

## **Social Relationships Through Feminist Lens**

Jhuma Chakraborty

**Abstract:** *This paper endeavours to discuss two real life relationships from the perspective of two philosophers- Carol Gilligan, a renowned psychologist and philosopher and Simone de Beauvoir an existentialist philosopher. I will show how the readings of these relations become difficult from the perspectives of two philosophies. Both of them have critiqued the patriarchal top down structure like any other feminist and have explored and interpreted human relations from novel perspectives. Gilligan maintains that human beings are essentially related. Gilligan suggests that the entire relational network of a society can be sustained through care and empathetic listening of the voices of the 'Other'. Beauvoir is an existentialist philosopher who maintains that human existence creates his/her being through freedom. One should go beyond the constraints of our contingent existence and give meaning to everyday relations through a never-ending venture of taking new projects.*

**Keywords:** Relational self, voice, empathetic listening, freedom, facticity.

### ***Introduction***

My paper focuses on two stories and their interpretation from feminist perspective. I am concerned with the ethical aspect of the two happenings. I want to discuss them from feminist perspective simply because patriarchal values will not appreciate the moral dilemma involved in these two stories. These are real life stories and are not a product of my imagination. The names of the characters are the only changes that I have made and the rest has been a description of what actually occurred.

My paper will have four sections. In the first section, I will discuss two traditionally accepted main stream theories in brief. In the second section I will narrate the stories. In the third section I will sketch the structure of the two feminist theories in brief; one by existentialist thinker Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) and another by Carrol Gilligan (1936-), a very prominent feminist ethical theorist of our time. Gilligan is a very important

turning point in the history of ethical theories. In the fourth section I will look at the events through the lens of the above-mentioned feminist theories and will highlight the predicaments and moral dilemmas involved in these relational networks.

### *The conceptual frame*

Gilligan has proposed a care theory which can be treated as an alternative to traditional mainstream ethical theories. The feminist ethical theories question the God's eye view of the mainstream ethics where the latter ignores the importance of context, conventions, the situatedness of particular actions and also the lived experiences of the actors.

Let us consider an example of mainstream ethical theory in brief. The famous German theorist Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) proposes that an action is right only when it can be universalised. It is the categorical imperative in us, the unconditional command of our conscience that decides the moral worth of an action. The moral worth of actions is not to be decided on the basis of their consequences. His most important dictum is 'Act as if the maxim of our action were to become by our will a universal law of nature' (*Critique of Practical Reason* p.139.) According to this theory one can lie only when one can will that everyone else can lie. One cannot break a promise because breaking promise cannot be universalised.

Another most significant ethical theory has been proposed by famous English philosopher John Stuart Mill (1806-1873). Mill's Utilitarianism is the principal foundation of modern liberalism that dictates the global economic scenario. Utility, or the Greatest Happiness Principle holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness, Mill refers to pleasure and absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain and the absence of pleasure. It would be a misunderstanding to think that Mill was unconcerned about the well-being of collective good. Mill's altruism dreams of collective happiness and thus insists on the principle of 'Greatest happiness of the Greatest number'. Mill's theory is considered to be ideal form of utilitarianism where he introduced the notion of qualitative measure of pleasure.

All these theories propose apriori principles based on reason totally marginalising the emotive aspect of a particular action. Moreover, the God's eye view of these theories ignores the importance of contexts, conventions, situatedness of particular actions as has been mentioned. The feminists critique this approach.

I am focussing on two feminist theories - one popularised by Carol Gilligan and another by Simone de Beauvoir the French feminist of the early twentieth century and the other is by Carol Gilligan(1936-). I have chosen these theories considering their importance in the postmodern era and also with a view to show how some relations put us in a moral dilemma regarding the decision of the moral worth of these actions.

Let me first narrate relationships as I have perceived them before I get into the feminist ethical theories.

### *The first case study*

The first story is that of Kakoli, a widow who feels that the quality of her life has improved after the demise of her husband though she had a very good relation with her husband. Kakoli is 61 years old, 11 years younger to her husband. Her husband Sudipto has passed away at the age of 72. She has two sons and a daughter happily married and settled in life. She stays alone in her flat at Narendrapur, Kolkata. She was a very efficient home maker and a caring mother. She could never imagine a life without her husband. Initially she was in deep depression after the sudden demise of her husband but gradually she could face the world overcoming the intense pain through which she was going.

After almost a year she started realising that her quality of life is much better in comparison to her previous life. She realised that she could never address her desires after her marriage. Sudipto was considerate and kind but Kakoli had a huge family with two unmarried sisters-in-law, one brother-in-law, her father and mother-in-law. She could sing very well and was good in her studies but had to discontinue when her mother-in-law fell ill. Everyone wanted her to pursue her studies but she herself decided to discontinue in order to take care of her family. Eventually she had two sons and a daughter. She had a heavy load of work, an ever-ending multitasking like any other homemaker. Her daughters and her son are happily settled.

Initially she felt ashamed of her change of attitude. Her deep rooted patriarchal values did not allow her to feel happier than before. But with time she could identify the reasons of her well-being. For the first time in her life she looked at her own self which she never did before. She was always a wife or a mother or a very caring daughter-in-law but She was never herself. Life appeared so beautiful and different as if she is reborn. She does not have any grudge against anyone. She is no more angry with her sister-in-law and her son. She can understand them better. She has become social, more connected, more concerned about others. She

keeps in touch with her friends and relatives. Her son, some of her relatives resent this change in her behaviour but she is not vulnerable any more. She can ignore their attitude while leading a happy creative life. Only her daughter and daughter-in-law appreciate the change in her.

### *The second case study*

Nilanjana was a friend of mine from class VI. She was very good in Mathematics. She took up science in class XI and started going to a tutorial home where she met Ayush, a quiet introvert boy, sincere in his studies with very few friends. Ayush was good in Physics and other science subjects but was not comfortable with Mathematics. Maths teacher was strict, stricter with the students who were not doing well. Ayush felt like discontinuing his classes but had no other alternative but to continue.

Nilanjana was helpful in nature. She went out of her way to help Ayush. Nilanjana could teach very well and she helped Ayush with his Maths. They started studying jointly. Ayush had problems with her domineering mother who would overpower everyone in her family. Ayush was more comfortable in Nilanjana's home. Nilanjana's mother Sujata was supportive, she loved pampering them with tasty yummy food. Ayush and Nilanjana realised that they became very significant in each other's life.

There was a radical change in Nilanjana after she joined the university. She joined a drama club in the university, loved eating out, busy with her drama competitions. She was in love with Ayush but with less intensity. She was not aware that she did not miss Ayush's phone calls like before.

Things took a different turn in Ayush's life. He used to talk for hours with Sujatamasi, about movies and classical music, in which both were interested. Both were deeply immersed in Tagore. Nilanjana felt alienated in the *adda* where the three of them enjoyed so much before she joined the university.

Sujata was lonely, she missed the company of her workaholic busy husband. There was a shift of attitude in Sujata. She started realising that her feelings towards Ayush were taking a different colour. She was drawn towards Ayush, in fact both of them were drawn towards each other. She became conscious of her feelings but had a lot of difficulty in accepting her mental state. She felt comfortable when Ayush went to Ranchi to complete his

semesters. She started hating herself for her unusual turn of emotions. How could she fall in love with her would be son-in-law?

Ayush was gradually realising that he was no longer in love with Nilanjana. He was in love with the innocent simple helpful Nilanjana. But, this Nilanjana is a different one, obsessed with her looks, her increasing consumerism, her casual indifference towards people around her.... Ayush was getting emotionally involved with Sujatamasi in a queer way. He was not aware of the exact nature of his emotions but he realised that Sujatamasi is his best friend. He could share his tensions about the semesters, his plans for his carrier, his detailed critical observation about the films he saw, his love for poems and literature about which both had a strong liking; feelings and emotions that he cannot share with anyone else.

Sujata wanted to be honest. It was very difficult for her to admit the truth. She knew that Nilanjana will misunderstand her but she felt that she should come out with the truth and face the stark reality. Nilanjana accused her mother for Ayush's change of attitude towards her. Sujata remained quiet and asked Ayush not to keep in touch with her. Ayush was depressed, he felt that life would be too difficult for him without his best friend. He strongly felt that there is nothing wrong in being truthful about one's emotion even if it is unacceptable in the society they live in. Relationships must not be inauthentic. He was confident that Sujata's emotions towards Ayush would not be same with time. He repeatedly asked Sujatamasi to change her decision but in vain. Sujata was in deep pain but she stuck to her decision.

### ***Feminism introduced***

Patriarchy is a universal feature of every society without an exception. Patriarchy refers to a system in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women; it sets up the values for the society and assign rigid frame for different social relations. We all know that this subordination is not the fate of an unfortunate lot; it is not that some 'vicious' men exploit some women. It is an all-pervasive system.

Gerdalerner, an eminent feminist, describes patriarchy with an analogy.

In this system, men and women live on a stage, on which they act out their assigned roles, equal in importance. The play cannot go on without both kind of performers. This stage is conceived, painted and defined by

men. Men have written the play, have directed the show, interpreted the meanings of action (Bhasin 1993: 15).

In Patriarchy women exploitation shows its face in three forms. Phallocentrism, patriarchy and sexism. Patriarchy is actually the institutional form of women subordination where sexism is its explicit manifestation. Any visible act or speech, attitude or theory that treats women as inferior to men can be labelled as sexism. Many eminent thinkers such as Aristotle (384BC-322BC), Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), Freud (1856-1939) have explicitly depicted women as inferior to men. The root of sexism is androcentrism or phallocentrism that discriminate women at the level of thought or at the conceptual level. Phallocentrism is actually the basis of both sexism and patriarchy.

In the postmodern era Feminism is a strong voice against women's marginalisation. It began with women activism starting from Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) and then subsequently by American and British movements where it was chiefly confined to the demand for certain rights; for example, right to education, right to vote etc. The conceptual or the philosophical basis of these demands against marginalisation was developed in the seventies of twentieth century.

As far feminism is concerned there are some misconceptions that must be clarified before we start discussing the theories which we want to discuss in this paper.

First, in last forty years we have witnessed quite a good number of feminist theories differing radically from one another. What is exactly common among them that puts them under the umbrella term 'feminism'? In fact, there are feminisms and not feminism. Though they differ from one another in many respects all of them focus on women empowerment in some form or other.

Second, patriarchy not only victimises women it victimises men as well by assigning them fixed roles. It is objectionable because both men and women have to act according to the rigid norms laid down by patriarchy, which emphasizes on homogeneity and convergences. Pluralism or variation is never encouraged. Moreover, it divides the entire society into men and women as if there is no place for the transgenders. The entire system is based on two valued logic, where one is either a male or female, right or wrong, rational or emotional. There is no third alternative. Any exception is completely overlooked.

Third, it would be a mistake to think that only women raise their voices against this discrimination. It was John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) the British philosopher who first raised his voice after Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1787) and wrote *The Subjection of Women* in 1869 demanding women empowerment. There were a good number of Indian thinkers who protested against women exploitation in India. For example, Raja Rammohan Roy (1772-1833), Iswarchandra Vidyasagar (820-1891), Jyotirao Phule (1827-1890), Dayananda Saraswati (1824-1883) and many more.

### *Carol Gilligan*

Feminist theories are generally divided into liberal and radical camps. The theory propounded by Beauvoir represents the liberal model and the one popularised by Gilligan can be taken as a radical one. Liberal models of feminist philosophy usually modify an established philosophical or a psychological theory and endeavours to make it Gender sensitive. On the other hand, radical theories totally discard the traditionally accepted systems. Radical feminist theories would propose a new model, radically different from the conventional ones with a different metaphysics, logic, epistemology and ethics.

Carol Gilligan in her book *In a Different Voice* (1993) has drawn our attention to the hidden voice of women which remains unexpressed due to the patriarchal power structure. According to Gilligan, patriarchy builds up cultural constructs that have mechanisms for silencing the female voice. This systematic silencing of the female voice is the most pervasive form of violence towards women.

Patriarchy is responsible for the conceptual framework that is deeply internalised by all the members of a society. Our fixed set of beliefs, together with the existing customs, forms our conceptual structure which lays down some fixed laws for both men and women. These laws are never questioned. Anything that deviates from this existing pattern is unacceptable.

Gilligan maintains that in our present state of existence we have realised that healthy relations are the most significant key to healthy social life. Healthy relation is ensured in an egalitarian society based on freedom and mutual respect. Primacy of reason or rational universal principles endorsed by the classical moral theories proposed by Mill (1806-1873), Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and Rawls (1921-2002) etc. ignore emotion. Feminists

points out that underestimating the importance of emotion is not congenial for healthy social relations.

Gilligan emphasizes that all of us have an inner voice and it is very important to listen to it. Voice for Gilligan is an important tool that bridges up the gap between external and internal (psychological) world. The inner voice comes out from one's lived experience, beliefs, feelings and thoughts and thus each individual voice is unique, no voice is identical with another voice. Some women are conscious of their internal voice but others are not at all aware of any implicit voice due to the internalisation of patriarchal values.

Most of the women experience a split inside, a conflict of two voices within; one is the internalised voice of patriarchy and another deeper internal voice which is denied any importance. Women who compromise with discrimination speak in an artificial voice and silence her inner voice simply because she feels it is neither feasible nor desirable to bring it up. Moreover, they feel that authenticity will disturb their relationship with near and dear ones. Since most women give prime importance to relationships they strangle their inner voice. Virginia Woolf states that a woman needs to strangle the angel from her own self so that she can silence the false feminine voice. Gilligan observed that the endeavour of expressing the inner voice had already started.

In this context, Gilligan writes:

I wrote *In a Different Voice* to bring women's voices into psychological theory and to reframe the conversation between women and men. It has been astonishing for me to discover, in the time since this book was published, how my experiences resonate with the experiences of other women and also in different ways with the experiences of men (1993: xxvi). So that now the themes of voice and relationship, and the concerns about connection at the cost of detachment, which seemed so new in the 1970s, have become part of growing conversation (Gilligan 1993: xxvi).

The different voice criticises the justification of psychological processes which go in the name of love. It must be noted that the different voice has a positive impact on relationships. This theory highlights the essential nature of human self, a self which is essentially relational. Gilligan maintains that a different voice is relational voice which insists in staying in connection with others. The psychological separation, which has long been justified in



the name of autonomy, selfhood and freedom, is no longer favourable for human development.

Gilligan thus proposed an alternative ethics based on voice. To understand the difference between artificial voice and real voice we need to be empathetic. This alternative theory is a theory of care, co-feeling and responsiveness.

To quote Gilligan in this context:

Moral problems are problems of human relations, and in tracing the development of an ethic of care, I explore the psychological grounds for non-violent human relations. This relational ethic transcends the age-old opposition between selfishness and selflessness, which have been the staples of moral discourse. The search on the part of many people for a voice which transcends these false dichotomies represents an attempt to turn the tide of moral discussion from questions of how to achieve objectivity and detachment to how to engage responsively and with care (Gilligan 1982: xix).

The journey of women from an invisible, unheard and marginalised state to a state where her voice can be heard, visibly understood as well as recognised as significant and powerful, is a journey towards empowerment. Her inner voice can reach others only when there is a responsive listener, who listens, understands and gives proper response thereby reinforcing her voice. Connectivity is largely dependent on empathetic listeners who will take initiative to understand the voice.

In her recent work *Joining the Resistance* (2011) Gilligan states that the different voice is identified not by gender but by theme. It is a difference that arises from associating reason with emotion, self with relationships. This voice articulates democratic norms rejecting patriarchal splits and hierarchies.

### ***Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986)***

The two world wars impacted the philosophical world that started questioning the importance of theories without practice. Simone de Beauvoir is an existentialist philosopher who claims that she is only developing Sartre's philosophy of existentialism. But feminists find Simone to be original, with a distinctive view, a view that is not a resonance of Sartre's existentialism.

Simone's theory revolves round the concept of freedom. It emphasizes on the free will. According to this theory the crucial difference that separates a conscious being from the causal deterministic order of things is the freedom of human being. The objects of the world are causally determined, they exist as things in themselves without consciousness; but human beings are different, they are essentially free. The view developed by Simone can be seen as a passionate defence of freedom as the most essential characteristic of human beings not bound by the fixed structure of the world; men and women are free to negate, to say no, to doubt, to imagine various possibilities.

This can be explained with the example of a gambler who resolved that he will stop gambling. He makes a choice, not determined by his past actions or events. Again, one can choose to be a writer. His future actions will remain unpredictable not necessarily determined by the project of becoming a writer. At every moment an individual can exercise a choice and take up a new project.

Another very crucial concept of Simone's theory is facticity. Facticity refers to the contingent circumstances or facts of one's life which may be biological, psychological, social and economical and these are constraints which human beings cannot change. For example, the fact that one Sujon is born in an economically poor family, he is Hindu by birth, has three sisters and brother. Basically, these are facts which one must accept, he or she cannot change it according to one's will. We are not free to make changes in the facts where we belong but we are free in giving them meaning, in interpreting them. I am alone giving meaning to my own world, constantly constructing and reconstructing it's meaning and in this manner, one is transcending the facticity. One is negotiating with the existing situation. For example, an alcoholic is giving meaning to his world. He lives in the world of his own where he has chosen to be an alcoholic; he could have decided to be an artist or a doctor. Simone would insist that we are free to construct our own situation.

It must be noted, in this connection, that my endeavour to construct my own world makes me responsible for all the projects that I choose and the consequences that follow thereby. As a conscious being I thus determine my essence only by temporary transient choices of what I would like to become. This is indeed the meaning of the existential principle that existence precedes essence. One is totally responsible for the choices one makes, in giving meaning to one's world, without any support from God or any other foundation of truth and value.

The freedom of the individual does not give him peace for he experiences a constant anguish, anguish for the consequence of enjoying total freedom which again implies total responsibility. Simone maintains that at times we try to escape this dreadful freedom associated with total responsibility. But the tendency to escape this responsibility is considered derogatory according to this view; it is referred as bad faith.

Bad faith is the attitude where one pretends that human affairs are unavoidable and necessary which cannot be escaped. It is pretending that we are causally determined as inanimate things of the world where we are not responsible for the happenings of our life. It is pretending that we are not responsible for what we do. It is self-deception, it is a lie that we tell ourselves, a lie to the soul. For example, a doctor who wanted to be a writer blames his parents for forcing him to become a doctor. Again, when a homosexual declares that 'I am a homosexual', as if nature has made him homosexual. This man is trying to escape from his freedom and his responsibility for choosing what he is and what he does. It is an alienation with one's self. It must be noted that inauthenticity or 'bad faith' is one of the core concepts of Simone's moral philosophy.

Simone criticises the serious man who with a spirit of seriousness accepts the conventional moral norms without questioning it, as if they are absolute, unchangeable necessary truths. We must remember that conventional morality is contingent, relative, a morality that is associated with a particular time and place.

Thus, to live is to transcend facticity by giving meaning to a situation, leading an authentic life not following the existing norms like a serious man without questioning them. To live a life of authenticity she/he will have to go against the accepted norms of morality, the age-old conventions that has never been questioned. One has to exercise his freedom by taking up new projects. He creates his own being from mere existence. He becomes responsible for his actions and psychologically in a state of angst which is associated with his freedom and responsibility.

### *Situating the case studies in perspective*

We have sketched two prominent feminist theories simply because we want to see how unconventional emotional relationships are interpreted from the feminist perspectives. We have first discussed Gilligan's theory of

care followed by Simone's views; here we will first consider the stories through Simone's lens.

If we consider the first story about the widow Kakoli through the lens of Simone we can see that Kakoli has given a new meaning to her present situation. She has transcended the facticity (for instance being alone) by taking up a new project where she can nurture her creativity through her music classes, treating her friends with interesting yummy food on which she is experimenting constantly, her gardening, her story writings and her social relations. She is more connected than before with her relatives and friends. She is no longer under the shadow of her husband or anyone else. She is enjoying every moment of her independence. Kakoli is leading an authentic meaningful life according to Simone's theory where she has given new meaning to his present existence and she is willing to take responsibilities associated with her decisions.

In the second story, Sujata, Nilanjanas mother, is in direct conflict with patriarchal values which will not allow any member of the society to deviate from the roles assigned to him or her. It will condemn any emotional relation between Sujata and Ayush.

It is to be noted that Simone's theory is prone to questioning the conventional social roles. It revolves round the concept of freedom and authenticity. Sujata has exercised her freedom. She has not suppressed her feelings, she has not lied to her soul and her closest one's. In Simone's language she is not acting in accordance with bad faith. She has exercised her agency and has taken up the project of not to be in touch with Ayush. Simone's framework will treat Sujata and Ayush as two adult individuals who could have opted for a serious relationship. One can argue that Sujata is denying her desire to get close to Ayush and thus acting according to bad faith. We must acknowledge that this is a complex problem where it is difficult to decide whether Sujata is silencing her desire to be with Ayush. The situation itself is ambiguous and we cannot expect black and white solutions of these complex issues.

Gilligan's theory revolves round the concept of care which implies respect for self and the other. In other words, it means carving out one's own space and letting other to do the same. In Gilligan's framework, it is important to give equal emphasis on the needs of both the individuals within the relationship. This ethical theory is about proper communication between two individuals. Kakoli was always caring for others but not towards her own self. This story is totally in tune with Gilligan for here she focuses on

her own needs and needs of others as well. Her relationship with her relatives has improved. She feels fulfilled and all her grudges get dissolved in her constructive happy life. Her silent voice has been expressed and heard by some of her close relatives and friends.

