216). (Schalkwy 28)

The prisoner discursively constructed as the 'othered' subject with body clad in uniform and marked by a number wiping out her real name loses her subjectivity and it is through writing/telling story that she recuperates her subjectivity. Victim-self becomes the narrative-agent. The prison writing is the body of the condemned brought out of hiding; it is a running habeas corpus brief against state hegemony. If the unnamed woman in the book gives up a life of physical and sexual abuse by her partner by killing him, she dooms herself to the same treatment by the "system." So if legal documents categorize these women as 'criminal', their personal narratives counter-write/ rewrite /retextualize the system as the fountain of crime. Like *The Thousand and One Nights*, in which the heroine, Sheharazade tells stories to the Sultan in order to stay alive, these women prisoners recount their life story to counter legal representations.

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Translation Studies: Each Translation, a New Object?

Rea Hazra

Abstract

Translation studies has, more often than not, been approached from a semantic understanding due to which it becomes difficult to maintain faithful translationsas it gets entangled in cultural imbroglios and personal unintended interpretation of the translator. In this paper I propose to distance oneself from the semantic understanding of translation while trying to foreground the semiotic understanding of translation as an art form and its implications. With this, the process of mediation gains conspicuity rather than being preoccupied with the semantic end product of translation. Language itself becomes an interface and it Walter Benjamin who raised the media question or the interface question as essential to translation. Language, as a medium, can be stretched to accommodate the foreignness of the original source language. If language can be moulded then the translator becomes a writer and mechanical semantic translation loses credibility to a different mode of translation that focuses on the modifying semiotic attributes of the medium. Herein, come in the significance of adaptations and transcreations as extensions of translation. They are capable of producing distinct semiotic signs because they function in two separate media. The question then arises: Is every instance in a different media a new object or does it fundamentally remain the same? Marshall McLuhan provides an insightful argument that the medium is the message which stresses on the uniqueness of media forms, so, translation may be considered a new object of art. Increased focus on the medium points to the fact that the medium does not and cannot function in isolation but form associations with several other components to convey meaning. This removes focus from the medium itself (here, translation) and redistributes focus on equally important elements that make up a network in the sense of Bruno Latour's notion of network in his actor-network-theory. Actor-network-theory(ANT) uses as its method flat ontology which diffuses hierarchies and binaries thereby placing human entities on an equal status as other material and abstract entities. Translation is also to be treated as an entity that by revealing the network diffuses oppressive binaries and exposes complexities previously hidden under conventional assumptions. These networks of ANT are not stable causing components to reassemble in different capacities so that there is no stable identity to which they can be pinned down. This aspect lends itself to the connotation of translatability or transference from one medium to another which inheres in the concept of translation without having to adhere to specific definitions as it becomes part of a separate network in a separate medium.

Keywords: Translation, Semiotics, Medium-specificity, Object-thing (Heideggerian sense), Actor-Network-Theory, Reassembling.

The dominant vein of scrutiny and discussion in translation studies has, largely and probably justifiably been to concentrate upon the gamut of challenges posed by the language in the source text when considered as material to be translated into a similar text in the target language. The word similar is used intentionally because had it been the same, translation would not be required: it would lose its etymological and functional/ontological existence. This requirement of equivalence rather than exactness is evidence enough to comprehend the diverse entanglements that lie surreptitiously beneath the unperturbed compactness of a language until it is subjected to translation. Two such formidable entanglements are that