Gilligan's care theory will be difficult to apply in Sujata's case. The emotional situation does not allow Sujata to care for herself and her daughter simultaneously. In this story, Gilligan's care model gets crippled and thus inapplicable in any triangular relationship. A theory can ideally chalk out a diagram of neat relationship between two individuals. But real-life situations are complex, where it is very difficult to decide the distribution of care among the partners involved.

Many of us will argue that the feminist theories are not always helping us in preserving social relationships. They will insist that patriarchal values should not be discarded without consideration. It works in different forms in different cultures and in many cases, it is effective in preserving and sustaining social relationships.

If we give more emphasis on freedom and agency then there is a high probability that peaceful, comfortable emotional zones will be affected. Many feminists will value freedom and agency at the cost of giving up the desires of comfortable emotional ties. Again, care model cannot help us understanding a triangular relationship or in other complex emotional structures.

There is no criterion on the basis of which we can prefer one model over others. Since care ethics believes in showing equal respect to different perspectives we can argue that it is suitable for social wellbeing. Collective harmony can be an acid test for preferring one theory. But care has its limitation as has already been shown.

### ***References***

- Bhasin, Kamala, 1993. *What is Patriarchy*. New Delhi: Kali for Women.
- de Beauvoir, Simone, 1984. *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (trans. Bernaede Frechtman). Kingston: Citadel Press.
- Gilligan, Carol, 1982. *In a Different Voice*. USA: Harvard University Press.
- Gilligan, Carol, 2011. *Joining the Resistance*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Moitra, Shefali, 2002. *Feminist Thought*. Kolkata: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd. in association with Centre of Advanced study in Philosophy, Jadavpur University.

Mukherjee, Bidisa, 2008. *Redefining Ethics as Care*. Kolkata: Papyrus.

Lavine, T. Z., 1984. *From Socrates to Sartre: The philosophic Quest*. USA: Bantam Books.

## **Inscribing the Self by the Cultural Others: Kailashbashi Debi and Saradasundari Debi**

Maroona Murmu

**Abstract:** *Western literary autobiography is conventionally conceived of as a unique form of self-presentation by a 'singular entity' proclaiming his superiority over and distinction from a myriad of relative nonentities. This paper shall try to socially locate the autobiographical endeavour and the essence of the lives of two Hindu bhadramahilas through their diary and autobiography. An attempt would be made to find out the significance of the distinguished 'I' when a woman constructs her autonomous entity and the agency of others around her. It will be explored whether self-construction of women whose families were active in the socio-political transition in nineteenth-century Bengal bore marks of an 'idiosyncratic,' 'individuated,' 'inviolable,' 'singular' self-considered essential for life-writing.*

**Keywords:** Personal Narratives, Agential Voices, Female Experiences, Emotions, Fragmented Subjectivities, Dismembered Recollections.

### ***Introduction***

Literary autobiography being predominantly a male legacy from the West, it was conceived to be a unique form of self-presentation by a 'singular entity' with a coherent worldview proclaiming *his* superiority over, and distinction from a myriad of relative non-entities (Weintraub 1978; Ellis 2000). Unlike in the West, the first biography written in Bengali happens to be *Naricharit* (Lives of Women) by a Christian woman Saudamini Martha Sinha (1865), a high caste Hindu housewife from a conservative rural household. Similarly, Rassundari Debi's *Amar Jiban* (My Life) (1868) holds the distinction of being the first autobiography written in Bengali. These were penned about three decades before 'renaissance men' from Bengal started writing about their lives, the first being Debendranath Tagore's *Swarachita Jiban-Charit* (A Self-Written Account of Life) (1898).

This paper attempts to socially locate the autobiographical endeavour and the essence of the lives of two Hindu *bhadramahilas* - Kailashbashini Debi and Saradasundari Debi - through their diary and autobiography. The diary explored here is that of Kailashbashini Debi (Kailashbashini Debi 1982) dealing with the period 1846–73. This, arguably, is the only one maintained by a woman of nineteenth-century Bengal. It was first serialised in the Bengali monthly, *Basumati* in 1953, with the title ‘Janaika Grihabodhur Diary’ (Diary of a Certain Housewife). The autobiography titled *Keshabjanani Debi Saradasundarir Atmakatha* (Life-Story of Saradasundari: The Mother of Keshab) was dictated by Saradasundari Debi to her grandson-in-law Jogendralal Khastagir in 1892 when she claims she was 73 years old and completes it in 1900. It was later republished as ‘Atmakatha’ (Saradasundari Debi 1982). I have looked into the reprinted versions of the texts in the second volume of *Atmakatha* (Jana et al. 1982).

Kailashbashini Debi was married to Kishorichand Mitra (1822–73) who was an enlightened social reformer associated with the British India Association, and the iconoclastic Young Bengal group. Back in 1843, Kishorichand established the Hindu Theo-philanthropic Society in Calcutta. A litterateur, while he contributed in the daily newspaper, *Bengal Hurkaru*, and the journal, *Bengal Spectator*, Kishorichand was also the editor of *The Indian Field*. He was with the judicial service, too, rising to the rank of Junior Magistrate of Calcutta. Kishorichand’s brother, Pearychand Mitra, had joined the ‘Public Library’ as deputy librarian in 1835 and retired as the curator. In 1854, he and Radhanath Sikdar started a monthly magazine, *Masik Patrika*, written in simple spoken Bengali prose published ‘especially for women’. Pearychand’s *Alaler Gharer Dulal* (*The Spoilt Child of Worthless Parents* 1858) which holds the contested claim of being the first Bengali novel was serialized in *Masik Patrika*. He wrote a number of books on the condition of women, the rigidities of caste system and intemperance. Pearychand writes in the introduction to his book *Adhyatmika* (1879) that his grandmother, mother and aunts read Bengali books. They were capable of writing in Bengali and keeping accounts. Thus, Kailashbashini hails from a progressive family in nineteenth-century Bengal which promoted women’s education.

Jogendralal Khastagir perceives the life-story of Saradasundari as that of an *Acharya-Mata* (Mother of a Brahmo Minister) depriving her of autonomous agential role. His interpretation is in keeping with the expectation of the nationalists who eulogised the pedagogical role of the enlightened mother. As the name of the book suggests, he aims to present a public



image of the Brahmo social-religious reformer Keshab Chandra Sen (1838-1884) through the private words of his mother. Jogendralal, in the long preface called 'Nibedan' to the book published from Dacca on 31 December, 1913, informs us that Girish Chandra Sen (1835-1910), the editor of *Mahila*, urged him and his wife Sarala Debi to write a book about the penury, religiosity and benevolence and the dexterous household management of Saradasundari Debi for the 'wellbeing of the Bengali women' (Saradasundari Debi 1982: 4). Hence, they got the dictated autobiography published in the Bengali journal *Mahila*. To Jogendralal, this book was 'as sacred as a religious text' written 'for the future followers of *Naba Bidhan* (New Dispensation) thousand years hence.' Jogendralal feels: 'If Saradasundari as the mother of Keshab Chandra had not guided her son's religion in the fully nationalist sense, this eternally new religion would have been presented in a westernised garb' (Saradasundari Debi 1982: 4). Interestingly, being the mother of Keshab or influencing his public life is not the narrative purpose of Saradasundari herself, nor is he the pivot of her narrative.

In my endeavour to distinguish male-authored personal narratives from those penned by female authors, I would attempt to find out the significance of the distinguished 'I' when a woman constructs her entity and delineates the agency of others around her through personal narratives. Is she guided by egotism — entailing simultaneous flaunting and normalization of one's idiosyncratic singularisation — which is essential in the autobiographical act? Does her portrayal of life bear mark of an 'individuated', 'singular' self with unique personality traits, values, attitudes that are considered to be markers of self-construction? Does she possess a sense of inviolable, coherent 'I' that impels her to consciously write about her life? Is it that the self gets effaced within the histories she observes and records?

The diary and the autobiography chosen here betray selective re-presentation of life with an authorial bias. Rather than being a developmental narrative with a purpose and goal, the anecdotal depiction of people, events and activities here lead to lack of self-analytic evocation of life as a totality. The texts unfold identities with characteristic fissures, incompleteness and diffidence that challenge the consistency of the narrative. However, the patterning and imagining of a fragmented identity is mediated by contemporary cultural configurations that determine what and in which manner the 'cultural others' can recreate their selves. The female narrators might have deliberately destabilised the unity of the universal 'I' and the authoritativeness of the rigidly controlled, self-aware subjectivity claimed

by the male authors. Literary theorists (e.g., Jelinek 1986: 41-53; Benstock 1988; Leigh Gilmore 1994) speak about politics of identity and agency where the female self chooses to have a less autonomous personhood, without a distinctive subjectivity. In fact, this decentred and relational identity lends idiosyncratic vitality to authorial and autobiographical space.

The narratives relate the mechanics by which nineteenth-century society was changing, and its effect on the age, as well as on individuals who fill the pages of these female tales. Both the texts explicate the instrumentality of historical circumstances, social institutions, material forces, cultural discourses and ideological practices in life-writing. These informed minds betray remarkable awareness of the uncertainties and constraints of their times. Both the narrators connect their individual life experiences with socio-historical institutions and portray a linkage between their lives and workings of society. Paradoxes, arising out of relationship to their family members, conflicts on varied issues of nineteenth-century social reform movement and dilemmas arising out of them, reflect in microcosm the social drama which was being enacted in the larger cultural macrocosm. This interaction between personal dilemmas and broader public issues endow unique personalities to the authors which perhaps impelled them to inscribe non-conformist subjectivity.

The patterns of remembrance produce dismembered texts and give rise to complex temporality. Kailashbashini mostly measures her time in terms of days, months, years according to the Bengali lunar calendar. Saradasundari, on the other hand, bears distinct spatial and temporal consciousness. She measures time in terms of broad landmarks in life such as births, marriages and deaths. Saradasundari's recollection of such events is interspersed with conflicting dates. She also admits that she has cannot remember the sequence of her pilgrimages spread over forty-five years due to her old age. The narrative turns out to be a subversive space where the chronological, progressive, sequential patterning of narrative rationality is defied. This disruption of linearity is in keeping with the fragmented and interrupted life that women are forced to live. In reality, contemporaneous socio-cultural codes legitimise and naturalise shifting, contradictory, fractured and co-existing identities and subjectivities for a domestic woman.

### ***Janaika Grihabodhur Diary (The Diary of a Certain Housewife)***

The unpolished prose and the colloquialism of the dialect in Kalishbashini's diary hardly manifest her intellect. This artless prose-writing gives the feel

of an authentic literary self and inconsistent feminine subjectivity. The numerous erratic spellings, naiveté of language and grammatical mistakes are compensated by richness of her thought. Lacking arrangement, structure, plan and theme, with profusion of random notes on details of daily life, this text provides an opportunity for a departure from a coherent recreation of life. Carrying instantaneous impression of Kailashbhashini's moods, dilemmas, reactions, attitudes, intimate thoughts, tastes, aptitudes and sensitivity, the diary displays spontaneous urge for self-expression. Moving through a series of moments in time, while the diary helps gauging fluctuations, aberrations and imperfections in Kailashbhashini, it is counterpoised by gaps, silences and absences.

Generally, the circularity of time in women's life, with continually repetitive diurnal activities, does not leave much space for variation. Since her husband, Kishorichand Mitra, took her along with him to the places where he was posted, Kailashbhashini's life was blessed with novel experiences. His desire to share his public life with his wife endowed her with a somewhat independent personality. This perhaps propelled her to recreate her own life on the pages of the diary. Kailashbhashini's chosen scheme of self-projection is much like a travelogue, scripting her own journey of self-discovery through places she had visited after the death of her son in 1846. She provides precise description of the sub-division and the district of Bengal that she travelled through and resided in. Interestingly, she refers to places in names that were used by the local populace, disregarding the names used by the British for their new administrative divisions. She refers to Rajshahi as Rampur and Barrackpore as Chanok. The narrative bears out her sense of history as she refers to Natore as the capital of the illustrious Rani Bhabani which, in Kailashbhashini's time, was under her successors. Mentioning the battlefield of Plassey, where 'the British and the Nawab fought for the first time', she writes about the 'inexplicable feeling of joy and numerous other emotions that were evoked (Kailashbhashini Debi 1982: 3). Speaking about Jahanabad in Midnapur, she mentions that during the Sepoy Mutiny, the soldiers of the Badshah of Delhi, Bahadur Shah Zafar-II, stayed there. She adds that prior to this, even the Mughals and the Pathans fought at this place (Kailashbhashini Debi 1982: 16). One finds reference to people of historical importance made rather unceremoniously. Describing her stay in Rajshahi she writes: 'Nothing worthwhile happened there. Only Dwarkanath Tagore passed away in England (1846)' (Kailashbhashini Debi 1982: 4). While commenting on her visit to Kashi and Prayag on the auspicious occasion of Kumbh Mela, she mentions the visit of the Duke of Edinburgh to these places accompanied by various

Rajas (Kailashbashini Debi 1982: 33). At the same time, when detailed description of each incident is accompanied by the names of the persons involved, she curiously leaves unmentioned the works that find pride of place in the social history of nineteenth-century Bengal. There is silence on public works Kishorichand had undertaken in Natore - building of schools for boys and girls, making of a hospital, digging of ponds, construction of road between Rampur and Dighaporia via Natore (Ghosh 1926: 77–85).

The traditional Brahmanical construct directed that a woman who received education was inevitably widowed. To subvert social strictures and repel her chances of being widowed, she procured knowledge in English from her husband at night. While education under her husband's supervision helped creating a bond between them, it bestowed power and authority to him (Kailashbashini Debi 1982: 20). A European lady teacher, Miss Tugod, too, was hired on a monthly salary of ₹ 25. Kailashbashini's extensive reading is reflected in her literary references. In nineteenth-century public debates, there was much anxiety over women reading 'trashy, romantic novels'. Female readers were repeatedly cautioned against romantic love and illicit passion represented in translated versions of English novels (Walsh 2004; Ghosh 2006). Kailashbashini, however, was acquainted with both English and Bengali novels. She unhesitatingly mentions that when Kishorichand went for his official visits, she 'lived like Robinson Crusoe' (Kailashbashini Debi 1982: 15). When she went to Kashi with her sister, she found a friend in Lakshmimoni, with whom she discussed Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay's *Mrinalini* (Kailashbashini Debi 1982: 34). On another occasion, she writes about the bounty of crops and indigo production she had read about in the daily, *Sambad Prabhakar* (Kailashbashini Debi 1982: 19–20).

The form of a diary being private and personal, one finds candid expressions of mutual compassion and evolving friendship between the couple, evoking the Western ideal of a companionate marriage. The effortless companionship was consolidated by Kishorichand's decision to take her along. Without interference from the larger family, the pleasure of uninterrupted closeness and shared experiences permitted overt displays of affection and openness in communication, highly unusual in nineteenth-century Bengal. When she expresses her inability to write after childbirth, Kishorichand wrote back saying that she was 'cruel' and 'heartless' not to 'write just one line upon repeated entreating' (Kailashbashini Debi 1982: 4–5). Once when she was critically ill, Kishorichand took great care of her, which gave her 'pleasure even in illness'. Readings of normative literature show that in those times, such consideration for the health of the wife was uncommon. To elucidate

how indispensable, she was to Kishorichand, she relates another occasion when he allowed her to attend his niece's wedding with much reluctance. Right after the ceremony, he expressed his 'pain' grown out of forced separation. Not only did he defy injunctions on male propriety that dictated that the husband was not to express emotional longing for the wife, Kishorichand even personally provided her food, water, and clothes to wear as maidservants were yet to arrive (Kailashbashini Debi 1982: 20-2).

The rhetoric of wifeliness came with a justification of wifely restrictions even with friends. She states that in Rampur Boalia she was happy being surrounded by female company. Apart from socialising during the festivities, they used to sail together and play cards (Kailashbashini Debi 1982: 11). In Natore, she was allowed to interact with a few families, even with Muslims. However, this was confined to taking bath in the river with friends at dawn; occasional visits to each other's place during daytime on palanquin and; walks to houses adjacent to each other at night. When she visited Kashi with her mother-in-law and few other women, she was excited about the freedom of interaction, not only with unacquainted women, but also with her mother-in-law, whom she came to know from close quarters for the first time. On another occasion, she mentions how glad she was to befriend the vivacious wife of the Deputy Magistrate at Garbeta, Mr. Jogeshchandra Ghosh. During Kishorichand's posting at Jahanabad (Midnapore) in 1852, Kailashbashini complains of her loneliness: 'In Jahanabad I saw no other face. That was a painful experience... I would teach my daughter and write this diary' (Kailashbashini Debi 1982: 15). One finds evasive acknowledgement of the limitedness of female solidarity and sisterhood and vocal commitment to happiness despite lonesomeness:

Men had a larger socialising group than we had. Nevertheless, we were happy...as women our demands are few, our minds slight, hence we were satisfied with little. That independence was enough for us...When Babu went out for his rounds or to the district areas, then all of us used to wander in the garden...They did not come before my husband nor did I appear before theirs (Kailashbashini Debi 1982: 11-2).

Her attitude towards Kishorichand was more of admiration for a loving husband than that of obedience to patriarchal authority. She was aware that her life had an independent quest. Once, Kailashbashini and her daughter were caught in a storm on Padma. She was exuberant receiving a note written by a panic-stricken Kishorichand expressing his relief on their return. He states that, had anything happened to them, he would have jumped

down from the boat of the *sahib* into the Padma. Her forthright comment suggests that she did not submerge her ego as the subordinate partner: 'That does not surprise me. On the contrary, had he not done so, I would have been surprised. Not all the prayers in the world can give anyone a wife like me' (Kailashbashini Debi 1982:7-8). Kishorichand had to postpone Kumudini's marriage, as Kailashbashini was fatally ill. If the delay became an impediment in finding a suitable groom, he decided to take Kumudini to Britain and get her married at a mature age. Kailashbashini snaps back saying that it would be fine if he married Kumudini to a *sahib* and he himself married a *memsahib*. In a dramatic passage, Kishorichand declares his love for her and asks her to acknowledge that he never neglected her. Kailashbashini responds to this with sharp wit saying that it has been so because she has never done anything to deserve chastisement. From her childhood she followed his instructions (Kailashbashini Debi 1982: 29).

Bearing the hallmark of a developed self, she was conscious about her own worth. However, the confidence she exuded was a derivative one, for it rose from the fact that she was in many ways Kishorichand's creation. Having admitted that women are cast according to the persona of their husband, she opines that her superstitious friend, Lakshmimoni, would have been a remarkable person, had she been married to an honest, educated man. She likens a woman to a 'seed' that accidentally falls on the ground and grows 'into a tree' to bear 'fruits'. Attributing her sagacity to her association with her enlightened husband, she compares herself to a well-nurtured tree: 'Whatever I am today is due to the fact that the ground has been cultivated and watered very carefully... My mind might have been fertile, but even the most ignorant person would have become enlightened if so much care was taken of' (Kailashbashini Debi 1982: 35).

While she was not an unthinking and docile individual, her effort to uphold the ideal of a *sugrihini* (good wife) made her negotiate between acquiescence and defiance. On one occasion, Kailashbashini managed to cajole her mother-in-law to take her along to the temple of the king of Chandrakona (Midnapur) in the palanquin meant for the attendants. This being in defiance of Kishorichand's order, she writes in great detail of the fear that gripped her (Kailashbashini Debi 1982: 17). She was aware that the idiom of wifely devotion gave her certain license to transgress wifely conformism, but her liberties were not boundless. This illustrates that even companionate marriages were not entirely egalitarian and husbands exercised disciplinary power. She, in fact, was elated to be the wife of a 'rich and powerful' man (Kailashbashini Debi, 1982: 11). The euphoria of a

blissful marriage emanated partly from pride in the social position that her husband's authority bestowed upon her. Talking about herself and her women companions, she observed:

The world looked up to them with honour but our husbands would live and die at our directive. What can ail women who have such husbands at their feet? Moreover, we stay with our husbands at their place of work (Kailashbashi Debi 1982: 16).

Interestingly, the empathetic conjugal bond and emotional closeness faced adversity in the new familial set-up in Kolkata. Kishorichand was promoted in June 1854 as the 'first Bengali Junior Magistrate of Calcutta', 'drawing a salary of ₹ 800' (Kailashbashi Debi 1982: 22-3). He founded the Samajonnati Vidhayini Suhrid Samiti (The Society of Friends for the Promotion of Social Improvement) at Kashipur on December 1854. The social reform movement made Kishorichand adopt a way of life that ultimately brought about an estrangement in the mental worlds of the couple. Kailashbashi was placed in complex and contradictory situations. While Kishorichand adopted ways of his more radical peers of the Young Bengal, Kailashbashi bore disgust for it: 'I would not name them—these uncivilised 'gentlemen'—members of the British India Association who instigate him to drink' (Kailashbashi Debi 1982: 24). One notices how deeply agonised she was by the disrespect shown towards her feelings and slighting of her concern by the newly Westernized Kishorichand.

Kailashbashi confesses that she follows Hindu rituals without being 'convinced of its basic validity'. She writes: 'I do not believe in Hindu rituals, but I have all through observed them... I fear being excommunicated... Death is preferable to that' (Kailashbashi Debi 1982: 24-5). Living in a social world that defined the woman's identity in relational terms with family, clan, caste, and community; excommunication would have destabilized her very being. When asked by Kishorichand, she adds that she does not have faith in Kishorichand's lifestyle, either (Kailashbashi Debi 1982: 24-5). While he could risk alienating the more orthodox relatives by pursuing liberal beliefs and flouting conservative norms, the culturally defined notion of woman as the custodian of culture and familial bonds saw Kailashbashi caught between the abiding forces of 'tradition' and inescapable forces of 'modernity'.

The education that she received from her husband had imposed on her a critical rationality, but her socialization taught her to be conventional. The

contradiction within Kailashbashini is laid bare on more instances than one. Quite contrary to the reformist sympathy for the plight of the Hindu widow, Kailashbashini applies her enlightened powers of logic to rationalise the rigid Brahmanical ascetic injunctions about widowhood, which were disciplinary, punitive, and depriving. In a lengthy disquisition, she even defends idol worship, but finally insists that ethical action is more important than the worship of god. She reproaches the duplicity of professed believers who lived a morally depraved life and instigated many to abandon Hinduism. To her, religion was a matter of personal belief and not an affair of public display.

Kailashbashini exposes the hypocrisy of the practitioners of religion who made atypical exceptions for people in power. On February 1857, Kishorichand married-off 11-year-old Kumudini to an educated, lower caste Mullick boy, unafraid that this act would ruin the ancestral line (Kailashbashini Debi 1982: 28). During the festivities that followed the British and the Indians dined together, breaking rigid commensality practices. Ramgopal Ghosh commended Kishorichand's fortitude. Since all those who had gone to Ghosh's daughter's wedding were later excommunicated, Kailashbashini observes that it was Kishorichand's influential position that refrained people from creating a furore on the issue (Kailashbashini Debi 1982: 30). We do not find Kailashbashini's reaction to this inter-caste marriage, but with a degree of conceit and sarcasm she wrote: 'The Bengalis can do nothing to the powerful. He had the law in his hands and so everybody feared him' (Kailashbashini Debi 1982:30).

With the 'Sepoy Mutiny of 1857', she felt that her days of happiness deserted her. Kishorichand lost his job on 28 October 1858. Kailashbashini claims that her husband had been delivered an inordinate punishment for an 'innocuous mistake' (Kailashbashini Debi 1982: 31) but refrains from providing details. Manmatha Ghosh (1926: 118-40) writes that as a just, independent-minded and daring Junior Magistrate, Kishorichand, had passed judgements against the police at times. The Police Commissioner Mr. Wauchope conspired and reported against. A commission consisting of two Europeans and an Indian was set up to look into the case and it found Kishorichand guilty. The *Hindoo Patriot*, on 11 November, 1858 pointed out that it was a 'notorious fact' how the 'ministerial classes of native officials are dismissed, fined and suspended from office at the whim and pleasure of their immediate superior' (Cited in Ghosh 1980: 91-5).

There is silence over the everyday life of Kailashbashini for almost a decade and a half. We are told that Kishorichand remained severely ill for six



months and passed away on 6 August 1873 (*Calcutta Review*, Vol. 57, 1873: 273). The narrative being founded on the happiness of conjugal relationship, it was logical that the diary would not continue beyond the life of her husband. In a poignant and powerful passage, Kailashbashini carves out an anguished end to her own story:

Oh readers, here my book ends! My life is over. Today, on 24 *Shravan* (August), thirteenth day of the moon, on the night of *Jhulan Jatra* at 11 o'clock, I immerse all my material happiness of the world. I die even when I am alive...I have returned as a widow from Shyambazar. The sound of widow shatters my heart like a thunderbolt. Oh Father of this world, why did you give me this name and how long will I have to bear this name in this country? I cannot withstand this pain. May this name of mine be soon reduced to dust (Kailashbashini Debi 1982: 37).

Beginning her record with the death of her son in 1846, Kailashbashini abruptly ends her narrative with the death of her husband and beginning of her widowhood at the age of forty-four. It is as if the solace provided by the companionate marriage made her live anew after the trauma of the death of the son. She died with the withdrawal of the comfort. Having led a loving marital life under the shadow of her husband, she turned reticent about the helpless life that dawns upon a Hindu widow. It is an irony of fate that Kailashbashini, who upheld ascetic widowhood, was prematurely pushed into a similar life of helpless loneliness. She might have espoused widowhood as an embodiment of traditional virtues, continuous self-denial and morally glorified valorisation of pain, but she could not bear its strain. She let go the reins of her life and her family since it was intertwined with that of her husband's.

Thus ends the tale of Kailashbashi about an extraordinary selfhood, which precariously balanced discrete parts of her being: one imbibed through rational education bestowed by her husband, and another, acquired through socio-cultural prescription. Yet another offered by her defiant selfhood that was apprehensive about the ethics of perverse Westernization.

### ***Atmakatha* (Story of My Life)**

Unlike Kailashbashini's diary, Saradasundari Debi's autobiography is eloquently written in Bengali with the rhetorical force of the Sanskrit diction

and *tatsama* words. The tone of the narration is informal, confessional, and documentary. This brings us to the heart of the compound negotiations that an orally narrated autobiography brings with it. Incorporation of a male voice in the narration leading to male mediation in the constitution of the female-self destabilises the narrative purpose of Saradasundari Debi. It results in internalisation of the lexical and syntactical categorisations used in dominant male language despite Jogendralal's claim that: 'If at any place the use of a particular sentence brought about a disparity between her thought and the written expression, she did not sit still until it was corrected' (Saradasundari Debi 1982: 5-6).

Quite contrary to the assertion of Jogendralal that Saradasundari 'did not allow even a speck of falsehood to creep in to the autobiography' (Saradasundari Debi 1982: 6) one is struck by faulty recollection, conflicting accounts, evasive silences, contradictions and discrepancies. One has to remember that omissions and manipulations are dependent on a specific culture's construction of what consists of truth and the rhetoric of truth telling (Ashley et al., 1994: 9, 57). Though autobiographies are perceived to be true accounts of the lived life, Jogendralal accepts that Saradasundari refrained from narrating events that were painful and would have hurt others, spoke only in the presence of her daughters and other relatives and made him promise that the biography would not be published during her lifetime and until long after her death (Saradasundari Debi 1982: 6).

We are here exposed to the complexity of autobiographical writing when the author is a woman, the 'cultural other.' Truth and authenticity being cultural constructions, there remains social pressure on a woman to conform to essentialised feminine propriety of suffering in silence out of thoughtfulness for others. Saradasundari's selectively remembered autobiography reveals the dialectic pull between a desire to defend the private secrets as well as to confess in public the inner truth. The fear of contempt from posterity and dispersed networks of power relations disallow her tale to tell all. Jogendralal adds that in congruence with the request of the elders, various parts of the autobiography have not even been published (Saradasundari Debi 1982: 6). Thus, the female autobiography is more prone to ambivalences, marginalia and silences than a male one (Whitlock 2000: 21-2; Ashley et al. 1994: 55-8, 68-9; Sturrock 1993: 136; Marcus 1998: 18; Ellis 2000: 106, 110).

Saradasundari did not possess a conscious organising perspective to lend continuity to discrete elements in her life. Since the act of recovering the past and re-presenting the tale of her life at the specific moment of

narrativisation did not come from within and had started at a time when memory did not remain her valuable companion, the narrative demonstrates doubtful fidelity to facts. As moments slide out of Saradasundari's consciousness, one finds misrememberings woven into the inconsistent narrative. The re-ordered life-story of Saradasundari does help making sense of her random experiences, events and emotions but does not provide a sense of unity and wholeness to the autobiographical self and the text.

The repetitive and fragmentary pattern of narration is worth mentioning. Beginning the narration at the age of 73 and engagement with the process of recollection for mere 10 days, results in expansion of episodes thought important and compression of events considered incidental. In the nine sessions narrated between 22 June, 1892 and 17 November, 1892 she deals with her natal and marital life, injustices meted out to her by her brother-in-laws after her widowhood; her pilgrimages; the marriages of her three daughters; the loss of dear ones – husband, mother-in-law, sister-in-law and eldest daughter. Surprisingly, she resumes her narration after 7 years and 9 months on August 1900 after braving a series of bereavements. On a single day she covers a huge vista—deaths in the family; her relation with her sons, daughters, daughters-in-law, grand daughters-in-law; her hallucinations after Keshab's death and the role of God in her life. She emphasises upon the division of affinal property and the Cooch Behar marriage of her granddaughter, Maharani Suniti Debi. Meetings with Ramkrishna Paramhansadeb and Lady Dufferin find special mention.

Almost as a convention, the patriarchal framework of autobiographies postulates a beginning with familial and communal stories of the self. However, Saradasundari devotes just about a dozen sentences about her provenance. Her tale begins with her birth in 1819 at her maternal uncle's place. We are told that she was born in Garifa in the Hooghly district to a doctor named Gourhari Das who was deeply religious. The relegation of the natal family and lineage to obscurity goes hand in hand with the social injunction that the woman's real affiliation is not with her natal family but with the matrimonial one. Bereft of parental or matrimonial right to land inheritance, the privileges, authority and power that class and caste confer upon a man, Saradasundari might have thought it proper not to claim an identity that lineage, caste and class bestow. This sparse account of her childhood days could also be due to the fact that lives of women perforce are devoid of boundaries and settled identities. The knowledge of her forbears, earliest influences and memories of childhood which tend to shape the adult life of a man, does not influence the feminine self in the same

fashion because early marriage and the ensuing burden of domesticity placed too soon on young shoulders, make the span of childhood shorter.

Her recollection truly begins with her marriage, tyrannical regime of hard-labour in the conjugal home and her anxiety as a child bride. The rationale for beginning at a juncture of life which endows one with a sense of alienation and terrifying prospect of forced translocation in a new place and family might have been adopted by her to explicate the profound uncertainty of both marriage and memory. She disapproves child marriage that compounds the ordeal of the child bride:

I was very frightened before going to my in-laws' home. I used to think that I would be put into jail or even hung. Thinking of all this, I cried for a month before the wedding. Finally, when my father forcefully took me to my in-laws' place, I felt as though I had been thrown into an ocean. For long I believed that the dictates of Hindu religion was the best. But now I think it is better to get girls married after they have matured to some extent. Then they do not have to put up with so many disadvantages (Saradasundari Debi 1982: 7).

The new family dynamics was laden with power struggle with the authoritarian mother-in-law at the helm. Exercising considerable disciplining power, the mother-in-law took an instant disliking to Saradasundari assuming her to be older than ten years of age. Saradasundari recounts how after the day-long drudgery she was admonished for her desire to play. Rather than punishing Saradasundari on her own, either as a willing or an unwitting comprador of patriarchy, the mother-in-law reported all her mistakes to the father-in-law Ramkamal Sen (1783-1844) who chastised her.

There remains gap between Saradasundari's conjugal experiences and her ability to voice it. She says less about her husband Pearymohan Sen (1814-48) compared to the detailed discussion on her father-in-law Ramkamal Sen who was a *diwan* (finance secretary) under Dr. Wilson at the Calcutta Mint (1828) and the Bank of Bengal (1809). We are told that Pearymohan worked at the Agency House of Baig. Social inhibition, shame and feminine timidity made her shy away from asking for money from Pearymohan even when he brought boxes full of it: 'I never asked for money for fear that he might think that I come from a family of paupers who had never seen money and hence I was asking out of greed' (Saradasundari Debi 1982: 10). Soon the agency house incurred huge financial loss. The debt

was repaid after he started working in the Calcutta Mint two/three years after Ram Kamal's death.

Perhaps out of enforced modesty and obligatory silence about conjugal relationship in a joint family, it was only after poignant description of Pearymohan's last hour that Saradasundari dedicates a small section on his commendable attributes. She notes that he was a 'good looking,' 'exceptionally charitable,' highly religious Vaishnav. He could draw beautifully, was a bird-lover and was interested in wrestling. As regards his educational achievement she says that he got a gold medal in the examination of the Hindu College. Not only was he good in English, Bengali, Sanskrit and Persian, he could also skilfully play a number of musical instruments like Harmonium, Esraj, Pakhwaj and Sitar (Saradasundari Debi 1982: 13-4). Devoid of opportunity to acquire education in her youth she proudly declares her husband to be her guide (Saradasundari Debi 1982: 7) Such an education imparted at night gave it a degree of legitimacy and helped building a new form of conjugal intimacy. She writes that he had beautiful handwriting and asked her to follow his style of writing. However, talking of inability to write, she notes: 'Through disuse I have forgotten to write, but I can still read' (Saradasundari Debi 1982: 11)

The absence of the husband as protector made Saradasundari's position in the joint family vulnerable. After two weeks of his death, she began to live in mortal fear of being thrown out along with her children since the Dayabhaga School of property rights in Bengal did not give a widow absolute right over the land of her husband. All she was entitled to was its maintenance. She showed a marked ambiguity towards material possessions. When the eldest son Nabin Chandra implored her to stay back till the distribution of movable assets, she sternly replied: 'Be it your disaster, be it your property, I shall not stay' (Saradasundari Debi 1982: 14). Hardened by family feuds over property she later voiced her inner dissatisfactions and challenged the subservient acceptance of normative codes of a virtuous self-effacing widow whose fulfilment admittedly lay in martyrdom in conjugal family. A series of deprivations led her to defend her rights while her brother-in-law tried to cheat her of her share. Her ability to competently guide her sons in property matters shows her thorough understanding of the legal and administrative structures regarding property deals (Saradasundari Debi 1982: 26-7).

The successive deaths of her husband, eldest daughter Brajeshwari and her mother-in-law made her seek solace in pilgrimages to Ganga Sagar, Puri, Kashi, Prayag, Vrindaban, Mathura, Vindhyachal stretching over a

span of 45 years. Interestingly, five sessions on pilgrimages covering a quarter of the narrative deal more with the thrill of her adventurous exploits and less with her religious venture in these sites. Daily humiliations in a painfully constricted familial milieu deprived her of a self-respecting existence and made her seek succour in the expanse of the sylvan beauty of the variegated natural world. For a woman who lived within the confines of *antahpur* for about three decades of her life, Saradasundari displayed unusual self-confidence, adaptability, persistence when she found her life's meaning in the expanse of the outside world. Pilgrimage, apart from being an approved antidote to rousing of physical desire also gave women confidence to assert control over their lives and exercise a spirit of independence. Saradasundari with other women of the group took decisions as to the places to be visited, the duration of the period of stay at each place—agential roles which were denied to widows under domestic captivity. One can fathom the transformation of Saradasundari from a humble, selfless pilgrim to an insightful traveller.

That the introspective self-fashioning of identity through autobiography involves a journey of self-realisation is borne out by the narrative. The recast and recomposed past, in this narrative, charts out the continual process of Saradasundari's becoming: the changing states of mind, her stepping out of the rut of Hindu orthodoxy and carving of a distinctive individual faith. Her metaphysical proclivity and philosophical introspection are dovetailed to open-minded rationality. Her detachment and scepticism made her criticise her past religious fervour. She considers her action in Puri of lying on the road holding the rope of the chariot during the *rath yatra* with the belief of acquiring *punya* as 'childlike.' She even feels that Lord Gobinda/Krishna stopped her from entering the temple of Gobindaji in Jaipur. Her mature and inquisitive mind made her lose her previous zeal to see the Absolute Brahman in idolatrous form. When asked as to why she went for pilgrimages despite being the mother of Keshab Chandra, she retorts, 'Pilgrimages are ancient in origin – they are the God's realm, what is the harm in seeing them?' (Saradasundari Debi 1982: 25). She likens her love for pilgrimages to her love for her children and relatives devoid of expectation. As if to vindicate her stand on idolatry she elucidates that salvation could be achieved either by idolatrous devotion to Krishna/Gobinda/Hari or by merger with the Universal Absolute Brahman or through the intimate attainment of His lotus feet as a mark of subordination (Saradasundari Debi 1982: 17).

A noteworthy feature of the narrative is Saradasundari's ambiguity towards notions of ritual purity, pollution and commensality norms which were crucial for upholding caste hierarchy for upper class/caste Hindus in nineteenth-century Bengal. The closeness that she developed with maids and guards made her eat with. Once the daughter of her Kaibarta (intermediate lowly caste) maid came running to her while she was eating and joined her. Saradasundari added: 'I did not have any hesitation in my mind, though some people chided me.' The Vaishnava guru of the Sen household who was accompanying these women refused to eat with them for subverting caste-based customs. Later at the prospect of being left behind he quickly ate the leftovers and forgot about his protests. While the likelihood of censure for violating caste norms did not deter Saradasundari she was caught within her inherited social location when it came to marriage negotiation. She writes of her disapproval when her grandsons married out of caste (Saradasundari Debi 1982:38).

In the tenth session, Saradasundari talks about her children - Nabin Chandra, Keshab Chandra, Krishna Behari, Brajeshwari, Phuleshwari, Chuni and Panna - and grandchildren. Her anecdotes of Keshab Chandra begin with the absence of a proper lying-in-room during his birth. She recollects that the room was so unhygienic that Keshab suffered from stomach swelling right after birth. He suffered from epilepsy from the age of nine to eleven. All she could recall about Keshab Chandra's academic and professional life is that he studied in Hindu College, worked in the Bank of Bengal and in the Calcutta Mint. A reconciliatory refrain reverberates as Saradasundari tries to prove that Keshab was not far from Vaishnavite Hinduism, thereby re-appropriating him for the Hindu fold. Conspicuous is her revelation that the Vaishnava guru approved of Keshab's conversion to Brahmo faith; that all through his life Keshab chanted the name of Hari and counted the beads of rosary (Saradasundari Debi 1982: 30-3). On 13 April, 1862, Keshab Chandra transgressed the norms of spatial segregation of women by taking his wife to the Tagore household at Jorasanko for *Maghotsab*. However, Saradasundari unceremoniously refers to this event of historic importance (Saradasundari Debi 1982: 27). Perhaps due to her own ambivalence towards Keshab's iconoclastic acts, Saradasundari refrains from commenting on Keshab's public life with the statement: 'about his youth and mature age much has been said already that need not be repeated' (Saradasundari Debi 1982: 30). Either out of a conscious subversive strategy for manipulation of facts or as an evasive mechanism against disagreeable memories, or out of consideration for popular acceptance, or to project a certain public image of Keshab Chandra for posterity, she refused to write

in details about the controversial marriage of Suniti Debi to the Maharaja of Cooch Behar that brought about a schism between *Sadharan Brahmo Samaj* and *Naba Bidhan Brahmo Samaj* (Borthwick 1977; Kopf 1979). She retorts: 'Many have written on it. There is no need to repeat it again' (Saradasundari Debi 1982: 36-7).

Along with her religious belief, marriage negotiations dealt on the seventh and eight sessions hold an important place in the account. She resents authoritarianism of elderly members of the joint family who habitually asserted their will in marriage negotiations. Saradasundari says that her eldest-daughter Brajeshwari's engagement and ostentatious marriage are the only happy days in her entire life. Since her brother-in-law and mother-in-law were instrumental in deciding weddings in the family thereafter, she begrudges the loss of her agential role. Her wish was also respected during the marriage of her youngest daughter Chuni. On a note of pride, she comments: "Since resources lay in the hands of my elder brother-in-law, the expenditure was handled by him *but I chose the partner*" (italics mine) (Saradasundari Debi 1982: 20). Saradasundari's choice for Keshab's bride was thwarted twice by her brother-in-law. Finally, Keshab was married at the age of eighteen to eight-year-old Jaganmohini of Bali in 1856 who according to Saradasundari was 'not beautiful,' 'small', 'thin', and 'insignificant' (Saradasundari Debi 1982: 20-1). Almost justifying male proclivity for polygamy in nineteenth-century Bengal, she was unhesitant in declaring that it would not have been unnatural if Keshab took another wife. She deliberately trivialises her discussion on other daughters-in-law: 'The daughters-in-law came from different families. Married to my sons, their influence transformed them into better women' (Saradasundari Debi 1982: 38). Saradasundari might be avenging the subjection in her youth as a daughter-in-law when she herself ascended in the age and power hierarchy.

The octogenarian Saradasundari concludes the narrative describing her present state in relation to joys and sorrows in her affinal and natal family. It bears traces of philosophical introspection, stoic detachment and restraint. A life lived mostly for others, is ungrudgingly surrendered to the inscrutable mercy of the Ultimate Absolute Other and uncertainties and ambiguities of fate. Describing her relationship with God who as a benevolent creator makes and as a devious destroyer unmakes life, she writes:

At regular intervals I receive news of happiness and grief from my family. My God does not let me dwell in absolute bliss or complete misery. He is testing me through joys and



sorrows to help me rise above these... the tidings of joy do not elevate me nor do news of sorrow upset me. I look at it all as a divine play and sitting in the midst of this populous family I shed tears with one of my eyes and laugh with another (Saradasundari Debi 1982: 40).

Saradasundari thus conceives her own life and the *sansar* as a 'divine play' or *leela* of God bestowing it with fulfilment and frustration, pleasure and pain rendering her character with fullness.