of culture which remains inevitably embedded in language and the tendency of the translator to interpret and consequently transfer his/her interpretation in the target language. Ostensive reference is not always practicable. Certain terms and ideas/concepts are culture specific and are impossible to translate or make sense of in an alien target language which may have similar but never the same concept in its respective cultural repository. This incongruity is precisely what Sudipta Kaviraj elaborates on in one of his lectures where he discusses how culturally laden words can fall prey to perilous overlapping of concepts when translated: "Language does its trick when we begin to think in English about the social world of India, the references actually make European characters walk in the scene. Our social world starts getting filled up by ghosts/spectres/characters which make vivid conceptual sense but lack real world reference." This in turn may lead to unintended (if the original authorial intention is sought) interpretations which seep into the translated text. From the brief discussion above, two consequent conclusions may be arrived at, one being the infeasibility of 'faithful' translation, and, second being the emergence of the translator as the creator in keeping with the tradition of Susan Bassnett's *The Translator As Writer*. These pros and(/or) cons (however one might wish to view them) arise from a specific kind of understanding which identifies the object of translation as a semantic question thereby emphasizing the meaning of the narrative and how one event relates to another in the course of the narrative. In doing so, the semiotic aspects or understanding of the narrative recedes into the background withdrawing along with it significant and nuanced facets which can catapult and veer translation studies in a different direction.

A substantial portion of the semiotic aspect of translation undoubtedly involves language. It is through language that intercommunication can take place. Language, then, becomes a medium of communication and one of the most fundamental examples of an interface. Once language is begun to be thought of as an interface, its role in translation undergoes a dynamic shift. Instead of being preoccupied with the end product or the semantic value of translation, the process of mediation gains conspicuity. In this respect it can be said that Walter Benjamin was one of the few prominent figures to have raised the media question as essential to translation. In his path-breaking essay he focuses on what happens when translation happens and how translation occurs. He posits that translation provides the scope to think reflexively of language and to reveal the nature of the interface as one which is flexibile and malleable enough so as to stretch and transform the translating language to accommodate the 'foreignness' of the original source language (11-23). If language is so decisive an interface/medium and if this interface can be moulded or distorted for the sake of harmony with the source language, then the translator, as seen before, becomes a writer. Inevitably mechanical translation, that uses the semantic value as its anchor, loses credibility to a different mode of translation that has the license to modify the semiotic attributes of the medium. Herein, come in the extensions of translation namely, adaptation and transcreation.

Though the boundaries that distinguish adaptation from trancreation often intersect and are blurred, one important difference is that adaptation modifies by analysing certain aspects of the source text to magnify or obscure them thereby making it a subtractive process while transcreation may be deemed an additive process as it adds different layers to the translated text while still having strong echoes of the source text. However, what

must be noted is not the definition of the two terms but an important difference: they are capable of producing diverse yet distinct semiotic signs because they function in two separate media. They convey meaning differently because their modes of conveyance vary. In this context one must halt to ask a cardinal question: is every instance in different media a new object or does it remain fundamentally the same? This conundrum has never ceased to plague philosophers since the times of Plutarch, Aristotle, continuing through Thomas Hobbes to the more recent Noam Chomsky, Marshall McLuhan and other media theorists, in the form of their respective responses to *the ship of Theseus* paradox. The paradox was a thought experiment put forward by Thomas Hobbes. It raises thought-provoking issues about the identity or *essence* of the object under consideration. The ship of Theseus was made completely of wood but as years passed by the wooden planks began to rot and would be subsequently replaced by metal planks till the last wooden plank would be replaced too. Is the newly restored ship, then, the original ship of Theseus? Till what point can the renewed ship retain its identity as the authentic ship? Hobbes adds a third supposition to further complicate the argument by saying that if the wooden planks from the first ship were collected and reassembled to construct another ship, then could the reassembled ship with its original constituents claim authenticity? This dilemma is fundamental to the issue of translation when looked at from the perspective of the semiotic understanding of the mode. It was concluded that translation is extremely problematic semantically. However, translation may, somewhat successfully, be carried out semiotically through its extensions like adaptations and tanscreations. Following the *ship of Theseus* strand of thought, the inevitable question which comes to mind is: once there is a change of medium, does the object represented remain the same? Marshall McLuhan comes to the rescue with his seminal statement: "the medium is the message" (1). He speaks of the uniqueness of media forms and develops Clement Greenberg's idea of a specific medium. Therefore, for McLuhan, an adaptation is an entirely different piece of art as is a painting or a movie or a graphic novel though they may all be based on the same original text. The word *translation* is too irresponsible and deceptive when used as an umbrella term to encompass different media or modes of conveyance of meaning because it makes one think that the processes of each unique medium, which are discreet and extremely dissimilar with their unique dynamics, are similar. *Translation* as a catch-all term has colonized every activity across media occluding the nature of different media across which translation happens. The medium is the message: "because it is the medium that shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action…The 'content' of any medium blinds us to the character of the medium" (McLuhan 2). McLuhan also makes an interesting and radical development in media studies when he argues that media are, infact, the extensions of the human senses and perceptions and so they would inevitably have social/cultural and personal repercussions and it is the nature of the medium which determines these interactions and effects: " The personal and social consequences of any medium – that is, of any extension of ourselves – result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology" (1). He supports his argument of this change in 'scale' or pattern introduced in human affairs effected by new mediums or new technology by lucidly explaining how the railways did not introduce movement or transportation rather it escalated the scale of human interactions resulting in formation of new kinds of cities, new kinds of work and leisure (1). So, a film adaptation like *The Lion*

King, a painting of Ophelia by John Everett Millais, an opera *Hamlet* by the French composer Ambroise Thomas – are all very different media and the nature of each medium stimulates the perceptions of the perceiver differently, introducing unique registers of comprehension though all three works have their roots in the play *Hamlet*. So long as the roots remain outstretched beneath the soil they grip and bind the soil together preventing soil erosion and performing other crucial functions but since they remain concealed from the human eye, their existence in that medium does not engender any change in the pattern of human interactions. However, when the extension of the roots, that is, the shoot breaks through the soil surface and emerges into a medium different from that underground medium, its very nature of being visible, tactile and manipulable accelerates and determines the scale of human interactions as it gives access to new ways of studying the habitable space which was previously inaccessible given the nature of the root-medium. The tree and roots may be linked organically but the point is the roots cease to be 'roots' and become a 'shoot' as soon as it enters into another medium, both (the root and shoot) performing mutually exclusive functions with respect to itself, its surroundings and to humans. It is true that a 'tree' would not exist without the root and shoot but it is also true that the 'root' is a root and cannot be a 'shoot'. Similarly translation too, though it has the same original reference point and semantic value, in its change of mode can be considered as a new object or work of art. If the medium is different the message conveyed is also distinct. Once the semiotic aspects or nature of a medium become apparent, translation ceases to be so and becomes a transmutation. Cornelia Vismann in her insightful essay deals with how the procedures (especially technological inventions) carried out at the Nuremberg Trials reduce and compress the entire Holocaust event so that the trauma and emotions, which were fundamental to this experience, constantly escape language. In this essay she, very much towing the line of McLuhan, discusses how new technology, with definite reference to the simultaneous interpretation system which is a kind of telephone system for the translator's tasks, brought about a change in the medium and consequently a change in the ethics of court trials. The tribune required that the trials be conducted in all four languages of the Allied Forces as well as giving the opportunity to the accused to defend themselves in their own language for a *fair* trial which could only be resolved through translation. To condense the lengthy process of individual translation and interpretation the legal authorities resorted to the telephonic system mentioned above to speed up the process. The result of this mediation Vismann sums up brilliantly:

> . . .interpretation technology is based upon a principle of telephone circuits. Users are entangled in all kinds of communicative paradoxes. A multi-lingual trial is transformed into a large-scale local phone call, where a dialogue with the crowd is transmitted, in essence a phone call with all those present. The system is a distanced medium without distance. It amplifies voices within earshot and produces long distance calls within eye contact. The earpiece of the telephone mutates into hundreds of headphones, the telephonic mouthpiece into microphones. Participants of the trial become call participants. They are connected with the events of the trial via wires and headphones. Telephonic translation is a transmutation. (5)

The introduction of the new translation technology accelerates the scale of interactions but also radically changes the entire discourses of ethics, of trial processes and court structures (hierarchies and binaries between judge-audience, for instance, dissolve), of time, of language, of trauma and of the role of humans.