### ***Conclusion***

The imagining of self by Kailashbashini is entirely relational in nature. In all probability, she maintained her diary because her husband maintained one. Though a woman of determination equipped to steer her fate, Kailashbashini lacks control over life and destiny and succumbs to either male prescriptions, or inscrutable destiny. Her husband was the fulcrum of her existence and she wrote about twenty-seven years of her conjugal life. A fulfilling marriage being her reason for self-creation and her self-invention being in relation to her husband, she shied away from writing about the self, devoid of the masculine presence. However, the fact that Kailashbashini wrote as freely on her friendship with her husband, as of her agony over his lack of self-restraint in the last few years, is an indication of a degree of candour quite radical for a Hindu woman of those times.

Selfhood and identity constructed by Saradasundari is determined by her understanding of her positioning in the gender hierarchy. In a single life-span Saradasundari had to carry out intricate negotiations and manoeuvres to meet varied requirements and purposes in marital/maternal roles. Saradasundari lived all facets of culturally inscribed identities in a joint family ridden with rivalry - subjugated childbride, a compliant daughter-in-law, a devoted wife, an oppressed widow, an understanding mother. She realised the futility of such subject positions. She suffered the agonies of such existences, navigated the turbulence of domesticity, motherhood and widowhood and broke the feminine propriety of silence. Empowering herself with speech, she as an autonomous subject publicly articulated her private emotions, feelings and frustrations questioning the very identities that instead of guaranteeing a secured social existence as they ought to have, oppressed her all the more.

While Saradasundari surpassed the ideological constriction of Hindu wifehood and sculpted a defiant, dissident identity only after the death of her husband, Kailashbashini desiring a social identity as a sentimental, devoted wife, her life was emptied of its fortune after Kishorichand's death. The premature end of the relationship that was perceived to lend fullness to her being, made Saradasundari question the stability of social conventions. Widowhood made Saradasundari break the shackles of wifely confinement and choose an independent life. For Kailashbashini, widowhood ended the meaning of life. Kailashbashini had invented herself through marital love and the ensuing freedom, position, and authority that empowered her to speak. The end of this life led to a complete disruption that made her abandon the project to write her life story.

In both the texts under review, one witnesses the inner tussles within Hinduism as well as between the former and Brahmoism. Kailashbashini's and Saradasundari's reflections on religion and faith make them atypical women of the times, endowed with inquisitive minds of their own. Their exposure to the world beyond *antahpur* made them unafraid in disclosing their inner inconsistencies, doubts, distresses. Embedded in the history of nineteenth century Bengal, 'her story' (Mukherjee 1993: 71-85) is candid enough to critically appraise the times, assess the efficacy of social changes that rocked the lives of myriads of people, critique social relations and appeal for socio-cultural changes.

### **References**

#### **Bengali**

Debi, Kailashbashini, 1982. 'Janaika Grihabodhur Diary', in N.C. Jana et al. (eds) *Atmakatha*, Vol. 2. Calcutta: Ananya Prakashan.

Debi, Saradasundari, 1982. 'Atma Katha', in N.C. Jana et al. (eds) *Atmakatha*, Vol. 2. Calcutta: Ananya Prakashan.

Ghosh, Manmatha, 1926. *Karmabeer Kishorichand Mitra*. Calcutta: Adi Brahmo Samaj.

#### **English**

Ashley Kathleen, Leigh Gilmore, Gerald Peters, eds., 1994. *Autobiography and Post Modernism*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.

Benstock, Shari, 1988. *The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writings*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Borthwick, Meredith, 1977. *Keshub Chandra Sen: A Search for Cultural Synthesis*. Calcutta: Minerva Associates.

Ellis, David, 2000. *Literary Lives: Biography and the Search of Understanding*. New York: Routledge.

Jelinek, Estelle C., 1986. 'The Nineteenth Century: New Voice.' In Jelinek, *The Tradition of Women's Autobiography: From Antiquity to the Present*, 41-53. Boston: Twayne Publishers.

Gagnier, Regenia, 1991. *Subjectivities: A History of Self-Representation in Britain, 1832-1932*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Gilmore, Leigh, 1994. *Autobiographics: A Feminist Theory of Self-Representation*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press.

Ghosh, Anindita, 2006. *Power in Print: Popular Publishing and the Politics of Language and Culture in a Colonial Society 1778-190*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Ghose, Benoy, 1980. *Selections from English Periodicals of 19<sup>th</sup> Century Bengal*, Vol. 5. Calcutta: Papyrus.

Karlekar, Malavika, 1991. *Voices from Within: Early Personal Narratives of Bengali Women*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Kopf, David, 1979. *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance: The Dynamics of Indian Modernisation 1873-1835*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Marcus, Laura, 1998. *Auto/biographical Discourses: Theory, Criticism, Practice*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press.

Mascuch, Michael, 1997. *Origins of the Individualist Self: Autobiography and Self-Identity in England, 1591-1791*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Mukherjee, Meenakshi, 1993. 'Story, History and Her Story.' *Studies in History*, Vol.9, No.1: 71-85.

Nussbaum, Felicity A., 1989. *The Autobiographical Subject: Gender and Ideology in Eighteenth-Century England*. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Sturrock, John, 1993. *The Language of Autobiography: Studies in the First Person*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Walsh, Judith E., 2004. *Domesticity in Colonial India: What Women Learned When Men Gave Them Advice*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Weintraub, Karl Joachim, 1978. *Value of the Individual: Self and Circumstances in Autobiography*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Whitlock, Gillian, 2000. *The Intimate Empire: Reading Women's Autobiography*. London and New York: Cassell.

## **Rethinking Kosli Identity: Language, Literature and Culture of Western Odisha**

Tila Kumar

**Abstract:** *Western Odisha' once upon a time, formed a part of the ancient Koshal kingdom having its distinctive history, culture and unique salient features. The proponents of the separate Koshal state movement which is going on in the western part of Odisha have been mobilizing people and spearheading their movement along such a historic path so as to bring back their golden past and to preserve, protect and promote their rich cultural heritage. The people of western Odisha living in as many as eleven different districts not only ascertain their common ancestry but also share their common fate of being backward and underdeveloped due to 'internal colonialism' including state apathy and 'coastal conspiracy'. Nevertheless, they are struggling and mobilizing forcefully to deconstruct their stigmatized identity and asserting today a unique 'Kosli identity', which is increasingly being recognized world over. And it is this 'Kosli identity' - which the leaders of the Koshal movement are using to garner people's support and galvanize Kosli consciousness and 'Kosli nationalism' - the emblematic chord of the demand for a separate Kosal state. It is, therefore, that we discuss in the present article, some of the significant markers of what constitute Kosli identity in terms of a) Kosli language and literature and b) Kosli culture.*

**Keywords:** Western Odisha, Koshal, Kosli, Sambalpur, Odia, Language, Dialect, Culture, Identity, Region, Nation, Nationality, State.

### ***Introduction***

'Western Odisha' once upon a time, formed a part of the ancient Koshal kingdom having its distinctive history, culture and unique salient features. The proponents of the separate Koshal state movement which is going on in the western part of Odisha have been mobilizing people and spearheading their movement along such a historic path so as to bring back their golden past and to preserve, protect and promote their rich cultural heritage. The people of western Odisha living in as many as eleven different districts not only ascertain their common ancestry but also share their common fate of

being backward and underdeveloped due to 'internal colonialism' including state apathy and 'coastal conspiracy'. Nevertheless, they are struggling and mobilizing forcefully to deconstruct their stigmatized identity and asserting today a unique 'Kosli identity', which is increasingly being recognized world over. And it is this 'Kosli identity' - which the leaders of the Koshal movement are using to garner people's support and galvanize Kosli consciousness and 'Kosli nationalism' - the emblematic chord of the demand for a separate Kosal state. It is, therefore, that we discuss in the present article, some of the significant markers of what constitute Kosli identity in terms of a) Kosli language and literature and b) Kosli culture.

### ***Kosli - Sambalpuri Language and Literature***

The language spoken by people in the western part of Odisha is known to be *Kosli* or *Sambalpuri* as against the *Kataki*, which is meant for the dominant standardized and official version of Odia. This language is spoken and used in day to day life by people in the ten districts of western Odisha and Athamallik Sub-Division of Angul District numbering about 1 crore spread about more than 50,000 sq. K.M.<sup>1</sup> 'Western Odisha', in common parlance, refers to the four undivided districts of Kalahandi, Bolangir, Sambalpur and Sundargarh. Recognizing their common culture and common fate of being poor, backward and underdeveloped, the Government of Orissa constituted a special agency for their 'accelerated development and advancement' which is known as 'Western Odisha Development Council' (WODC).<sup>2</sup> The four (4) Districts comprising the area of the Council, as a consequence of reorganization of Districts in Orissa in 1993 now consist of Kalahandi, Nuapada, Bolangir, Subarnapur, Sambalpur, Bargarh, Deogarh, Jharsuguda and Sundargarh districts.<sup>3</sup> However, after people from Boudh and Athamallik Sub-Division of Angul District appealed and demanded for their inclusion in the special programme, the jurisdiction of 'Western Odisha' has been extended to eleven (11) areas/zones.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, the whole of this Western Odisha region is found to subscribe to a common socio-cultural milieu. 'Culture' seen as a broad term, comprises of tradition, rituals, festivals, language, life-style, food pattern etc. Or more suitably to bring in the classic definition of E. B. Tylor, the celebrated cultural anthropologist, 'culture... is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by a human as a member of society'.<sup>5</sup> It is, therefore, that an understanding and appreciation of the culture of a particular region warrants a proper analysis

of its historical geography and the changes that take place across time and over space. Needless to mention here that as regards Odisha or for that matter Western Odisha, we have not come across any detailed study of the 'culture-complex'<sup>6</sup> i.e., a group of cultural traits all interrelated to each other which constitutes a representative culture of a particular people, community, nation and region, particularly with regard to its historical geography. The language and literature has not been studied properly until recently. This is due to the misunderstanding that the language of this region has been considered to be a mere 'dialect' of Odia language spoken and written by the dominant people of coastal Odisha including the state capital. Although during the Odia Language Movement and the state formation of Orissa province, much has been contributed by the people of the region, their contributions have neither been recognized nor have been written about as a part of standard Odishan history. It is only very recently that somehow their significant contributions have come to our knowledge and limelight due to efforts made by some researchers, historians and activists of the Koshal movement.<sup>7</sup> Needless to mention that among the many districts forming part of the Central Provinces during the British period, only the District of Sambalpur was an Oriya-speaking tract which had lost its independence in 1849 after the sad demise of the last Chauhan King Raja Narayan Singh.<sup>8</sup> It is noteworthy to mention here that all the lowest personnel of the British government were mostly Hindi-speaking non-Oriyas. The British rulers did not understand any language other than Hindi and they also instructed the lower personnel not to pay any importance to Oriya language. And it was in 1895 that the then Chief Commissioner of Central Provinces, Sir John Woodburne passed an Order directing that Hindi shall be the language of Courts and Government Offices in Sambalpur.<sup>9</sup> In sharp reaction to this Order, people in the region under the leadership of Dharanidhar Mishra mobilized themselves and in a meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> June 1895 passed a resolution opposing such an imposition of Hindi language in the area.<sup>10</sup> They not only submitted a Memorandum to the then Vice Roy Lord Elgin, but spearheaded the movement for its resolution. Appeals were made to people all over the Oriya speaking tract and nationalist writings were written in and published by several dedicated intellectuals of the region in the pages of *SambalpurHiteisini* and *Hirakhand*.<sup>11</sup> The intellectuals of the region rather galvanized their movement further following the census of 1901. In a well-documented Odia book entitled *Simla Yatra* i.e., Journey to Simla,<sup>12</sup> we come to know that five eminent persons of the region namely Mahant Behari Das, Balabhadra Suar, Braja Mohan Pattanaik, Madan Mohan Mishra and Sripati Mishra

had decided to proceed to Simla so as to meet the Viceroy Lord Curzon in September 1901 and to apprise of their demand that Oriya language should not only be introduced in the region but also that an area in which a particular language like Oriya was the medium of instruction, should be placed under one homogeneous administration. It is further reported that although the delegation from the region could not meet the Viceroy in Simla, later on, the Chief Commissioner of Central Provinces Sir Andrew Fraser, came to Sambalpur and finally from 1903 onwards Oriya was introduced as the official language in the Courts and government offices in the region. Another crusader of the movement from the region was the well-known poet Ganga Dhar Meher<sup>13</sup>, who not only spread consciousness among Oriya-speaking people to wake up and get united to claim their mother tongue as against Hindi or Bengali which were imposed upon the Oriyas, but also liaised with the British authorities to consider such a genuine cause. When Oriya language was in crisis, it was Meher who proved to be one of the stalwarts who had the courage to herald a renaissance in Oriya language and literature. In fact, Meher was so passionate and spirited and determined to promote the Oriya language movement of his time and reinstate the glory of his language, literature and culture that he went to the extent of suggesting that one who does not love and respect one's motherland and one's mother tongue can never ever be considered as an educated person. This can be best summed up in his very famous and most popular poem.<sup>14</sup> Not only this, but there were numerous others who put their head and heart and struggled tooth and nail for Oriya language and an independent province of Orissa. It may also be recalled here that from the very first conference of Utkal Union or Utkala Sammilani in 1903 till the formation of the State of Orissa the people of the region contributed significantly.<sup>15</sup> However, once the state was finally formed in 1936, the leaders and intellectuals-scholars of Orissa forgot their contributions and rather looked down upon those who spoke languages other than the dominant Odia language.<sup>16</sup> In fact, almost every person I talked to during my field work who were exposed to friends, relatives or officials or even by chance encounter to people from coastal Odisha, they had bitter experience of having been laughed at or joked at for their language, literature and culture. This has been polarizing day by day. And the result has given birth to such a situation, to which linguists call 'diglossia', i.e., when people of this region speak their language/dialect as a vernacular in their everyday life, but they have to turn to 'standard/official' Odia language as a medium of education in schools and colleges and for any other public-official purposes. The irony of the situation is that the vocabulary of Kosli-Sambalpur language consists of numerous



words and phrases which are unintelligible to people in the coastal region. It is, therefore, argued that there is an intrinsic – fundamental difference between Kosli-Sambalpuri language *vis-à-vis* language used by people from coastal Odisha.<sup>17</sup> As a matter of fact, people from western Odisha have already submitted a number of memoranda over the period, to the Government of India so as to include Kosli language in the 8<sup>th</sup> Schedule of Indian Constitution, which lists the government recognized official languages.<sup>18</sup> Although initially the inclusion of a language in the Schedule meant that the language would be one of the bases that would be drawn upon to enrich Hindi, today, the list has acquired more significance. The Government of India is now under an obligation to take suitable measures for the development of these languages, such that they grow rapidly in richness and become effective means of communicating modern knowledge. In addition, a candidate appearing in an examination conducted by the Public Service Commission is entitled to use any of these languages as the medium in which he or she answers the paper. Thus, inclusion of a particular language in the Schedule provides certain specific advantages to its speakers which will be denied to them if it is not included in the Schedule. As regards Kosli/Sambalpuri language, the Chief Minister of Odisha Mr. Naveen Patnaik has already recommended the case and requested the Centre to include in the Schedule. However, it is needless to mention here that there are certain people especially belonging to coastal Odisha who are protesting and resisting such a move tooth and nail. One of the staunch critiques of the proposal has been Dr. Debi Prasanna Pattanayak, who has been a Professor and a well-known linguist and the Founder-Director of the Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL), Mysore. It also needs to be underlined that it was Dr. Pattanayak, who was awarded the Padma Shri in 1987 for his contribution to formalizing and adding Bodo as a language in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution and who was instrumental in getting classical language status for Odia but is now so vehemently opposing for inclusion of Kosli/Sambalpuri language in the Schedule.<sup>19</sup> He looks down upon the advantages to the people of the region if it is included in the Schedule. Rather than appreciating such a move by the marginalized and stigmatized millions, his main apprehension has been that once the language is included in the Schedule, it will subsequently result in bifurcation of the state - on the basis of linguistic division.

It may be noted here that the literature in Kosli-Sambalpuri language has been flourishing day by day. There are already volumes of literature available in almost every literary genre such as poetry, prose, essay, critiques, auto/biographies, on historical as well as contemporary problems, and enriching

the literature every day. Although no literature is said to have been written in Kosli/Sambalpuri language till the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, we find the oldest sample of Kosli words, phrases and morphological features in ancient *Charyapadas*,<sup>20</sup> which are considered to be the oldest form of Oriya, Bengali and Maithili. Nevertheless, the first writing in the language is said to have been penned in 1891 in the first weekly magazine of the region called *Sambalpur Hiteisini*,<sup>21</sup> which was published under the patronage of Bamanda King Raja Sudhala Dev and edited by Pandit Nilamani Vidyaratna. It was titled 'Sambalpur Anchalar Prachin Kabita' written by Madhusudan.<sup>22</sup> Since then, the list of Kosli writings did not stop. For the period from 1891 to India's independence in 1947, Panda has collected a total of 64 poems written by 35 poets.<sup>23</sup> In terms of the evolution and development of Kosli language and literature, the period up to 1891 is said to be the 'dark age', from 1891 to 1970 can be termed as the 'infant age', as there were literature written but they could not withstand their counterparts and did not bring about an assertion of their unique identity. It was only after the 1970s that the writings were not only prominent but the writers realized themselves of their unique position coming from a region which had rich cultural heritage but had been marginalized and stigmatized by the powerful coastal Odias. Some of them even gave up writing in Odia language as a protest and wrote in Kosli language, their own mother tongue, till their last breathe. Since long, there have been volumes written about the distinctive nature of the language and its unique identity and status as a language with its own grammar, syntax, phonetics etc. Almost all the classic epics such as the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, *Upanishada* etc. have already been translated into Kosli-Sambalpuri language. And by now, there are already a few Dictionaries of Kosli-Sambalpuri words to Odia words<sup>24</sup>, which shows how unique and distinct both are from each other.<sup>25</sup>

Here it might be useful to list some of the pioneers of Kosli language and literature and their contributions which have been enlightening the leaders and activists of the Kosal movement over the period. They are:

**Satyanarayan Bohidar (1913-1980):** He is regarded as the father of Kosli-Sambalpuri literature. He established and fortified the identity of Kosli/Sambalpuri language and literature. His poetic excellence lies in his use of pure Kosli/Sambalpuri words which create a magical feeling in the heart of the readers. His major works have been *Sripanchami*, *Ghubukudu*, *Jikcharana*. Although he was a Sanskrit teacher by profession, he dedicated himself to the service of his mother tongue. He also wrote a small booklet on Sambalpuri grammar, which was the first attempt of its kind. All his

writings have been brought out in a single volume *Satyanarayan Granthavali* published in 2001.

**Khageswar Seth (1906-1987):** Seth did not have any formal education but learnt his lessons of life from his home and the life around him. He was a born poet and his vision of the world was self-determined. Due to degradation of society around him, he raised his voice against intolerance and inequality in his writings. His notable works were *Parchha Sati*, *Vote Vichar*, *Papar Maa Baap* etc.

**Prayag Dutta Joshi (1913-1996):** A well-known name in Kosli language, literature and movement, he was the first serious scholar who attempted a linguistic study of Kosli language. In fact, it was Joshi, who so emphatically announced that the language of the region was not Odia, but Kosli. Till his death he was not only producing seminal essays on uniqueness of Kosli Bhasa and literature but also promoted many amateur Kosli writers and poets. He was also among those who for the first time in 1986, submitted a memorandum to the President of India to include Kosli under Eighth Schedule. His small booklet *Koshali Bhasar Samkhipta Parichay* is considered as a sacred text by Kosli writers as well as leaders of the Kosal movement.

**Nilamadhab Panigrahi (1919-2012):** A dedicated scholar, critic and poet in Kosli/Sambalpur language as well as a prominent and established Odia writer. He devoted wholeheartedly to the cause of Sambalpur language and literature and is said to have brought about literary revolution in the region. He is best known for his monumental work *Mahabharata Katha* in six volumes as translations of original Sanskrit verse of Vyasadeva.

**Hema Chandra Acharya (1923-2009):** A major poet and short story writer, he used to write equally in Kosli/Sambalpur as well as in Odia. He used pure folk language and gave sincere tone to his creations. His works revolved around rural world in around his own village. He is known for his *Kosli Ramayan* and is known as Kosli Valmiki.

**Mangulu Charan Biswal (1935-):** Since 1950s, he has been writing both in Odia and in Kosli/Sambalpur. He is a well-established poet, story writer, playwright, and lyricist. He is very unique in his word order simple but very effective and heart touching. Though he wrote many plays such as *Udla patar Budla Danga*, *Bhutiari Hatari*, *Ulgulan* and *Sundar Sai*, his drama *Bhukha (The Hungry Man)* which was also made out to a movie, brought his name and fame internationally.

**Haladhar Nag (1950-):** Born and brought up as an orphan in his maternal uncle's village, he is hardly a literate to be called as such. Despite his poverty, hardships and sufferings, he has produced volumes of poems which are very popular, powerful and heart touching. He is a born poet, who came to the limelight only during 1990s with his first poem *Dhodo Bargachh* i.e., the giant banyan tree of the village. A collected volume of his poems has already been published as *Lokakabi Haladhar Granthabali* (2014) and also a bi-lingual (Kosli along with its English translation) volume of his poems have been available by now entitled *Kavyanjali* (2016). His poems directly come from his heart and he can recite his poems for hours without even a single word written in paper. Today his voice is considered to be the voice of the entire region. He has been recognized all over the country and several researchers have already been awarded with degrees for their theses on such a unique poet our time.