The increasing focus on the medium begins to unravel a most singular phenomenon which have considerably potent implications in the philosophical and social disciplines. It is somewhat fathomable that the medium does not and cannot function in isolation. To convey meaning at any given moment, the medium has to invariably work in association with several other components so that the medium itself (here, the translation/adaptation) becomes not the centre of attraction but causes redistribution or reallocation of focus to other equally important components. Translation/Adaptation is not a self-contained entity absolute in its completeness, rather, it renders visible the "network" of which it is a part and so lays emphasis on the other seemingly peripheral beings as necessary criteria for any entity to exist. The term "network" is used, here, in a Latourian sense in which network may be considered to be a kind of a shock or disturbance that reveals around any given substance/entity the vast deployment of its attributes. To use an example similar in vein to one of Bruno Latour's many examples, one thought of the recent Chandrayaan-2 lunar orbiter to be an object ready to probe the lunar atmosphere and surface and then the sudden debacle of the lander, Vikram, makes one realize that the object required the ISRO with all its organisational and bureaucratic systems to land successfully on the lunar surface. The orbiter was not an object whose substance could be categorically stated but an array of conditions so arbitrary and unexpected that the lack of any one of them, an error in mathematical calculations, may be enough for its failure. In retrospect, attention is redistributed on all elements of the network where the presence of the moon, the orbiter itself, the building of ISRO, the employees, the bureaucratic routine, the mathematical equations, the presence of mass media and masses, the idea of nationalism – all occupy equal positions of importance. A network is deployed whenever an object becomes a *thing* (used in the Heideggerian sense). An object becomes a thing when it (the object) no longer serves its common function. This idea is developed significantly by Bill Brown in his essay *Thing Theory* where he argues that when an object breaks down or is misused, it dissociates from its socially encoded value and becomes available to us in novel ways through the suspension of habit: "As they circulate through our lives, we look through objects (to see what they disclose about history, society, nature, or culture – above all, what they disclose about us), but we only catch a glimpse of things…We begin to confront the thingness of objects when they stop working for us. . ." (4). So long as the translation is rendered in another medium or displaced, it makes itself available to us in new ways and hence draws attention to the "thingness" of the new medium. However, McLuhan, Vismann and even Bill Brown (to some extent) speak of media in relation to culture and society, that is, in relation to a human perceiving subject. It is in this context that it becomes necessary to employ Latour's Actor-Network-Theory because it brings to visibility the complex network of translators, original manuscripts, digital information, helpers, publication procedures, rough drafts, languages, culture, critics, and so on involved in an apparently self-subsisting end product which translation is inadvertently seen as. Latour follows the method of flat ontology so that every element in a network is equally important to any other element in it. If one

wishes to define an entity, an agent or *actor*, one has to deploy its attributes that is its network so that there is complete reversibility in that the actor is nothing but a network and a network is nothing but an actor. Simply put, this strand of philosophy places subjects and objects on an equal plane where the human being is not heirachically superior to a non-living entity or conversely where a non-living entity is granted equal status as that of the human entity. This is a fundamental development in ontology as a philosophical enterprise. Seen from this perspective, then, translation/adaptation is not important only in its relation to the human world, it is not solely meant to interact with and be available for human consumption but should also be treated as an entity that by revealing the network, diffuses the oppressive hierarchies and binaries: phantoms that seem to oppress all thinking. Once the binaries evaporate and groups and borders (simplifications) destabilised, the world lies bare with all its complexities which assists in sensitive dealing of entities and looking for unexplored links rather than conceiving them only through underlying assumptions (Latour 16).

Another fundamental aspect of the actor-network-theory that is that the networks formed are not stable either and the entities (whether material or abstract, as everything is placed on an equal footing) that assemble to form one particular network may quickly lose their identity or belongingness to that network because the same entities may be reassembled in different capacities to form another network which in turn is also transitory:

> A new vaccine is being marketed, a new job description is offered, a new political movement is being created, a new planetary system is discovered, a new law is voted, a new catastrophe occurs. In each instance, we have to reshuffle our conceptions of what was associated together because the previous definition has been made somewhat irrelevant…to register this feeling of crisis and to follow these new connections, another notion of the social has to be devised…as a very peculiar movement of re-association and reassembling. (Latour 6-7)

In the context of translation, this aspect is crucial because it (the aspect) lends itself to the connotation that the concept of translation inheres: its translatability or transference from one medium to another without having to adhere to specific definitions as it changes medium or becomes a part of a separate network. The entities or materials may be the same but when reorganised repeatedly in diverse ways or when translated (used widely to include all its forms), the entities lose their former identities to reassemble and form new constantly shifting identities so that a work of translation can never only be pinned down to its semantic understanding which will hinder the necessary new semiotic associations it forms in different media and cripple its scope as art form to a large extent.