**Dola Gobind Bishi (1960 -):** is perhaps the most prominent name today as was in yesteryears, when we look at the movement with regard to promotion and protection of Kosli language, literature and culture. Dr. Bishi, in fact, represents the first generation of writers, activists and researchers of Kosli language, literature and culture as well as the bridge to so many generations of writers, poets and researchers on these issues. He was among the first, along with Kosal Ratna Pandit Prayag Dutta Joshi, to announce and to initiate a public discourse on the distinction between languages spoken by the people of coastal Odisha and that of western Odisha, sometime in the late seventies of the last century. During our interview, he was so spirited about sharing some of the historic moments of launching Kosli language movement as a young college going student amidst some old octogenarian leaders such as Kosal Ratna Pandit Prayag Dutta Joshi. He was too realistic to say how the language taught at schools and colleges was so different from the language spoken at home and had hardly any correspondence with each other. And it was with such a realization that he jumped into the fray in searching for the way out of such a conundrum. And no sooner his radical writings on the issue opened up debates and discussions not only in the region but also got extreme reactions from people from coastal Odisha including threat to his life. Nevertheless, he dedicated himself to the cause of his Mother land and Mother tongue, which continues even today. Since 1978, even as a student, he published, perhaps the first Kosli magazine *Kosal Shree* and urged for recognition of Kosli as a distinct language in itself and not as an appendage of Odia language, which had been neglected, marginalized and stigmatized till then. In 1984 he published a full-fledged book on unique grammar of Kosli

language *Kosli Bhasa Sundri* and fought tooth and nail to assert distinctive identity of Kosli people and their language. And to get official recognition of the same, he led a delegation to the President of India in 1986 for inclusion of Kosli language in the Eighth Schedule of India's Constitution. Not only this, he established a Kosli Sahitya Academy called Kosalayana so as to promote research and publication on Kosli language and culture. And with his initiative such historic books were published and came to our limelight such as Pandit Prayag Dutta Joshi's *Kosli Bhasar Samkhipta Parichaya*, which is treated as the nerve of Kosal movement today and Indra Mani Sahu's *Kosli Ramayan*. His writings on the language, literature and culture of western Odisha goes into thousands. But some of his historic contributions are: *Kosalara Aitihāsika Prusthabhumi*, which analyzes the historical mooring of western Odisha from the ancient times and gives the historical background of today's Kosal movement. The other one is *Prachina Bharatara Mahajanapada Kosal*, which tries to map out the historical location of western Odisha from the ancient period and ascertains that the present day western Odisha, along with parts of present day Chhattisgarh constituted, once upon a time the Kosal state, which has been listed among the sixteen (16) *Mahajanapadas* of ancient India.<sup>26</sup> In addition to his incisive writings, he has been a source of inspiration to so many generations of researchers and activists dealing with problems of western Odisha in general and Kosli history, language, literature, culture and movement in particular.

**Saket Sree Bhusan Sahu (1978-):** is a very young, energetic and vibrant Kosli poet, writer, playwright, editor, organizer and activist of Kosli language, literature and culture. He is one of the most active leaders of Kosli language movement in recent time. The literary career of Sahu<sup>27</sup> is said to have started when he was in class seventh when he wrote a poem 'Chasi Bhai' for the wall magazine of his school and which was also being published in *Hirakhand*, a premier daily of the region. From his school days, he started participating in Kosli plays and also wrote stories as well as directed Kosli plays such as *Bhanga Darpan*, *Sapan R Samadhi*, *Akasar Dak*, etc. Later on, due to his love for his land, language and culture, he actively subscribed to e-groups such as Kosal Discussion and Development Forum (KDDF) and contributed significantly by writing very forcefully on various issues related to Kosli language, literature, culture including the movement for a separate Kosal state. Since January 2010, he has been regularly publishing *Beni*, a monthly Kosli magazine. Moreover, he has also published a volume on the history of Kosli language and literature titled *Kosli Sahityar Itihas* (2017) from his own publication house Beni. Not only this, but he

has been in the forefront of leading delegations for submitting memorandum to concerned authorities both in the state as well as in the Centre for inclusion of Kosli-Sambalpuri language in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution and has been mobilizing individuals and institutions all over the country with regard to officially recognizing such neglected and marginalized languages. Mention may here be made of, for instance, the Chennai Declaration, which was declared on the sidelines of 'Language Rights Conference' held in Chennai on 20<sup>th</sup> September 2015, and the Campaign for Language Equality and Rights (CLEAR) which has been demanding for promotion of linguistic Rights and Equality and celebration of Mother Tongue Day on 21<sup>st</sup> February following International Mother Language Day. As a consequence, we can see that for the last couple of years there have been celebrations of *Kosli Matrubhasa Divas* i.e., Kosli Mother Tongue Day, where debates, discussions, essay competitions, poetry recitations are organized so as to bring out Kosli consciousness among the people of the region. Needless to mention that it is due to his initiative that a dedicated school called *Haladhar Abasik Banavidyalaya* was opened in Kudopali, wherein teaching and learning is done purely in Kosli language. For this, he has also written a few introductory Kosli books for children such as *Asa Kosli Sikhma* and *Asare Pile Kathani Kahema* and believes that if education is not imparted in one's mother tongue, it is nothing less than a crime of denying these children their education.

There are several other poets, writers, playwrights, dramatists who are contributing in their unique ways to feed in Kosli literature and Kosal movement. During my field work and also while talking to leaders, activists and scholars of Kosal language and literature I came to know more than hundred magazines, journals, weeklies etc. which have been published over the period for promotion of Kosli language, literature as well as the movement.<sup>28</sup> However, pity to note that hardly they come out regularly and many of them have already become history by themselves. Some are still struggling and reviving gradually. However, what I came to see during my discussion with people in the street that these literatures are not easily available. Neither is any arrangement to record and document these historical write-ups which may uncover the layers that constitute history of the Kosal language, literature and movement. There is also an apprehension about learning and teaching Kosli language and literature, given that outside their private lives, it has hardly any market value. Despite this, however, I came to know that Sambalpur University has been offering a Diploma Certificate course in Sambalpuri-Kosli language and literature for some years by now.

As it stands today, there is both resistance to such a claim as well as recognizing the true essence of the logic of considering Kosli-Sambalpuri as an independent language in itself. It is, therefore, no strange to see that linguists and literary leaders from coastal Odisha are fighting tooth and nail to stop the government from including Kosli-Sambalpuri as a part of the 8<sup>th</sup> schedule, whereas no wonder to see that there are organizations, institutions and forums to discuss and spread the language and literature of the region. The Government of Odisha has also recognized the value of such a language and literature and already awarding the writers and poets coming from this language. In fact, one of the most popular and prominent writers of this language is Haldhar Nag<sup>29</sup> is very noteworthy who has been recognized for his writings and has already been awarded by Odisha Sahitya Akademi in 2014 and Padma Shri, one of the highest civilian awards of the country, by the President of India for the year 2016. And as a consequence of such a popularity of Mr. Nag, the Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik not only invited him to felicitate for his recognition but went a step further and has already announced for establishing a Kosli Language and Literature Research Centre at Bargarh to be named after him so as to promote his language and literature.<sup>30</sup>

### ***Kosli culture and Kosli identity***

As regards culture and cultural identity of western Odisha is concerned, it still remains to be well-recorded and documented, although the region inhabits a heterogenous population comprising many dozens of castes, tribes and other socio-cultural communities. Given the diversities of its population dominated as it is by tribals, Dalits and several peasant and marginalized communities, the cultural ethos of the region is also a conglomeration of several strands of cultural patterns and traditions. Some of them are considered to be part of great traditions, some of little tradition while some others may be considered tribal tradition or peasant tradition. However, despite these diversities, the people of the region have been known for having come together as a unique cultural community *vis-à-vis* their coastal 'others' and as a consequence they come together as a collective and forge their solidarity, while celebrating their lives. Thus, in the following few pages, we attempt to discuss some major forms of cultural pattern, which are reflected in the festivals, songs, music, dances, rituals, beliefs, their food pattern, traditional artefacts, folk games, folk performances etc., which represent their collective identity as being and belonging to a

distinctive region, which the leaders of the Koshal movement are trying to anchor upon and mobilize people along cultural questions such that they are now feeling proud of their culture and promoting it not only in the region but exhibiting all over the country and also outside. This seems to be watershed in the cultural history of the region, given that their culture was once looked down upon, stigmatized and laughed at for being underdeveloped, backward and uncivilized by their coastal counterparts.

We highlight some of the major festivals of western Odisha. Of all the festivals celebrated by people in western Odisha, *Nuakhai* stands out for wherever one might be, it is during this festival that everybody comes to one's native place and celebrates with one's kith and kin. Usually it is on the 5<sup>th</sup> day of Bhado (August-September) that this festival is celebrated. Villagers and also people in towns and cities always look forward to this day. It is, by and large, a peasant festival celebrating the first harvesting of paddy which is offered to the deities and then accepted by all as the blessings of goddess Lakshmi. Earlier, *Nuakhai* was celebrated by people in different dates. However, today we see a common date being fixed for the celebration as a matter of their unity and to conform to their solidarity. In fact, the leaders of Koshal movement and their activists and supporters all over the world - from Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata, Bhopal, Hyderabad, and Ahmedabad to Los Angeles, California and Dubai - have been using this festival to mobilize people and showcase their strength by celebrating *Nuakhai Bhetghats*. They call themselves *Juharparivar* belonging to a common family despite all their differences. So today, wherever one goes from western Odisha, one can be a part of these *parivars* and celebrate one's culture in a homely manner far from one's home.

The second most popular festival of the region is *Puspuni*. It is observed throughout western Odisha on the full moon day of the month of *Pausa* (December-January). This is the time when harvesting is completed and hence, people enjoy themselves by meeting each other and celebrating together. Various kinds of food including special kinds of cakes are prepared in every household which is exchanged with one's friends and relatives.

*Rath Jatra* is observed on the second day of the bright fortnight in the month of *Awadh* (June-July) throughout western part of Odisha as that of coastal Odisha. However, they claim that it is their own god which had its origin in their part of Odisha, which was later on taken away by the rulers of coastal Odisha. Even in the remotest of villages, people - old and children, men and women look forward eagerly to celebrate it by pulling the chariots



of three idols of Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra. It is the time to refurnish all their homes and get new clothes for all and with sweet food.

*Dasra, Buel Jatra and Chhatar Jatra:* The festival of *Dasra* which starts with the first day of the bright fortnight of *Ashwin* (September-October) celebrates goddess Durga. But more than anything, it is the *Buel jatra* and *Chhatar jatra*, which is unique to western Odisha. *Bueljatra* is a festival of *tantra*, which has been said to be the greatest contribution of the region to Indian culture.<sup>31</sup> On that day, amid magical chanting the transmigration of the divine soul of goddess is practiced on a man. This man, so possessed, moves around the village from door to door and people worship him as a symbol of the goddess. *Chhatar Jatra* is observed particularly at Bhawanipatana's Manikeswari temple. The holy umbrella of the goddess moves from one place to another where thousands of devotees assemble to witness the procession. The large-scale sacrifice of animals to propitiate the goddess, however, creates an unusual scene.

Mention should also be made of *Khandabasa* festival, which is observed on the eighth day of the dark fortnight of *Dasara*, especially in the villages where *Shakti* cult is prevalent. Particularly, in the temple of Lankeshwari of Junagarh, Kalahandi district, a grand festival is observed during which the King of Kalahandi brings the sword of the deity with all her ornaments and attire from his palace in Bhawanipatna. It is also from this festival day onwards that the well-known performance of *Ghumura* starts and is played all over the region, moving from one village to another.

*Dhanu Jatra* of Bargarh is based on the story of Lord Krishna and the killing of demon king Kansa. During *Dhanu jatra* the whole of Bargarh town becomes an open theatre where *lilas* or activities of Lord Krishna beginning from his childhood to his slaying of Kansa are enacted by real life characters for about a fortnight during Pausa (December-January). Finally, on the last day, the demon king is killed by Krishna representing the victory of good over bad. The *jatra* also includes various exhibitions, road shows, local music, dances and performances and also gives some relevant social messages on each day of the *jatra*.

Like *Dhanu jatra*, people in Sundargarh district celebrate *Chaitra Jatra* based on the life of Lord Ram. It begins with the day of *Ram Navami*, when Lord Ram was born and continues for more than a week and ends with Lord Ram ascending the throne of Ayodhya after killing Ravan. It also shows the victory of good over bad which is celebrated with local music, dances, fairs etc.

*Lok Mahotsavs*: For quite so many years, what we have come across is organization of *Lok Mahotsavs* by almost all the districts in the region. These *Mahotsavs* are an occasion to showcase the rich culture and unique tradition of the concerned district. They are well-planned, well in advance. Many local traditions which were almost neglected or on the verge of dying are now given a new lease of life. Seminars, workshops, poetry recitations, various competitions are organized during the *Mahotsav*. It is also in these *Mahotsavs* that leaders and activists of Koshal movement are seen to be more prominent and trying to mobilize people so as to actively participate in the movement for the sake of their culture and their Mother land.

There are many more festivals which are celebrated throughout the nook and corner of the region full of its sacred calendar. What is interesting to note is that the activists and leaders of Koshal movement are using many of these festivals to awaken consciousness among the masses about their rich culture and how it should be promoted and protected by them. They argue that it would not be sensible any more to look down upon their culture which the people of coastal Odisha had treated them in a very humiliating manner for so long and that it is time to appreciate one's own culture and tradition.

Given this, it is akin to say that the mobilization on the part of leaders and activists of the Koshal movement is complementary to the development and growth of Kosli language, literature and culture and *vice-versa*. While mapping the historical landmarks, archaeological antiquities and sacred sites in the region, we come across a rich stock of various strands, some even dating back to pre-historic times in traces, ruins and extant in different stages of preservation. Mention may be made of Paleolithic rock art of Gudahandi cave and Neolithic ones of Yogimath and Dumerbahal in Kalahandi and Nuapada districts and Vikramkhol rock paintings in Jharsuguda.<sup>32</sup> However, no proper study has yet been done to decipher them and they are gradually getting destroyed due to natural calamities as well as man-made disasters. There is a vast corpus of materials including inscriptions on stones and copper plates, coins etc. of different ruling dynasties,<sup>33</sup> and their proper studies may throw new light on the detailed history of the region. While doing my field work especially in Kansil,<sup>34</sup> Ranipur-Jharial<sup>35</sup>, and Kosaleswar temple Baidyanath,<sup>36</sup> what we came across is a serious neglect of various historical heritage of the region such that either the State Archaeological Department is not recognizing their historical value or even if it has taken over them, they are not taking proper

preservation and security of these monuments. In fact, there have been appeals by people at large and history lovers in particular, to apprise of the sorry state of affairs in this regard to respectable authorities. And many voices in unison that this is nothing but due to 'step-motherly attitude'<sup>37</sup> on the part of the concerned government authorities, who generally come from coastal Odisha. History of Koshala region is seen to have been wrapped in obscurity. And it is to such a rich cultural past that the proponents of the Koshal Movement, asking for a separate state of their own, are anchoring to and striving to preserve, protect and promote their golden past. It is, rather becoming very obvious to see the people of this region increasingly forging their 'nationality' and imagining themselves as a 'political community' - the citizens of an alternative Koshal state.<sup>38</sup> And today one can see volumes of works being written in Kosli-Sambalpur language and if one tries to map out the range of folk songs, folk dances, folk dramas, contributions from the region is quite noteworthy. Not only this, but this cultural uniqueness of the region is appreciated not only by the people from western Odisha but, gradually gaining recognition by the coastal Odias as well as the wider world. Researchers, activists of the movement and litterateurs and folklorists in general are attempting at their own levels to see a new avatar of western Odisha, which was until recently, stigmatized for its poverty, backwardness and underdevelopment. Thus, it's time to see how different markers of Kosli identity such as literary, linguistic and cultural representations are increasingly being used by the leaders of the Koshal movement to garner people's support and to bring all the people of the region to a common platform in the guise of pan-Kosli identity despite their internal differences.

**[Acknowledgement:** This article has been a part of my Ph. D. Thesis on 'Koshal Movement in Western Odisha: A Sociological Analysis' to be submitted soon to the Department of Sociology, Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi, Delhi. I humbly acknowledge my sincere thanks and gratitude to my esteemed Supervisor Prof. Abhijit Dasgupta for his guidance, critical probing and thoughtful insights on formulating this paper as well as for the overall research endeavour on the topic.]

### ***Notes and References***

1. Dash, Ashok Kumar, 2009, 'Sambalpur (Koshali) Language and Literature at a Glance' in Guru, Giridhari Prasad (ed), *West Orissa: Past and Present*, Western Odisha Development Council (WODC), Bhubaneswar: 120.

2. See ORISSA ACT - 10 OF 2000 THE WESTERN ORISSA DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL ACT, 2000, as notified by the Law Department, Government of Orissa, dated 5th December 2000 having been assented to by the Governor of the state on the 27th November 2000. Also see, 'WODC at a Glance' vide <http://www.wodcodisha.nic.in/frmgllance.aspx>.
3. The original 13 districts of Orissa at the time of States reorganization and the merger of the princely states have been reorganized further due to increased developmental work and to make the administrative machinery more effective and also due to persistent demand by the people in three successive phases. The first phase which was implemented with effect from October 1992 on Gandhi Jayanti Day as per the election manifesto of the then ruling Janata Dal which effected Koraput and Ganjam districts. Koraput was divided into four new districts i.e., Koraput, Rayagada, Malkangiri and Nabarangpur while Ganjam was divided into Ganjam and Gajapati districts. The second and third phases of reorganization which became effective from April 1993 and January 1994 respectively, affected eight districts (without any change, till date, in three districts such as Sundargarh, Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj), thus giving birth finally to as many as 30 new districts in Orissa. Kalahandi district was subdivided with Nuapada as a new district, Balangir gave birth to Subarnapur/Sonepur district, Sambalpur was divided further into Sambalpur, Bargarh, Deogarh, and Jharsuguda, Baleshwar was divided into Baleshwar and Bhadrak districts, Cuttack was divided into Cuttack, Jajpur, Kendrapada and Jagatsinghpur, Puri was divided into Puri, Khurda and Nayagarh districts, Dhenkanal gave birth to Dhenkanal and Angul, and Phulbani was divided into Boudh and Kandhamal as new districts. For details, see Sinha, B.N., 1999, *Geography of Orissa*, New Delhi: National Book Trust, third revised edition: 5-10. Also see Kumar, Hemanshu and Rohini Somanathan, 2015, *State and District Boundary Changes in India: 1961-2001*, Working Paper No. 248, Centre for Development Economics, Delhi School of Economics, November, 2005.
4. See official website of Western Odisha Development Council (WODC) <http://www.wodcodisha.nic.in/frmgllance.aspx> and also their Annual Activity Reports of various years such as 2012-13 and 2013-14.
5. See Tylor, E. B., 1871, *Primitive Culture* London: John Murray, Vol. I: 1.

6. The concept of the 'cultural complex' is grounded in the theory of analytical psychology, which originates with Carl G. Jung's early work on complex theory, as in *The Theory of Psycho-Analysis*, 1913/1967. Such an idea emerges as a way of understanding the collective psyche, as it expresses itself in group behaviour and individual psychological experience. Common characteristics of 'cultural complexes include their unconscious, their resistance to consciousness, their autonomous functioning, their repetitive occurrence in a group's experience from generation to generation, and their tendency to accumulate historical experiences and memory that validate their point of view. For detail elaboration, reference may be made to Singer, Thomas and Samuel Kimbles (eds) 2004, *The cultural complex: Contemporary Jungian perspectives on Psyche and Society*. London: Brunner-Routledge.
7. For the contributions by individuals and institutions of western Odisha during the Odia Language movement and formation of Orissa province, reference may be made to Supakar, Sraddhakar, 'The Contribution of Sambalpur in the Formation of a separate state of Orissa,' translated by Satyanarayan Mohapatra, *Orissa Review*, Information and Public Relations Department, Govt. of Orissa, Bhubaneswar, April 2005, pp. 82-85, Barik, Pabitra Mohan, 'A Movement for Restoration of Oriya Language,' *Orissa Review*, Information and Public Relations Department, Govt. of Orissa, Bhubaneswar, April 2006, pp. 5-6, Acharya, Snigdha, 'Linguistic Movement of Odisha: A Brief Survey of Historiography' *Odisha Review*, Information and Public Relations Department, Govt. of Odisha, Bhubaneswar, April 2016, pp. 27-33, and Pasayat, Chitrasen, '1895-1905: A Golden Decade in the History of Odia Language Movement in Sambalpur,' *Odisha Review*, Information and Public Relations Department, Govt. of Orissa, Bhubaneswar, April 2012, pp. 39-42.
8. See Supakar, Sraddhakar, op.cit.: 82 and Pasayat, Chitrasen, ibid.: 39.
9. See Supakar, Sraddhakar, op. cit.: 82.
10. Ibid.: 82
11. As cited in Supakar, Sraddhakar, Ibid.: 83, Gangadhar Meher's 'Appeal of Utkal Bharati' published in *Sambalpur Hiteisini* of 5<sup>th</sup> March 1895 is worth noting. Meher lamented: 'The mother is fated to remain in exile. We are also fated to become motherless. Whatever is going to happen is fated to happen. But we should not become cowards and keep up with our struggle.' Also, Supakar points out a report from

*Hirakhand*, another monthly journal from the region, how during the census of 1901, one Baikunth Nath Pujhari, who was then working as an Assistant Commissioner, was engaged in government work but during the evening hours and all through the night travelled from village to village and explained to the people how to answer various questions asked to them and particularly to say and write 'Oriya' as their mother tongue so that it will pave the way for introduction of Oriya language in the region once again.

12. See Mishra, Sripati, 1918, *Simla Yatra* (Odia), Cuttack: Utkal Sahitya Press. For details refer Mohanty, Bishnu Charan, 2006, *Smrutibasi: Biographical Sketches of Illustrious Sons of Western Odisha* (Odia), Bhubaneswar: Western Odisha Development Council (WODC), especially ch: 2, pp. 16-18. Also see Supakar, Sraddhakar, op. cit.: 83-84 and Pasayat, Chitrasen, op. cit.: 41-42.
13. Gangadhar Meher (9<sup>th</sup> August 1862- 4<sup>th</sup> April 1924) was a renowned Odia poet of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, also known as Swabhab Kavi, the Natural Poet, was said to be a literary Midas, who transformed everything into gold by the alchemic touch of his genius. His major works have been *Tapaswini*, *Indumati*, *Rasa-Ratnakara*, *Pranaya Ballari* etc. A collected volume of his writings has been published as *Gangadhara Granthabali*, edited by Nagendra Nath Pradhan, 1996, Alisha Bazar, Cuttack: Dharma Grantha Store. He was a born poet of delicate charm and was a prominent leader of the Oriya Language Movement, which subsequently resulted in the formation of Orissa as a separate province.
14. *Matrubhumi matrubhashare mamata*  
*Ja hrude janami nahi*  
*Taku jadi gyani ganare ganiba*  
*Agyani rahibe kahin?*
15. Utkal Union or Utkala Sammilani was established in 1903 by Madhu Sudan Das (1848-1934), who is known as one of the founding identity. The efforts made by Madhu Babu and members of the Utkal Union were historic in not only assertion of an autonomous identity but also bringing all Oriya-speaking people under one administration in the form of Orissa province. And it is well documented that about three dozen of people from western Odisha were actively participating in the deliberations of the Union from its very inception, including Gangadhar Meher, Ram Narayan Mishra and many others.

16. In fact, many people during my field work brought about a parallel between what is pathetically referred to as the 'Bangla domination over Odia language, literature and culture' and what is going on in terms of 'coastal conspiracy, hegemony and domination'. It may be recalled that during the British period, the Oriya speaking people were divided in three different administrative units such as Bengal, Madras and the Central Provinces as a consequence, the Oriyas became virtually appendages to these administrative divisions and their language Oriya became linguistic minorities in these provinces. As regards the Bengal dominion, the Bengalis occupied many official positions in Orissa as they were educationally advanced people. They not only looked down upon the Oriyas, their language, literature and culture but some Bengali Officers even tried to abolish Oriya language and replace it by Bengli medium of instructions in the schools of Orissa. Especially, one Bengali teacher from Balasore Zilla School named Kantilal Bhattacharya published in 1870 a booklet which was sarcastically titled as *Odiya Ekta Swatantra Bhasa noy*. He strongly described that Oriya was merely a dialect of Bengali language. Likewise, another notable Bengali scholar Rajendra Lal Mitra despised and insulted Oriyas and their culture. And it is this Oriya-Bangla language debate which subsequently acted as a catalyst for the intellectual movement among the Oriyas and was later on very instrumental in the rise of Oriya nationalism and ultimately a state of their own called Orissa. The people of western Odisha also complain that the people belonging to coastal Odisha look down upon and stigmatize their language, literature and culture. Needless to mention that despite that there are fundamental differences in spoken forms of coastal and western Odisha and despite there being distinctive grammar, syntax, pronunciation etc., the language spoken by about ten million people is denied its language status and merely designated as a dialect of Odia language.
17. Efforts have been made by writers and linguists of western Odisha for quite some time to interrogate the question of fundamental difference between Kosli-Sambalpuri language *vis-à-vis* Odia language. It was Kosal Ratna Pandit Prayag Dutta Joshi, who for the first time, declared the language of western Odisha as being different from that of coastal Odisha and named it as 'Kosli' in many his writings since the late 1970s and 1980s which sowed the seed of a literary renaissance in the region by the 1990s and inspired many generations of writers, poets and linguists which continues till date. Reference may be made to Joshi, Prayag Dutta, 'Utkala sahitya ku Khadial ra abadana', *Asanta Kali*,

February 1978, 'Kosali Bhasa', *Girijhara*, November 1981, 'Kosli Bhasa', *Agni Sikha*, 1981, 'Khadiyal Anchalar Loka Bhasa', *Saptarshi*, June 1981, 'Upabhasa Nuhen', *Dainik Kosal*, 17<sup>th</sup> October 1981, 'Swatantra Kosli Bhasa' *Dainik Hirakhand*, 15<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> September 1983, 'Swatantra Kosli Bhasa', *Saptarshi*, November 1983 & September 1984, 'Paschim Odishar Bhasa Kosli', *Hirakhand*, Bishuba Milana Smaranika, January 1985, 'Swatantra Kosli Bhasa' *Saptarshi*, March 1988, March-April 1990 and his full-fledged book on the issue *Kosli Bhasara Samkhipta Parichaya*, edited by Dr. Dola Gobinda Bishi and published by Rabi Kiran Swain on behalf of Kosalayana, Kosal Sahitya Academy, Titilagarh, 1991. A very detailed analysis of the issue was also brought to public discourse by Gobinda Chandra Udgata with his article 'Bhasa Prasanga- Odia and Sambalpuri', *Saptarshi*, March 1997. The contributions of Dr. Dola Gobind Bishi is also noteworthy who has been writing as well as speaking on the issue so forcefully in various media and has already brought out a unique grammar book on Kosli language titled *Kosli Bhasa Sundari*, 1984 and is preparing a multi-volume Thesarus of Kosli words, phrases and idioms. Also there are seminal additions to such a discourse by several others such as Ashok Kumar Das, 'Sambalpuri (Koshali) Language and Literature at a Glance', in Guru, Giridhari Prasad (ed), *West Orissa: Past and Present*, Western Orissa Development Council (WODC), Bhubaneswar, 2009, pp. 120-138, Ashok Kumar Das, 'Peculiarities of Sambalpuri/Koshali Language in its Morphology' *Surata*, souvenir of Nuakhai Bhetghat, Juhar Parivar, New Delhi, 2009, Patel, Kunjaban, *A Sambalpuri Phonetic Reader*, Menaka Prakashani, Gole Bazar, Sambalpur, undated, Sahu, Saket Sree Bhusan, 'Kosli: A Distinct Language', September 17, 2011 available online vide his blog Kosli Sahitya <https://koslisahitya.wordpress.com/2011/09/17/kosli-a-distinct-language/>, Karmee, Sanjib Kumar, 'Kosli Language: A Perspective on its Origin, Evolution and Distinction', available online vide <http://www.orissadiary.com/ShowOriyaColumn.asp?id=31000> dated 25<sup>th</sup> May 2012.

18. The Constitutional provisions relating to the Eighth Schedule occur in Articles 344 (1) and 351 of the Constitution. Art. 344(1) provides for the constitution of a Commission by the President on expiration of five years from the commencement of the Constitution and thereafter at the expiration of ten years from such commencement, which shall consist of a Chairman and other members representing the different



languages specified in the Eighth Schedule to make recommendations to the President for the progressive use of Hindi for official purposes of the Union. Art. 351 provides that it shall be the duty of the Union to promote the spread of Hindi language to develop it so that it may serve as a medium of expression for all the elements of the composite culture of India...Initially there were only 14 languages included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. Sindhi language was added in 1967. Thereafter, three more languages Konkani, Manipuri and Nepali were included in 1992. In 2004 four more languages such as Bodo, Dogri, Maithili and Santhali were added to the list totaling as of today to be 22 languages under the Eighth Schedule. However, it is to be noted that there have been demands for inclusion of 38 more languages in the Schedule which also include the Sambalpuri/Kosali language spoken by the people of western Odisha, which is under consideration by a Committee under the Chairmanship of Shri Sitakant Mohapatra and the Ministry of Home Affairs. During my field work and while interviewing Dr. Dola Gobind Bishi, Lecturer in Odia, D.A.V college Titilagarh, I came to know that it was way back in 1986 that Dr. Bishi along with Koshal Ratna Sri Prayag Dutta Joshi from Khariar had submitted the first memorandum to the President of India to include Kosli language in the Eighth Schedule. Over the period, there have been many more memoranda submitted by various individuals and institutions from the region for this. Although initially inclusion of a language in the Schedule meant that the language would be one of the bases that would be drawn upon to enrich Hindi, today, the list has acquired more significance.

19. See Pattanayak, Debi Prasanna, 'Govt's Eight Schedule move reflects immature vision', *The Telegraph*, Calcutta, 6<sup>th</sup> March 2014. He originally wrote his reactionary piece called 'Matrubhasha O Manaka Bhasha' on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2011 in *Sambad*, an Odia daily. Following this, there were several rejoinders and reactionary debates between the champions of Kosli language and literature *vis-à-vis* coastal Odias who saw it as divisive, parochial and suicidal. Some of the outstanding contributions in this context were, for instance, by Sanjib Karmee, Saket Sreebhusan Sahu, Narendra Kumar Mohanty, Arjun Purohit, Sapan Mishra and many others. For details as well as comments, see Kosal Discussion and Development Forum, 'The Sambad' (Odia daily) on our discussion of Kosli language vide <https://kddfonline.com/2011/07/22/the-sambad-odia-daily-on-our-discussion-of-kosli-language>.

20. *Charyapadas* is a collection of mystical poems belonging to the period 8th-12th century with regard to the Vajrayana Buddhism and the tantric tradition in eastern India. For details see Sahu, Saket Sreebhusan, 2017, *Kosali Sahitya Itihas*, Beni Publications: 4-7.
21. *The Sambalpur Hiteisini* alias the Sumbulpur Patriot is said to be the oldest weekly of not only Sambalpur district, but also of the entire western Odisha region. It is said to have been published by the king of Bamra State since 30th May 1887 so as to bring out consciousness among the Odia-speaking people and to draw the attention of the British administration regarding the problems of Hindi language which was imposed upon them and to introduce Odia as the official language in Sambalpur. However, it was only in the 1891 issue of the weekly that one comes across the writing in Sambalpuri-Kosli language for the first time.
22. See Panda, Sasanka Sekhar, 2003, *Jhulpul*, Cuttack: Chitrotpala publications: 7.
23. Ibid: 1-2.
24. Tripathy, Prafulla Kumar's compiled book *Sambalpuri Oriya Shabdakosha* (1987), i.e., a Sambalpuri to Oriya Dictionary, and Guru, Narasingha Prasad, 2016, *Koshali-Odia Abhidhan* Tikarpada, Balangir: Binapani Prakashan. Also, during my interview with Dr. Dola Gobind Bishi, a well-known writer and researcher of Kosli language, literature and culture in Titilagarh pointed out that he is preparing a multi-volume series on Kosli Thesaurus, which would not only collate unique Kosli words, phrases and idioms but will also illustrate their historical roots, contemporary usages and their comparative analysis *vis-à-vis* Odia terms.
25. The uniqueness and distinctive identity of Kosli and Odia languages are debated throughout the history although it is said to have been unnecessarily stretched too far. Some researchers, activists and proponents of the Kosal movement have been trying to go to the root of these languages and suggesting that Kosli is an ancient, rich and sweet language. It belongs to Indo-Aryan family of languages. Legend is that the original Shouraseni Prakrit was travelling towards East and before becoming Magadhi, it stopped in Kosal region and evolved a form. As it evolved on the way to Magadh, it is also known as Ardha-Magadhi. On the other hand, Odia language is said to have come from Odra-Magadhi Prakrit although it also belongs to Indo-Aryan family

- of languages. For details see Sahu, Saket Sreebhusan, 'Kosali Language: A Reflection of Regional Disparity in Odisha', vide <http://odishawatch.in/kosali-language-reflection-disparity-odisha/>. Also see Joshi, Prayag Dutta, *Kosali Bhasara Samkhipta Itihas*, edited by Dolagobind Bishi, Beni publications, second edition, 2013: 24.
26. *Mahajanapada* literally means a great country. The political division of ancient India during 6<sup>th</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> century BC mentions *Sodasha Mahajanapadas* i.e., sixteen (16) great kingdoms such as Anga, Assaka, Avanti, Chedi, Gandhara, Kashi, Kamboja, Kuru, Kosala, Magadha, Malla, Matsya, Panchala, Surasena, Vriji and Vatsa.
  27. Refer 'The Profile of a good Young Writer Saket Sreebhusan Sahu', available online vide <http://eodisha.org/the-profile-of-a-good-young-kosli-language-writer-saket-sreebhusan-sahu/> dated 11<sup>th</sup> December 2012.
  28. A list of Kosli language magazines have been available online compiled by Sapan Mishra, Sambalpur University which has been approved and produced by Kosal Discussion and Development Forum (KDDF). Arranged alphabetically, it lists in total seventy-seven (77) Kosli magazines. For details, see 'A Complete List of Kosli Language Magazines' vide <http://kddfonline.com/>. However, while I was doing my fieldwork in the region and was looking for these magazines, I could hardly collect any of these magazines. I also came across a few newer magazines which were not in the list. While talking to some of the editors of these magazines and journals, we came to realize that the major problem in the production and marketing of such magazines are due to the problem of readership and due to lack of financial viability. Dola Gobind Bishi, for instance, was one of the earliest to publish a magazine called *Kosal Shree* during his student days in 1978. However, he complained during our interview that there is hardly any profit that they got in return even to publish the second issue. Such endeavours, he lamented, were carried on by the spirited persons and activists with good intention, but without any capitalistic market-oriented calculations. As a result, whatever is published is privately circulated like charity and it is pity to note that after sometime even the writers, publishers and printers would be unable to find a copy of the same for themselves.
  29. Haldhar Nag was born on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1950 in Ghens, Bargarh District, in his maternal uncle's village. He grew as an orphan from his very

childhood, who survived by washing plates in a hotel, selling peanuts on the street and is hardly literate. But today he represents a powerful voice of the entire western Odisha and its identity. He has been bestowed with the *Kosal Ratna* award, recognizing him as a jewel of the region. His poems are true reflection of the everyday life of the common men and women of the region. He is considered as the *messiah* of the toiling millions for he fights for the oppressed and the marginalized through his poems. He is also popularly known as *Lok Kabi* i.e., People's Poet and *Kosli kuili* i.e., koel or cuckoo bird for his enchanting poetries. People consider him as the second Ganga Dhar Meher, and by now, about half-a-dozen researchers have already done M. Phil / Ph. D theses on him and many more are still researching on him and his writings. See especially Mohan, E. Kiran, 'Poet Haldhar Nag: An Agent of Social Reform', Orissadiary.com, 17<sup>th</sup> November, 2015, Guru, Sudeep Kumar, 'Poetry makes him known as new Gangadhar Meher, Peanut seller Haladhar Nag carves niche for himself as poet of Kosli language', *The Telegraph*, Calcutta, 25<sup>th</sup> September, 2010 and Krishnan, Madhuvanti S., 'Poetic Crusader', *The Hindu*, 13<sup>th</sup> April, 2016.

30. See Sanjib Karmee, 'Naveen Babu announces a Kosli Language and Literature Research Centre at Bargarh', Kosal Discussion and Development Forum (KDDF) vide <https://kddfonline.com/2016/04/07>.
31. See for details, Deo, J.P.S, 2010, 'Yogini cult is the gift of Bolangir district to Indian culture', in Udgata, Srinivas et.al (eds), *Cultural Legacy of Western Odisha: A Commemorative volume in Honour of Late P.C Rath*, published by Koshal Nagar, Bolangir: P. C. Rath Memorial Trust: 71-82.
32. For details, see Mishra, Dadhi Baman, 2009, 'Archaeological Heritage of West Orissa', in Guru, Giridhari Prasad (ed), *West Orissa: Past and Present* Bhubaneswar: Western Orissa Development Council: 26.
33. Ibid: 27
34. Kansil is a small village of about 1500 population living in 325 houses (according to 2011 census) in Bangomunda Block of Balangir District. This village has been supposedly once the capital city of Kosal King Kusha named 'Kushasthali' or 'Kushawati'. I came across the name of the village in some vernacular writings and also writings by some noted historians such as Ramachandra Mallick (1867-1936), perhaps

the earliest historian of the region with his *Sankhipta Koshal-Patana Itihas* (1931: 46-48, 62), wherein he emphatically proves that this village along with its neighbouring villages such as Ranipur, Jharial, Bahabal and Balkhamar constituted five units of the ancient *KoshalNagar* with specialized tasks such as Queen's Palace, Bathing Ghats, Reserved Force and Storage of wealth and property respectively. Purna Chandra Rath (1909-1952), is another noted historian from the region, who devoted one full chapter on the village called 'Kansil' (2014: 108-111) with details of historical and archaeological sites in and around the village and ascertains without any doubt, how this village, once upon a time, was a well-developed town/*nagari*, and that the present-day name of the village Kansil is nothing but a corrupted version of the ancient Kosal Nagar or Kushasthali. Dr. Sadananda Agrawal (1952-2017), whose contributions in analyzing, interpreting and popularizing Koshal history is quite noteworthy and especially his *Koshala Itihas* (2013: 21) establishes with archaeological evidences that the village and the entire region especially the historic Ranipur-Jharial temples represents a very unique architectural style which is possible only in the case of a highly developed kingdom and civilization. Also, while talking to some prominent leaders of the Koshal movement such as Nataraj Mahapatra, Khariar during my field work, I could realize the significance of the village for uncovering the history of the entire Koshal region and therefore, went to the village in March 2017 and saw by myself some ruined structures at several places in and around the village, which are yet to be studied properly. However, while talking to people in the village we saw a common voice by almost all the villagers-old or young, educated or uneducated, men or women—that they are, indeed, so proud of their history as they belong to 'Kosal Nagar' or 'Kausalya Nagar', once the capital city of Kosala kingdom. They were also very enthusiastic about the prospect of the 'Koshal Movement', which they said, will bring back their glorious past. However, they also put forth before me the neglect on the part of the government as regards these historical monuments and requested me if I can do anything in this regard.

35. Ranipur and Jharial are twin villages under Titilagarh Sub-Division in Balangir District and bear strong traces of their ancient heritage. The archaeological sites in and around these two villages is known as "*SomaTirtha*" in various scriptures pertaining to the reign of Somavamsi kings dating back to 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> century. There are more than hundred small, medium and large temple structures in different stages of decay and preservation. The unique Hypethral temple of 64 Yoginis is one of the

four remaining such shrines such as Hirapur near Bhubaneswar, Khajuraho and Bhedaghat near Jabalpur. It also shows a confluence of Saivism, Vaisnavism, Buddhism and Tantrism. Although this place has already been taken over by the State Archaeology Department and also has been declared as “Monuments of National Importance”, the state of the affair as regards its protection and preservation is far from satisfactory. There is no security guard as such and as a result, many of the structures from the 64 *Yogini* shrine are already lost. I could even see by myself, some historical rock structures far from the site, probably being taken by someone gradually. The villagers as well as lovers of history of the region lament that had it been situated in the coastal part of Orissa such as Puri or Bhubaneswar, the situation could have been very different and the place could have been developed properly and not as it is today.

36. The Kosaleswar temple at Baidyanath is on the bank of river Tel, situated about 15 Kilo Meters to the South-East of Sonpur in Subarnapur District. Historian N. K. Sahu has been of the opinion that the temple was constructed during the reign of Telugu-Chodas in the last part of 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D. There is also a reference in one copper plate record that Baidyanath urf Kosaleswar was the tutelary deity of the Telugu-Choda ruling family. There are some who on the basis of the architecture, sculptures and especially the specimens of plastic art, date it back to 7<sup>th</sup> century AD or even earlier. Charles Fabri (1899-1968), the English curator and Buddhist doctor opines that it was originally a Buddhist structure which has been refurnished later on by the Hindus as per their need. Dr. Sadananda Agrawal (1952-2017), a crusader of Koshala history suggests it to be of around 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D and has also appealed several times to the concerned archaeological Department of the state for its protection and preservation. When I visited the temple in March 2017, I was aghast to see the sorry state of affair of such a historical monument of the region. The main temple was supposedly under repairing and all the statues of varying gods and goddesses were left unattended lying outside the temple in a far corner. While talking to the villagers, came to know that originally, there were three temples in the precincts but today there exist only two temples because one temple on the bank of the river was taken away by the flood water in 1967, and only a few stones stand there today.

37. Such a phrase or idiom is popularly used throughout India and also outside so as to refer to neglect, disregard or inattention. It also underlines the ill treatment meted out by one's literal relatives—the step/foster father or mother, who are not real biological parents and are stereotyped of being bad father or mother who do not take care of their foster children at par with their own children.