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Narrative Style and Function of Memory in 'Pedro Paramo': Creating 'Otherside' of its Own.

Ritesh Basu

Abstract

Latin American Reality has its own sense and essence. Therefore, it can not be traced by the European notion of Realism and/or Surrealism. Pedro Paramo (1955), a short novel, written by Juan Rulfo deals with this kind of reality before the term 'Magic Realism' appears in the field of literary criticism. It portrays the other side of our so-called reality. Later an American(USA) band RHCP coined a term 'Otherside'. This study focuses on the novel by using 'Otherside' as a yardstick. The novel develops in such a manner that it creates an 'otherside' of reality. Rulfo uses some unique narrative techniques to construct the body of the novel. Also, memory plays a significant role in structuring the novel and its narrative, and through this different kind of narrative, Juan Rulfo breaks the concept of time and space which always goes clockwise. In 'Pedro Paramo', spectres come and interact with living being but in such a manner so that it can not be called a ghost story or fantasy. It is something beyond that. It defamiliarises the notion of reality in the search of something real. But this 'real' never glorifies one single dimension rather it generates ambiguity and leaves it for the readers. 'Pedro Paramo' is an unrequited love story of the main character Pedro who destroys the town named Comala. But why? Rulfo portrays the answers through the narrative. Events and memories are intertwined and juxtaposed almost on every page of the novel. By all these, Rulfo brings a dissimilar taste in modern Latin American literature which produces 'otherside' of its own.

Keywords: Otherside, RHCP, Reality, Latin America, Pedro Paramo, Narrative style, Memory, Death, Remembering, Time and Space, Ambiguity, Destiny

"For, I know the truth that life is but a dream"

(Pedro Paramo, A film by Carlos Velo,1967)

The term '*otherside*' is coined by an American band, RHCP, in their song titled *Otherside*. The song '*Otherside*' is written in the memory of RHCP's former member Hillel Slovak who died of a heroin overdose at 26. In the music video, the first shot is of a man lying on his back with broken wings that seem like lips. After that, an ambulance takes him to the hospital, where doctors put him under treatment. Then comes a surreal nightmare in which the man fights a dragon, an enormous raven and his own separated shadow. He then jumps off a building with the red lip-wings attached and falls on the ground. The video ends with the same shot with which it began. It portrays the horrors of drug obsession and how forsaken it makes the man feel. In the other interpretation, the music video of the song also represents a trip/hallucination (mainly caused by drugs effect) and/or death-trip (or an overdose) of a man (which reminds Slovak's case). Moreover, the entire trip/journey of the man is full of events of fantasy. Nevertheless, the trip is not futile, as he goes through some experiences, imagination and creations even though they are not real. Another interpretation of the music video is an afterlife of the man. All bizarre

things can be seen as another side of our so-called 'reality'. The roof of the hospital becomes a monster, the shadow of the man separates itself from the body and starts fighting with him, the sudden appearance of a giant raven--- all are the creations of the man when he goes through the trip leads him to death. Does it make no sense? We got the answer from the lyrics: "*Once you know you can never go back, I've got to take it on the otherside*". Maybe the man remains unconscious at the time of his death, and that kind of (un)consciousness creates absurd things that are his own way of accepting death--- simply not putting an end but something beyond that. He takes a different path through imagination when death is unavoidable.