For the discourse on 'nation' as an 'imagined political community', see Anderson, Benedict (1983), *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso, revised edition: 5-7.

## **Of Objective Claims and Located Accounts: An Ideological Plea to Rethink Knowledge in Assisted Reproductive Technologies from a Feminist Standpoint**

Pinaki Roy

**Abstract:** *Attempts to critically grapple with the practice of Assisted Reproductive Technologies cannot solely focus on the objective medical claims of the practitioners. Holistic and inclusive perspective on the operations of this domain should also engage and reflect on the located accounts of the intending mothers, who are mostly at the receiving end in this domain. Their located accounts can help us rethink the dominant conceptions, both clinical and cultural, of Assisted Reproductive Technologies (henceforth ARTs) as a medico-technological enterprise from a feminist standpoint.*

**Keywords:** Intending mothers, infertility, infertility experience, motherhood, maternal body, heterosexual norms, stabilization, subversion, constitutive (un)anticipatibility.

### ***Cognitive blindness and the consequent problematization: Tracing the intending mothers' location in ARTs practice***

The present paper emanates from a deep sense of discomfort with the existing academic and activist literature on ARTs practice in India, where the location of the intending mothers is inadequately theorized (Qadeer 2010; Pande 2010; Marwah et. al. 2011; Nidampally et. al. 2011). The intending mothers' assisted reproductive labour is treated less seriously, as if the legal complexities, human rights violations and medico-ethical issues are not as vital in their case as with the gestational surrogates. Within feminist quarters there is a tendency to equate ARTs practice to the surrogacy arrangements, which is a gross simplification of the multi-layered dynamics of this enterprise. The implicit binary between the socially sanctioned reproductive labour of healthy potential mothers and the stigmatized assisted reproductive labour of gestational surrogates in feminist literature tends to obscure the assisted reproductive labour performed by



the intending mothers. Such labour occupies a liminal space between the sacred unmediated reproductive function of healthy potential mothers on the one hand and the stigmatized assisted reproductive labour of gestational surrogates on the other. This liminal space, which is neither wholly sacred nor fully stigmatized, poses unique psychosomatic challenges for and imposes societal pressure on the intending mothers in their pursuit of personal fulfilment, and biological and social completion, which is often overlooked in the feminist readings of ARTs practice.

Given this premise of cognitive blindness, the problematization which the present paper posits is two pronged: firstly, it seeks to focus on the intending mothers' experience of infertility and negotiation with technologically assisted conception, and secondly, drawing from the first, it attempts to rethink the objective knowledge claims of ARTs practice through an ideological reading of the located accounts of the intending mothers, of their subjective experience of encounter with infertility and ARTs practice, which are generally seen as marginal to what counts as valid knowledge in the latter domain.

The engagement with the problematization at hand involves critical reading of what is methodologically designated as in-depth ethnographic interviews. The interviews with the intending mothers constitute the narratives which are read over here in order to foreground the ideological plea for rethinking knowledge in ARTs practice from a feminist standpoint. However, it is important to mention at the outset as a cautionary note that the intending mothers in this paper are not 'intending mothers' in the literal sense of the term. When the interviews were conducted, they had already achieved motherhood through assisted reproduction. It is the recollection of their experience as intending mothers which constitute the narratives for engaged reading.

### ***Received knowledge and the ground reality: Locating the intending mothers in ARTs practice beyond the trope of objectification***

The present concern is not completely novel. Sarah Franklin raised this issue long back in 1997. However, the treatment attempted over here wishes to be both conceptually and methodologically different. In her book *Embodied Progress*, Franklin (1997) suggests that in 'the world of assisted conception' the linear link between having sex, transmitting genes, and giving birth, taken for granted in natural conception, is 'bypassed' through technological assistance. Starting from the detection of infertility to the

birth of the baby, every possible step in 'the world of assisted conception' is conceptualized in terms of 'clinical parameters' (Franklin 1997:145). What qualifies as 'meaningful information' in this domain have nothing to do with women's negotiation with infertility and infertility treatment but only with the standardized norms and protocols of the treatment regimes of ARTs practice and the infertility experts supervising the treatment (ibid.). This discounting of women's experience, the meanings they attribute to their condition, the challenges they encounter and the strategies they deploy to cope up with these challenges, is the key concern of Franklin's critical ethnography of ARTs with special reference to In-Vitro Fertilization (henceforth IVF).

It is true that the 'clinical parameters' (ibid.) undermine intending mothers' experiences but the current scenario of ARTs practice cannot be solely judged in terms of the above theme. Much of the continuing relevance of ARTs practice in our society can be attributed to the unfailing effort made by the enterprise to address intending mothers' experience of biopsychic incompleteness and social stigmatization deriving from their inability to conceive. The legitimacy of this enterprise is derived from the promise it offers to the infertile couples in general and the intending mothers in particular to recuperate them from the state of biological and social abjection induced by infertility. To say that the intending mothers' experience of infertility and negotiation with infertility treatment is completely undermined in ARTs practice would be an overstatement. This is however not to suggest that there is some altruistic zeal at work in ARTs practice, the urgency to carve out a market for these expensive technologies necessitates the prioritisation of intending mothers' experience of being psychologically ruined and socially stigmatized. The argument is not that there is no material evidence of psychosomatic pain and societal pressure induced by infertility, the categorical foregrounding of intending mothers' experience of incompleteness and stigma is essentially a marketing strategy-a capitalizing move. It is ARTs practice's production of a skewed feminism-a feminism which foregrounds that women's emancipation from infertility-induced abjection can occur only through technologically assisted conception, and in doing so, ARTs practice claims legitimacy for its self-assigned responsibility. Thus, there is a clear production of the intending mothers as objects of technologically assisted conception, of the reproductive market, which endeavours to emancipate infertile women from 'the state of victimhood', makes them more acceptable not only to themselves but also to the society at large. The objectification of intending mothers is more than evident in this scenario and hardly calls for further emphasis. But

what is absent in the existing literature is the recognition that parallel to the process of objectification in this context, there is also a process of subjectivation. The intending mothers are not mere objects or targets of ARTs, they are also the subjects or producers of knowledge by virtue of directly experiencing the treatment regimen of ARTs practice and therefore capable of narrating their experience in their own terms. Keeping this formulation in mind, the present paper attempts to rethink the objective knowledge claims of ARTs practice through an ideological reading of the located accounts of intending mothers' subjective experience of encounter with infertility and ARTs practice.

But reading intending mothers' located accounts is easier said than done! Any attempt to read intending mothers' located accounts will have to engage with the crucial category of feminist standpoint and the critical re-workings of the category which looks beyond the essentializing move of conceptualizing women's body as the sole, privileged locus of sex specific experience and knowledge. Anirban Das's *Towards a Politics of the (Im)possible* (2010) can be seen as one such critical re-working of versions of feminist standpoint which tends to think of the 'located woman' as 'the woman in her body.' (58) In this book, Das suggests that positing of the body located in 'three-dimensional space' in certain versions of feminist standpoint is 'strategic', but nevertheless 'flawed' for the 'naturalized linking of the female to the body.' (ibid.) The moot point of Das's conceptualization of body is that it is the figure of the 'unanticipatable' which cannot be pinned down to 'palpable presence' in 'three-dimensional anatomic space' (ibid.). Grappling with Das's notion of body can be seen as prelude to a critical engagement with the question of reading intending mother's located accounts. Since the notion of body in Das's conceptualization is metaphorical-material rather than purely material, it opens up the possibility of thinking the body beyond the objective medical claims of reproductive medicine and ARTs practice, which conceptualizes body as *always already* sexually marked in anatomic and hormonal terms, to think of body in terms of performance of heterosexual norms and the (un)anticipatable stabilizing and subversive possibilities built into such performance. Here the performative body becomes the location from which subversive possibilities of undoing the generalities which constitute the heterosexual norms, which in turn informs the objective medical claims of reproductive medicine and ARTs practice among other institutions, may be thought of while remaining aware that the possibilities of undoing the generalities may in fact stabilize these heterosexual norms. Thus, the argument is, to think of body beyond the fixity induced by the objective medical claims, is to grapple with a

whole lot of (un)anticipatable moments, some subversive and some stabilizing. Yet this challenge is worth taking because it opens up the sanctity of the objective medical claims of reproductive medicine and ARTs practice to a new arena of possibilities - the possibilities embedded in reading intending mothers' located accounts as performative narratives for rethinking knowledge within ARTs practice and the generalities which constitute its knowledge base such as infertility experience, motherhood and the maternal body.

With this clarification the following section discusses the complex theoretical and methodological issues involved in producing a located reading of located accounts.

***Of Located accounts and allocated reading: Theoretical-methodological noteson 'achieving the feminist standpoint'***

Sandra Harding (1987), one of the early proponents of feminist standpoint, questions the biases that creep into the so called objective accounts of reality of western androcentric sciences. (19) In opposition to the latter, Harding proposes that women can also be producers of knowledge based on the gendered character of their experience. (26) Rather than being deceived by the false claims of the 'invisible, anonymous and disembodied voice' of western androcentric sciences, Harding's feminist standpoint posits the knower as 'a real, historical individual with concrete, specific desires and interests'. (32)

This recognition contains within it the possibility of rethinking knowledge from a feminist standpoint in two senses: *first* of all, it creates the possibility of thinking of knowledge production beyond the limits of western androcentric sciences, which only privileges men's voices as the quintessential disembodied voice, and eulogises it as the most valid form of knowledge viz-a-viz women's voices, which are disqualified for their bodily location, and *secondly*, in positing that knowledge can be produced from women's location, based on their gendered experience, and that women have distinct interests and needs, based on their oppressed location in society, Harding paves the path for linking knowledge production to politics, to the organized pursuit of interests, beyond the disinterested and apolitical pretensions of western androcentric sciences. Yet such positing of women's knowledge, based on the gendered character of their experience, is not to be seen as positing of the subjective against the objective accounts of reality of western androcentric sciences. On the contrary, the shared experiences

of women are seen by Harding (1987) as having an intersubjective character, which she views as a stronger form of objectivity.

In a similar vein, Donna Haraway (1988/1999) suggests that the notion of 'disembodied objectivity' is 'an illusion, a god-trick' (177), and alternatively posits that all vision is embodied. The valorisation of the knower as 'the real, historical individual with concrete, specific desires and interests' (Harding 1987: 32) in Harding and the emphasis on the 'embodiment of all vision' (Haraway 1988/1999: 177) in Haraway feeds into the idea of historical specificity and contingency of all perspectives or visions. But the fact that all perspectives or visions are historically located and rooted in immediate material interests and concerns does not imply that they are not objective. Similar to Harding's idea of strong objectivity of the shared intersubjective experiences of women, Haraway suggests that the location of the oppressed has greater potential to generate more 'real' and objective accounts of the world (178). For both of them the location of the oppressed in neither 'innocent' nor organically given, rather the location is achieved, which Haraway suggests pertains to the matter of learning how to see from the location of the oppressed through the mediation of 'instruments of vision' (180), but she cautions that such learning is not easy. The achieving of the location of the oppressed involves a critical epistemological positioning, which interrogates what counts as objective knowledge, and its disqualification of knowledge emanating from the marked bodies or locations of women, of men and women of colour, and the colonized. But the deployment of body as synonymous with location should not be read as the positing of body as the fixed locus of embodiment of knowledge. On the contrary, Haraway sees body as a 'reified category' which acts as a nodal point in the material-semiotic circuits of meaning (181) and as a shifting and partial location for making more responsible knowledge claims about lives of the oppressed.

Achieving the location of the oppressed or learning to see from below is indeed a troubled question. While the mobility of the location of the ethnographer and the criticality such mobility embodies is crucial, the specificity of the dissimilar locations of the ethnographer and the informants may frustrate not only the mobile positioning that the ethnographers seeks to achieve, but also the criticality inherent in such a gesture. Does this imply that all attempts to read the intending mothers' located accounts are *always already* frustrated by the dissimilarity of the location of the ethnographer and the informants? Though Haraway suggests how to see from the location of the oppressed or from the below, and how such seeing

can be impaired or blurred, her attempts to de-essentialize location does not end up in a nuanced understanding of what purpose these de-essentialized locations may serve, especially with regard to the question of communication between the ethnographer and the informants having dissimilar locations. Even nuanced anthropologies of biomedicine like that of Arthur Kleinman (1995) fails to address the troubled theoretical issue of location, but definitely takes us ahead in thinking methodologically of the steps involved in the engagement between the ethnographer and the informants.

In *Writing at the Margins* (1995), Kleinman suggests that in order to be able to read the multiple subjective illness narratives emanating from the distinct personal-socio-historical coordinates of the informants' location, in opposition to the standardized objective indicators of disease developed by western biomedicine, the ethnographer must be capable of engaging the local milieu of the informants. Kleinman (1995) further suggests that the ethnographers should be interested in the meanings the informants impute to their own experiences and how these meanings are connected to the broader socio-political context of the experience (75). Any attempt to grasp the experience of suffering should thus involve ethnographic engagement with the local milieu of the informants within which certain illnesses experience unfolds (76). Informants' positioned narratives of illness and the ethnographer's positioned interpretation of the informants' narratives would constitute ethnographic engagement, where validity of the informants' positioned narratives would be derived from its connection with the local milieu within which such experience is lived and the validity of the ethnographer's interpretation of the informants' narratives would be derived from the ethnographer's use of categories embedded in the local milieu of the informants to make sense of their narratives. Such accounts would be products of dyadic engagement of the ethnographer and the local milieu of the informants rather than being based on the ethnographer's dispassionate use of scientific method to collect data, and treatment and representation of objective facts 'out there' (ibid.).

In Kleinman's framework, ethnographic engagement with the other, in the latter's local milieu, is the basis of negotiating the dissimilar locations of the self and the other, in order to grasp the contextual experience of suffering and the meanings embedded in it. The argument that ethnographic engagement is necessary for negotiating the dissimilar locations is well taken, but is it sufficient to use categories emanating from the local milieu of the informants to be able to produce valid readings of the latter's world? Is it not a mere suggestion at the level of mode of interpretation without

any larger theoretical claim regarding location, communication and ethical responsibility to the other in the ethnographic engagement? Das's ideas on the matter at hand seem to be useful theoretical resource in endeavouring not only to grasp the itinerary of de-essentializing the notion of location and how de-essentialized locations may be able to communicate with each other but also the possibility of developing a critique of the ideological foreclosures which induce fixity only the locations of both the ethnographer and the informants. Let us see how this is possible.

In *Towards a Politics of the (Im)possible* (2010), Das argues that although there is no authentic location from which one can resort to a critique of ideological foreclosures, as all imaginable locations are produced in and through acts of foreclosure, yet that does not preclude the possibility of critique of ideological foreclosures which induce fixity on locations, identities and subjectivities. But how is such an argument useful to address the troubled question that is being asked over here. How is it possible for the ethnographer to grasp lives of people and critically engage with the informants with whom she does not share the same experiential world? Das's invaluable theoretical meditations on location, communication and ethical responsibility to the other is crucial in working out methodologically the itineraries of achieving the location of the other and facilitating a communication with the other. Das suggests that in certain versions of feminist standpoint, women's embodied knowledge claims are seen as emanating from their bodily locus of experience and as having the potential to undermine the disembodied knowledge claims of western androcentric sciences. The body in such versions of feminist standpoint is seen as the privileged location from which the critique of ideology would emanate, which appears to Das as an essentializing move as it takes for granted the female body located in 'three dimensional anatomic space' as the essential locus of knowledge. Instead of thinking body in terms of 'palpable location' in space, Das is more inclined to think of body as the reification of ideality into materiality, yet something which exceeds mere material presence. He thinks of the body beyond the limits of the possible as the very constitution of the body in and through power and ideology renders body the figure of the (un)anticipatable (1997: 17). To embody knowledge, for Das, is to be responsible to the (un)anticipatable, and to develop a counter-ideological position 'one' will have to 'work through' the 'undecidabilities' born out of the constitutive (un)anticipatability of the body (1997: 28) and decide provisionally in which way to orient oneself in countering ideology (36).



The invocation of history (time) and geography (space) in certain versions of feminist standpoint, for Das (2010), ends up reducing location to undeniable presence within specific temporal and spatial coordinates, which overlooks the discursive character of location and the experience emanating from that location. This is not to say that Das is comfortable with the idea that both location and experience are completely mediated by discourse. Das wants to avoid linguistic determinism as much as he discredits historical or geographical determinism inherent in certain versions of feminist standpoint (149). For Das, determinism of any kind tends to build 'systematic structures' and leaves 'untheorized' the (un)anticipatable elements in the construction of location and experience (ibid.). His strategy is to foreground the theme of 'radical undecidability' which he suggests 'haunts' 'the calculable world of experience' presumed to be connected to particular locations. (150) Now, what lesson is learnt from Das's theorization of location and experience in terms of 'radical undecidability' and what purpose does it serve here?

Das's (2010) suggestion that going beyond the understanding of experience in terms of essential location in time and space opens up the field of experience of each location to communication with other contingent locations (ibid.), which also provides the basis for ethical responsibility with the other, appears to be a significant theoretical-methodological resource in this context. The self and the other, the ethnographer and the informants or collaborators in the field may be separated by dissimilar locations but the openness of the field of experience of both renders possible a communication, where the self responds to the call of the *other as other*, rather than devouring the other in the course of communication. This constitutes the counter-ideological move of deciding across the 'undecidable' elements which constitute experience to implicate oneself provisionally to the *otherness of the other*, without reducing the other to a fixed location and definite set of essences.

Following such a conceptualization, it can be argued that the located accounts of intending mothers which are presented over here are not authentic, coherent accounts of experience; rather they are the products of the communication and the ethical encounter of the contingent locations of the ethnographer and the informants, the intending mothers in this case. The power differentials and the ideological closures such communication and ethical encounter brings into play notwithstanding, the attempt here is to read these located accounts as narratives to focus on whether they throw some new light on the imperatives and mechanisms of ARTs



enterprise as an objective medical domain, without, *firstly*, reducing these located accounts to women's bodily essences, and *secondly*, assuming that these accounts present a radical alternative to dominant heterosexist accounts of the domain.

The two narratives presented below emanate from the in-depth ethnographic interviews conducted with the couples. The presentation has a definite pattern. Original excerpts from the transcribed interviews have been presented only after brief introduction to the narratives. The entire body of the original interviews have not been presented; the omissions are solely based on the ethnographer's critical decision. The original excerpts are followed by a close reading of the specificities of each narrative. Discussion of the generalities which cut across the narratives has been presented towards the end of the section.

Some words of caution before proceeding to the narratives. *Firstly*, each narrative is to be seen as a conjoint production of the ethnographer and her informants in the field, the infertile couples in general and the intending mothers in particular, which precludes the possibility of thinking these narratives as transcendental truths pertaining to the authentic experiences of the women only. Unlike the objective social scientist, the ethnographer contributes as much as the infertile couples in general and the intending mothers in particular to produce the very texture of the narratives. *Secondly*, the narratives presented over here should not be seen as representing authentic experiences of atomized women subjects because their experiences are *always already* mediated by heterosexist ideology (though the paper searches with eagerness the moments of departure from the heterosexist ideology). Women not only speak about their experiences in the physical presence of men, they also cannot speak about their experiences without referring to men who hold dominant position in their lives both as facilitators and as hindrances. *Thirdly*, the location from which the ethnographer attempts to read these narratives is not outside the workings of power and ideology, but this does not preclude the possibility of an ideological reading of the located accounts of intending mothers' subjective experience of encounter with infertility and ARTs practice. Following Das (2010), the possibility of communication across dissimilar locations and the ethical relationship such communication embodies is explored in this context. The ethnographer's limitation in grasping the nuances of the others' experiences is also attended to over here. And *lastly*, the aim of reading these narratives is not to mechanically arrange the concepts emanating from these texts into a neat linear picture, but to engage in a critical-romantic

bond with the lives of the informants in the field, the infertile couples and most importantly the intending mothers.

***From the ethnographic field: Towards (un)anticipatable narratives of (de)stabilization***

**Narrative I:** Nirupama and Ratan (names changed) are residents of Garden Reach in Kolkata. Nirupama is a nurse in a government hospital and Ratan is a contractor with a construction company. Both of them had to shoulder the responsibility of their respective families for which they had a 'late marriage'. They were married since 2005, and after trying for three months to conceive naturally, without success, they decided to seek medical assistance. They were aware of the risks of infertility associated with 'late marriage', an awareness they both attribute to Nirupama's occupational affiliation with the world of doctors and began tackling the 'problem' medically from the very beginning.

First, they went to a local gynaecologist. Then a family friend informed them about the student of a renowned senior infertility expert in the city. They began their treatment under him and continued for some time without success. Then they shifted to another nursing home in south Kolkata where a medical complication was diagnosed in Nirupama's ovaries. She was administered injections everyday and had to undergo *transvaginal ultrasound* every week but nothing worthwhile happened during a long span of two and half years of treatment in the south Kolkata nursing home. Frustrated with the outcome, they went to another doctor who suggested them to try to conceive naturally. But they could not. Driven to desperation, the couple decided to contact an infertility clinic to opt for IVF.