'*Otherside*' does not merely mean the other side. By joining the 'other' with the 'side', fantasy becomes not only a separate side of reality but a unique view of our so-called real-life world. When reality fails to focus on something, and when it cannot be perceived by the concept of the real-life world, an alternative view is needed, which creates its own sense and essence. It has its own notion of accepting reality. The song mentions: "*Once you know you can never go back/ I've got to take it on the otherside*". It signifies when one knows that he/she can never resolve or reverse or ascertain something through the path of reality, he/she must ensure or think of another way. The '*otherside*' replaces the original or so-called *real* side by subverting the preconceived idea of reality. It defamiliarises the path of reality in search of real. So here we argue that the *otherside* expands the meaning of the other side. *Otherside* is the realm where an alternative view of the reality juxtaposes with everyday reality. The European notion of *Realism* can not trace it. In this sense, and for our purpose, we will use the term '*otherside*' instead of 'other side'.

Latin American reality is the reality of their own which is well established in their history, ancient civilisations, cultural resonance, beliefs, mythic elements, revolutions and socio-economic-political and cultural backgrounds. Juan Rulfo's novel '*Pedro Paramo*' has its background on the *cacique* figure of the pre-revolutionary Mexican feudal society. It was published in 1955. '*Pedro Paramo*' is not a fantasy. It creates a reality in its own ways. The text focuses heavily on memory through which emerges *otherside*. It defamiliarises the boundaries of time and space. It also accumulates memories and dreamlike situations fuelled by a constant flow of remembering. Memory plays such a vital role that it constructs another kind of reality, which is an *otherside*.

To understand the thematic overlaps, we choose two lines from the song as a yardstick--- "*Once you know you can never go back, I've got to take it on the otherside*." '*Pedro Paramo*', a short novel written by Juan Rulfo, tells a story of a strange place named Comala. A man named Juan Preciado visits there in search of his father, Pedro Paramo. In Comala, he interacts with spectres, and in the middle of the novel, he suddenly dies. The story continues with Juan Preciado's afterlife conversation with Dorotea, another dead woman lying with him in the same tomb. From the very beginning of the novel, its narrative structure challenges time and space. It creates dreamlike situations with the help of different kinds of narrative techniques and fragments of memories. There is no chapter division in the novel. Like a dream, where incidents and events come haphazardly without any chronological order, the novel develops. The whole story is divided into chapter-like fragments, which seem to be fragments of memories. There is no particular time span. Past events and dead characters suddenly come into Preciado's present journey. So the question arises what is present? Suddenly Juan Preciado dies, and we find him talking with a dead woman named Dorotea. So what we think to be the present, is it really the present? Or is it the past? Time never goes clockwise; the past juxtaposes with the present, they overlap, and sometimes memories juxtapose with the past events. Place shifts as time flows haphazardly.

Juan Rulfo breaks the concept of time, which always goes forward. This type of narrative we also find in Alejo Carpentier's short story '*Journey Back to the Source*' where the time goes backwards. "In Rulfo, it is more a case of splitting time and of fragmenting reality than of portraying man's split perception of time" (Dasgupta 131-132). Thought, memory and remembering construct the *otherside* of reality. Metaphors and the use of symbols often empower this reality. When Juan Preciado comes to know that Abundio is Pedro's son too--- "a flock of crows flew across the empty sky, crying *caw caw caw*" (Rulfo 3). Crows and ravens signify death. According to Norse mythology, Odin has two ravens -- *Huginn* (thought) and *Muninn* (memory). This line particularly foreshadows memory full of death and destruction. The conversation between Juan Preciado and Eduviges Dyada completely defamiliarises the notion of reality---

" "...You have to know in advance, and your mother didn't let me know till just today."

"My mother...my mother is dead."

"Oh, then that's why her voice sounded so weak. As if she were a long way away. Now I understand..." "(Rulfo 8).

There are always shifts in the narrative, which create a time-frame, where past and present intertwined and overlapped in each other---

" "What are you doing in the toilet so long?" "Nothing, Mama."

"If you stay there, a snake'll come and bite you." "Yes, Mama." " (Rulfo 9)

---These lines emphasis on a real situation, and just after that, a dreamlike situation is created:

"*I was thinking of you, Susana. In the green hills. Where we flew kites in the windy season. We heard the sounds of the village down below us while we were up there, up on the hill, and the wind was tugging the string away from me. 'Help me, Susana.' And gentle hands grasped my hands. 'Let out more string.'...* " (Rulfo 9-10).

And after that agin reality grows----"I told you to come out of the toilet".(Ruflo 10)

The answer to the mother's question ("What are you doing in the toilet so long") is certainly---"I was thinking...". Future utterances come in Pedro's childhood days, and by these, we can trace him as a dynamic character beyond his ruthless *cacique* figure. It also clears how Pedro becomes Pedro Paramo of Media Luna.

It is significant when memory or remembering comes in the narrative, the lines grow in *Italics*. These techniques of converting past and present, real situation and dreamlike situation are subtly employed. They provide the flavour of the *otherside*. We can notice the shifting narrator and memory when Eduviges tells Juan---

" "How many times did your mother hear that? 'Dona Doloritas, I can't eat this, it's cold.' How many times? And even though she was used to the worst, those meek eyes of hers began to harden"

"...And everything had the flavor of orange-blossoms in the warmth of the season…"

"Finally she began to sigh.

" 'Why are you sighing Doloritas?'

"I was with them that afternoon. We were out in the fields watching the flocks of little birds, and there was one buzzard circling in the sky.

" 'Why are you sighing Doloritas?'

" 'I'd like to be a buzzard like that one, so I could fly to where my sister is.'

" 'All right, Dona Doloritas. You can go see her right now, today. Let's go back to the house so you can pack your suitcase.'

"And your mother
went. " 'Goodbye,
Don Pedro.'
" 'Goodbye, Doloritas' " (Rulfo 16-17).

Here the narrators are Eduviges, Doloritas and Pedro with one of Pedro's memories (related to Susana). This shifting narrative is used mainly to portray the duality of Pedro's character. What is the actual reality of Pedro Paramo? This shifting narrative ignites the question. And we find one Pedro who abandons his wife Doloritas and simultaneously another Pedro with a soft heart who has vigorous emotions. We can also find the third-person narrator shifts to quoting Pedro Paramo in the first person (which is also Pedro's memory) in a single para---

"It rained again in the night. He listened to the drumming of the water for a long while, but then he fell asleep, when he woke up all he could hear was a quiet drizzle. The windowpane was glazed with water, and the heavy drops ran down it like tears. *I was watching the drops fall, Susana, in the glare of the lightning, and every breath I breathed was a sigh, and every thought was a thought of you*" (Rulfo 12).

Agony extends its sphere from the narrative present to the narrative past. Sometimes this technique joins two chapters thematically by expanding metaphors and symbols---

"I thought that woman was listening to me, but she had her head cocked as if she heard some faraway murmur" (Rulfo 17).

There is a one-line sentence after that. And then a new chapter begins. The new chapter or chapter-like fragment is nothing but a memory. The '*faraway murmur*' can be traced as a memory from a distant past, and it is no doubt a remembering recollection of Susana---

"The day you went away, I knew I would never see you again. Your face was dark in the blood-red light of the setting sun. You were smiling. You left the village behind you, how often you had told me: "I like it because of you, but I hate it for everything else. Even for having been born in it." I thought: "She is not coming back." And I told myself many times: "Susana is not coming back. Susana is never coming back" (Rulfo 18).

These kinds of 'faraway murmur' often come in the narrative to show a different reality vis-a-vis the *otherside* of Pedro Paramo.

With its many dimensions, '*Pedro Paramo*' is an unrequited love story of Don Pedro. His love and desire for Susana lead him through the *otherside*, a narrow path that is hated by most of the people of Comala. Pedro gains power, becomes the boss of Media Luna, commits many immoral acts. But for what? Just for the sake of power? No. There are two causes: one, vengeance for the murder of his father and second, for Susana. The first cause deals with the feudal Mexican society and the pre-revolutionary era, full of confusion and ambiguity. The second cause deals with Pedro's love and desire for Susana.

From the beginning to his death, despite marrying Susana later, he can not achieve the love of Susana or the 'Susana' he always seeks. For this, he becomes "a heap of stones"(Rulfo 123). When Pedro Paramo knows he can never achieve Susana, can never get the love he needs and wants, he chooses the *otherside*. He sleeps with many women, kills many people, abandons his wife Doloritas and commits other immoral acts. By all these and without Susana San Juan, "he

was used to seeing some part of himself die each day'(Rulfo 122). It is another reality of a bad man. Through his own utterances, we find a different reality of Pedro Paramo. It creates ambiguity when we see the ruthless cacique with a melting heart inside---

" "I felt as if Heaven had opened. I wanted to run to you. To surround you with happiness. To cry. And I did cry, Susana, when I knew you were coming back." " (Rulfo 81).

He was not happy at all; he did not remain conscious all the time as we come to know from Eduviges--

" "I got into bed with him full of love and embraced him but he'd been out on a spree the day before and was all tired out. He coughed and coughed but all he did was put his legs between mine." " (Rulfo 16).

Susana is in Pedro's head all the time. His *cacique* figure gives him enough power to achieve many women but fails to achieve Susana's love. He tries to achieve love in the other way, which is morally wrong, but at the same time, it may be reviewed as the other way to digest unavoidable destiny. When Pedro fails to attain the love in real life situation, he takes it on the *otherside*---

" He thought of Susana San Juan then of the girl he had slept with a short while ago. That startled, trembling little body. Her heart in her mouth from fear. "A handful of flesh", he called her. And when he embraced her he tried to change her body into that of Susana San Juan. "A woman isn't of this world." (Rulfo 107).

On the otherside of all those deeds and destructions of Pedro Paramo is another Pedro with his love for Susana. Similarly, the *otherside* of the dead Comala is Susana, who is life. The town was alive until Susana's death. For Susana, Pedro destroys everything. In the last moments in front of his empty ruined land Pedro still thinks of Susana if she comes back---

" "Susana," he said, and closed his eyes. "I begged you to come back… " (Rulfo 122)

After their death, characters come in conversations, and some do not realise that they are already dead. Characters speak even after their death, lying in their graves, in a simple manner so that it seems natural and mundane---

"I'm here, face up, thinking about those days to forget my loneliness. Because I won't be lying here for only a little while. And I'm not in my mother's bed, I'm in a black box, like the coffins they use for burying the dead. Because I'm dead.…" (Rulfo 73-74).

It becomes clear that the dialogues between Juan Preciado and Dorotea coincides with the narrative present and indicates that there is not going to be a future. Dorotea says, "It's all the same" (Rulfo 56). The life-in-death experience again and again in the novel is a never-ending process of frustration. So there is also a nihilist tone in Rulfo's book. It becomes harsher when Juan Preciado accustoms with the dead Comala---

" "Yes, the village is full of echoes. They don't scare me anymore. I hear the dogs howling and I let them howl, because I know there aren't any dogs here anymore. And on windy days you can hear the wind shaking the leaves, but you already know there aren't any trees. There must have been trees here once, or where would the leaves have come from? " (Rulfo 40).

The third person narratorial voice goes into the depth of Pedro Paramo's head and reveals the contradictory personality in him. In one fragment, we see him misbehaving with his wife Doloritas, and just after that, he becomes a complete different Pedro full of love and vigour.

All unrealistic incidents parallelly seem mundane and natural. By reversing the time, destiny

can not be changed. And what is our destiny but to return to the source or earth? In '*Pedro Paramo*', we can hear Pedro saying, "Everybody chooses the same path, Everybody goes away." (Rulfo 122).

Death and life converge into a single reality --- that all things are going to an unavoidable end. Therefore, the journey against physical age is nothing other than a journey towards an infinite end. It is just another reality of destiny. It evokes the *otherside*.

Death as a trope regulates the text, and memory plays a significant role to achieve this consciousness. The function of memory is consequently empowered by the unique style of narrative. Memory keeps alive the dead Comala from the amnesia and total oblivion. These narrative techniques with the constant flow of memory and picturisation of death somehow manage to touch destiny---

"The way we uncoil
Return to the soil
Flaws are everything
And chaos reigns."
(*Deform to Form a Star*, A song by Steven Wilson

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