In the infertility clinic both Nirupama and Ratan had to undergo thorough medical examination after which the doctors diagnosed that Nirupama was suffering from *anovulation* (inability to produce eggs) and recommended that donor egg is required for the IVF procedure. Nirupama and Ratan could not arrange for an egg donor and eventually they opted for another infertility clinic. But even in the new infertility clinic, the same problem of arranging for an egg donor persisted. Moreover, they were upset with the overtly 'professional' attitude of the clinic and their complete disregard for the mental condition of their clients. Despite having consulted the best doctors in the most renowned clinics in Kolkata, they were completely 'fed up' with their condition. When they had just started considering adoption as an option, Nirupama's sister advised them to consult a local gynaecologist,

who referred them to another gynaecologist, who in turn referred them to an infertility expert. The infertility expert assured them that he will arrange for the donor egg. In the meanwhile, Nirupama was asked to undergo thorough medical examination. The infertility expert suspected that Nirupama was suffering from ovarian cancer but that possibility was ruled out with the *biopsy* report proving the doctor wrong. The infertility expert immediately proceeded with the IVF. Ratan donated his sperms on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2012. Two fertilized embryos were transferred to Nirupama's uterus on 31<sup>st</sup> March. One of them developed successfully. Nirupama and Ratan are now happy parents of a new born.

Here are some excerpts from the in-depth ethnographic interview conducted with the couple, at their residence:

*12 Noon, Sunday, April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2013,*

*Badhabattala, Garden Reach:*

*... Nirupama responds to my questions in Ratan's presence:*

*... What was your feeling when you could not conceive?*

I felt lonely! I felt extremely lonely after coming back from the hospital! He (refers to her husband, Ratan) went to the company (refers to Ratan's place of work), met his friends, but there was a void in my life! My life had come to a standstill; I only wished I had my own child! In married life, the child is most important thing! Those who are unmarried, for them life is different! But married life is incomplete without a child! He regularly took me for shopping or an outing, just to divert my mind. But neither shopping nor an outing could calm my disturbed mind! I felt very lonely; I only wanted a baby of my own....

*Did you blame yourself for not being able to conceive?*

*... No! Why should I blame myself when all my reports were alright? (Asks me) It (refers to conception) was not happening! And I don't know why? Sometimes I thought what if some magic happens and I conceive all of a sudden. (Smiles) But nothing of that sort happened. (Smile gradually fades)*

*Did you develop a sense of lack during this time?*

*Yes, sometimes! But, see, doctors were treating us for that! They should have rather told me whether I lacked something or not! (Note that Nirupama does not consider *anovulation* as a biological*

problem, which is medically considered to be a pathological condition)

... We could have conceived normally much before! The doctors misled us! In the south Kolkata nursing, they treated us for nearly two and a half years without any net result! I have the capacity to carry a baby; the problem was with the treatment protocol! I have carried my baby till the end of the pregnancy! I became mother in the very first *embryo transfer* (transfer of fertilized embryo into the uterus)! Had the doctors taken our case seriously we could have conceived much before without IVF. (Utters these words with a sense of frustration)

When and why did you start seeking medical help?

...We started trying from the very first month of our marriage. When we realized that it was not happening normally, we went to the doctor! But they harassed us mentally, physically and emotionally! From 2005 to 2010 practically none of the doctors took us seriously! If they had done so, then, by now we could have conceived normally without any difficulty...

... We desperately wanted a doctor who will guide us seriously! Then we found somebody like sir.... (By the expression 'sir' Nirupama refers to the IVF expert who helped her have her own baby through IVF)

I have come to know that at one point of time both of you even started considering adoption. Which one did you prioritize, conceiving through IVF or adoption?

No, no, I just wanted to conceive through IVF if it was not possible normally! The satisfaction is far greater in IVF! I felt everything, starting from the conception to the birth! I experienced it personally! (Here Nirupama completely avoids answering why IVF was a better option, she even refrains from uttering the word 'adoption' even once)

*Ratan suddenly intervenes to respond to the question:*

Actually, we became desperate. We took it as a challenge that we have to achieve it anyhow. See, we can adopt whenever we like, but carrying one's own child is a different feeling altogether.

*Dialogue with Nirupama continues:*

To conceive through IVF is not easy. But once you have conceived there are greater restrictions. How did you cope up with the restrictions?

We followed every instruction given by sir. The transplant (since donor egg was used for the IVF, Nirupama's interaction with assisted reproduction began with the *embryo transfer* phase) was done on 31<sup>st</sup> March. For the first three months I was on bed rest. I worked for only three months during the entire pregnancy. From November onwards, I took medical leave for another six months. I delivered my baby in last December....

I will resume work from May this year. It is true that once you have conceived it is more difficult. (Reaffirms what I have asked as part of the question) Initially I was so scared that I could not even walk! I had conceived after so many years of trying, I did not want to miscarry! I could not sleep for so many nights, I felt claustrophobic! I had a strange feeling as if I was being taken to an operation theatre! I had told about this to sir. He gave me medicines and I underwent routine examinations but nothing serious was detected. But this continued till the third and fourth month, may be because of excessive tension. (Smiles, but it gradually fades)

Did you have such problems before conceiving? Did this persist even after the delivery?

No, no, I don't know whether this happens with others or not, but whenever I went to the bathroom, I had this strange feeling that if I pour water on my head, I will die out of suffocation! I used to sit in one corner of the bathroom out of fear! These happened because of tension! Sir asked to take *Alzolam* every day. These complications disappeared after the seventh month.

What are the other problems that you faced during the pregnancy?

... I had very high pressure! I was advised to take four tablets every day! I had taken medicines for high pressure earlier, but it went beyond control during the treatment! I took lots of medicines during the entire pregnancy, every month; I took medicines worth Rs 3000-4000...!

***Specificities of the narrative:*** This narrative introduces us to the involvement of *third party reproductive service* (provision of reproductive service by people other than parents) in IVF such as *egg donation*. However, throughout the dialogue Nirupama avoids referring to the use of donor egg in IVF, it was a secret Ratan had already divulged while discussing about the hardship they had to undergo, in Nirupama's absence. This secret was known neither to the extended family nor to the neighbourhood. Maybe it was not even known to Nirupama or maybe she knew about it but was unwilling to divulge to an outsider. But that it was no longer a pure secret was not known to her. She categorically resisted being medically labelled as having any major pathological condition. She kept on reiterating over and over again that her medical reports were alright, although she had problem in producing eggs which necessitated the use of donor eggs in IVF.

In her negotiation with this condition, she developed a strong resistance to any attempt of the medical regimen to label her as incapable of giving birth to a baby. Yet at the same time she claimed that had the doctors taken her case more seriously, she could have conceived much earlier. Thus there is a dynamics in this narrative between Nirupama's assertion that her medical reports are alright and her feeling that at least minimum guidance was required from the doctors. There is no doubt trace of the production of what can be called responsible medicalized subjects in the narrative, following Nikolas Rose (2007), which can be located in their suggestion that they chose to opt for medical help soon after their marriage. They had already predicted that their inability to conceive within the first three months of their marriage could be related to some physiological deficiency emanating from 'late marriage'. Yet there is dynamics even in this case as well. On the one hand, they act as responsible medicalized subjects by seeking medical help, on the other, they, especially Nirupama, demands responsible behaviour in return from the doctors. Responsibilization of the subjects thus produces demanding subjects, who demand responsible behaviour from the doctors too. Therefore, with the perception that the doctors had not done what they should have ideally done, Nirupama resorts to blaming the doctors for the delay, and for rendering IVF inevitable.

Related to these dynamics is Nirupama's constant repression of the anxieties born out of the experience of undergoing IVF with donor egg. It is not only the chancy character of the whole enterprise that produces anxiety in her case, the repression of her sense of being a lesser woman, based on the internalization of social expectations from women in general, to procreate,

results in a different psychosomatic outcome. The repressed perception of distancing from the baby growing inside her womb, of nurturing a baby who is not directly biologically related to her, and the maternal environment her body is providing possibly culminates in the sustained psychosomatic experience of claustrophobia, which can be read as a direct outcome of the bifurcation of the so called wholeness of the birthing a baby into separate functions, namely, the genetic contribution and the gestational role, attributed to two separate women. ARTs introduce a schism into the maternal biological function, seen to be embedded in women's body, but this schism may create a sense of incompleteness in women who are performing either of the two functions. In Nirupama's case, the experience of claustrophobia and the scary feeling of an imminent miscarriage can be seen as related to the schism which ARTs introduces into the socially perceived wholeness of maternal experience. Yet unlike other women who cannot even gestate a baby, IVF helped Nirupama to at least achieve the bodily markers of pregnancy, which has immense symbolic significance in pro-natal societies such as ours. It is particularly from this experience of gestating the baby that Nirupama derives the courage to say that she has proven her 'capacity' by carrying the pregnancy to term. Still such a narrative of wholeness is punctured by reference to claustrophobia and the fear of imminent miscarriage owing to the perceived inability to live up to the ideology of biological motherhood.

**Narrative II:** Suritha and Kalyan (names changed) are residents of Howrah. Kalyan is an engineer with the panchayat department and Suritha is a home maker. They are married since 2004. They did not think of having a child for the first one and half years of their conjugal life. Once they started thinking of 'completing their family', after repeated efforts, they realized that there was 'some problem'.

In 2007 they started seeking medical help from a local gynaecologist. Having informed by someone in their neighbourhood that cases of infertility are tackled best by the infertility experts, they resorted to one of the leading corporate infertility clinics in Kolkata. Soon they noticed lack of transparency in the practices of the clinic. Their medical reports were never handed over to them after the consultation with the infertility expert, as a result of which they never got the chance to see their medical reports. Suritha underwent four failed Intra-Uterine Insemination (henceforth IUI) cycles in this particular clinic for which different reasons were cited each time by the concerned infertility. Kalyan underwent *semen analysis* for eight times for the four IUI cycles. Initially the doctors told Kalyan that his

sperm quality is so superior that ‘1000s of IUIs and 100s of IVFs’ can be performed using the already donated semen sample. After the four failed IUI cycles they realized that something was wrong with the treatment protocol and decided to change the clinic.

In the new clinic both Suritha and Kalyan were subjected to hormonal treatment for reasons unknown, and without any outcome. They soon shifted to another clinic where the doctor advised Suritha to undergo *investigative hysteroscopy* (procedure to see inside the uterus and detect problems) and Kalyan was asked to produce the result of semen analysis from a fresh sample. Analysing the reports of both Suritha and Kalyan, the doctor came to the conclusion that it was a case of *unexplained infertility* (infertility without any specific cause or reason). They prepared for the first IVF under this infertility expert’s supervision (during which three embryos were transplanted, none of which grew successfully) but the cycle failed owing to some viral infection. The eggs collected from Suritha’s ovaries during the first *ovum retrieval* (retrieval of eggs for IVF), which were preserved in a frozen state, were used for the second *embryo transfer*. This time two embryos were implanted which culminated in the birth of Suritha and Kalyan’s baby on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2013.

Here are a few excerpts from the in-depth ethnographic interview conducted with the couple at their Howrah residence:

*11:00 a.m., Saturday, April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2013,*

*Ichhapur, Howrah:*

*Kalyan initiates the dialogue in Suritha’s absence and I begin asking questions to him:*

... What was the response of your family, relatives and friends to your condition? I mean, how did they react?

See, everybody understood that we have some problem! We were married since 2004 but we did not have a child! Everybody in our extended family was curious about our conjugal life! They frequently asked why we were not trying, why we were not completing the family! ... I felt irritated! I even thought of replying back to them rudely, but.... (Stops, the sentence remains incomplete) This happened even within my friend circle. New colleagues in my office were curious whether I was married and had a child. I hope you understand... (Pauses for a while) It is so common to



ask colleagues about their marital status, about the number of children a person they have.

... It is really embarrassing! But the embarrassment increases when even the colleagues start asking personal questions like, why are we not trying to have a child or is it not happening!

How did you react to these speculations about your conjugal life?

... I felt bad, but I realized what I was going through is only a quarter of what she (refers to his wife, Suritha) was going through. She had to face rejection from both her and my relatives and acquaintances....

*Suritha joins us after attending her 21 days old new born:*

What was your experience?

Actually, we are three sisters-in-law in my father-in-law's family. My *boro ja* (refers to Kalyan's eldest brother's wife) already had a daughter, but me and *mejdi* (refers to Kalyan's middle brother's wife) did not have an issue. (Read child) We both had the same problem but we never discussed the matter with each other. Now she has a baby. I don't know whether that happened through IVF. But as long as we both were childless, we were treated in the same manner. Relatives conveyed *bhalo khobor* (good news) to my *boro ja*, but we were never informed. Even when we were present, we were categorically ignored. I was not even invited to attend sacred ceremonies in the family. I had deliberately stopped attending all such social gatherings. I was completely devastated....

But I thought all these things happened in the past?

No, this happens even today! I am the only child in my mother's family. My mother has two sisters and both of them are childless. My *mejo mashi* (refers to her mother's middle sister) brought me up. Both mine and his (refers to her husband) relatives said that I have a *bhagya* (fate) like my *mejo mashi*. Some relatives even told me, *tor mayer poribarei kono osubidhe ache!* (The problem is there in your mother's family only)

How did you cope with this situation?

*Kalyan intervenes, but briefly:*

She completely immersed herself in *pujo-accha*! (Worship and penance)

*Suritha ignores Kalyan's intervention, resumes replying:*

From 2007 onwards, I joined a Montessori teacher training course but dropped out of it half way!

Why?

Actually, all trainees in that course were young married women like me! Most of them had children! They talked about their children and about how they were managing their children and the course! I felt completely out of place in such discussions, I increasingly felt the emptiness in my life...!

What did you do next?

In 2009 I joined a boutique! I decided not to divulge the actual year of my marriage to them, but by then the feeling of emptiness had grown into my mind! My life seemed meaningless without a child! I thought that I had got married at the right time but why was I alone, am I destined to remain alone forever? Friends and acquaintances who had married two or three years after me had their own children by then, but I was still incomplete. I left the boutique soon.... (Starts crying)

What did you learn in the boutique? (In a futile attempt to divert her attention)

Embroidery! I designed *sarees* (traditional Bengali/Indian apparel) for my mother-in-law and my mother. Actually 2009 was the most depressing year of my life. (Reverts back to theme of incompleteness) I could not continue anything fruitfully, I was completely devastated....

... In 2009 only, a local shopkeeper advised me to meet an infertility expert. He gave me the name and address of.... (Refers to a renowned infertility expert in Kolkata, associated with a corporate ART clinic)

And what about the *pujo-accha* (worship and penance) part your husband was referring to?

Nothing yielded the result I wanted! I went to many *thakurbari* (place of worship), did whatever penance I was advised to do but

nothing worked! I had lost all hope! But I told God, *amai jokhon meye toiri pathiyecho, tomake amai sontan ditei hobe!* (That you have sent me to this world as a woman, you have to give me a child)

You underwent four failed IUI cycles and one failed IVF cycle before successfully conceiving and giving birth to your baby. How did you cope up with these failures?

*Kalyan replies:*

It was very difficult. We were completely misled by.... (Refers to a popular corporate infertility clinic in the city) We were not given our reports; we did not exactly know what our problem was! After each failed cycle, the doctor came up with new stories about why it failed!

I was not very enthusiastic about the second IVF after all this. The entire thing was becoming financially difficult for me to manage. Injections, medicines, conveyance cost, along with doctor's fees added up to a huge sum of money every month. Investing on another IVF cycle appeared to me like gambling! I had to think about our future, about saving some money for our old age, but she was unwilling to give up!

*Suritha adds:*

Yes, I kept on insisting on undergoing the second IVF cycle! I was desperate! After every failure I just thought *tahole hoito or kothatai thik hoy jabe!* (Then maybe his words will become true)

Did you consider adoption as an alternative to the rigmarole of failed IUI and IVF cycles? (Addressed to both)

*Kalyan replies:*

I wanted to adopt! She was against adoption! She wanted to conceive by hook or crook!

Why? (specifically to Suritha)

See, he is my own child. (Refers to the baby she had through IVF) An adopted child is not one's own child. Adoption would not change my situation, *para-protibeshir chokhe to ami ja chilam tai roye jabe!* (My status will remain unchanged in the eyes of my neighbours)

*Kalyan adds:*

Actually, she was under so much pressure that she could not think of these alternatives! But I could! She thought she have to conceive, otherwise her life is not worth living...!

***Specificities of the narrative:*** This narrative introduces the common disturbing themes of social ostracism, internalization of social neglect in the form of poor self-concept, and the attribution of childlessness to the wife's lineage. The theme of infertility as personal failure and inadequacy, as hindrance to biological and social completion, and acceptance is dominant in this narrative. The narrative shows that infertility can be a painful experience for both men and women, although in varying degrees and forms, and that husbands can also realize that the social burden of infertility falls more on women, compared to men. Yet what comes across as prominent is Suritha's struggle, even in the face of social ostracism, poor self-concept, and withdrawal from a normal life, is her conviction not to be completely subdued by social pressure in the mission to recuperate her lost self-identity by achieving motherhood. This conviction is discernible in Suritha's insistence that she should opt for the 2<sup>nd</sup> IVF cycle even when Kalyan, otherwise a very supportive husband, insists on not wasting more money in this 'gamble', and rather opt for adoption. For Suritha, biological motherhood is the only means of achieving social recognition and her legitimate position within her family and neighbourhood, and thus she takes up this obstinate challenge of overcoming her biological frailty, through interventions on her own body, by trying to convince Kalyan, who is the prime investor in these costly procedures.

This conviction to achieve biological motherhood should not however be read as a tale of a potential personal achievement. In fact, Suritha succumbs to the ideology of biological motherhood, and negotiates with her husband who is ready to compromise genetic link by opting for adoption. Apart from this negotiation with Kalyan over a mundane-utilitarian issue such as investing on costly procedures of assisted reproduction, Suritha also negotiates with God and the larger societal realm. The practicing of penance, paying regular visits to *thakurbari* (place of worship) cannot be seen solely as ways of seeking solace in the spiritual realm; these rituals and practices also embody an active material demand to the God, to put in Suritha's words, *amai jokhon meye toiri pathiyecho, tomake amai sontan ditei hobe!* (That you have sent me to this world as a woman, you have to give me a child)

Her negotiation with societal speculations about her reproductive history, by reducing the number of years of her married life, should not be read as an escape from such speculation, but as an active, conscious and self-styled portrayal of normalness.

As mentioned earlier, Suritha's negotiations are connected with the desire to achieve biological and social completion, with the compliance to the imperatives of what Adrienne Rich (1986) calls 'institutionalized motherhood' but this narrative cannot be solely reduced to that. The way she challenges her husband, who is considering adoption, God, for denying her what she is otherwise entitled to, and society, for all the neglect hurled upon her by the relatives and acquaintances, necessitates rethinking the taken for granted assumptions regarding the key beneficiaries of 'institutionalized motherhood'.

***Tracking generalities across the narratives:*** In the preceding sections, the specific elements of each narrative, which demarcate one from the other, have been presented. The identification of these specific elements, which attribute singularity to each narrative, is not the ultimate objective however, in which case we would only have series of separate narratives of intending mothers' located accounts of experiencing infertility and the necessary treatment regimen meant to address the latter.

The attempt is to track the generalities which stitch together the two narratives presented here, the common themes which cut across the located accounts of intending mothers having distinct locations. Infertility experience, motherhood, and the maternal body are the three generalities or common themes which cut across the two narratives, yet in (un)anticipatable ways which (de)stabilize the generalities themselves. By this is meant that the generalities are themselves subject to several variations when we try to understand them with regard to specific cases, some of which can be accommodated within the overall rubric of the generalities, and some of which represent a departure from the basic traits of the generalities. The argument is that even generalities embody variations, and the mapping of generalities cannot be insensitive to the case specific variations which constitute these generalities. Therefore, when the categories of infertility experience, motherhood and maternal body are deployed as generalities, it is done with the motive to unravel the how each specific case complicates our conception of these generalities, how (un)anticipatable elements necessitate the recognition of the variations or the differences built into the generalities. The reading of the interaction of the generalities with one

another, and the generalities in their specific variations that is offered over here is sensitive to their inherent messiness, for which no attempt has been made to engage with each generality separately in the following paragraphs.

The narratives of Nirupama and Suritha explicitly contains the elements of 'void', 'loneliness', and 'meaninglessness' without a child as essential ingredients of infertility experience, but they do not hold themselves responsible for their condition. Nirupama attributes her infertility to medical negligence. That she is capable of reproducing, of realizing the quintessential maternal function, is the most recurrent theme in Nirupama's narrative, but this assertion is coupled with complaints that she could have conceived much earlier without technological assistance, had the doctors acted more proactively. In Suritha's case, although there is an evident interiorization of social neglect but the feeling of incompleteness, the experience of biological lack is coupled with the redefinition of motherhood as something to be achieved against all odds. Rather than blaming herself for her condition, Suritha shifts the responsibility of recuperating her from the 'abject' condition to her husband, to God, and to the society. Her case is not only that of a prolonged personal lamentation over her own biological frailty, but of actively seeking her entitlements from her husband, from God, and the society at large.

In Nirupama's narrative the medically designated pathology of *anovulation* is completely disavowed to retain the naturalness of the maternal body, yet such naturalness is haunted by the recognition of the necessity of technological assistance. Nirupama's conception of maternal body is ridden with tension because she perceives her body not to be diseased or affected by any pathological condition yet thinks that it is in need of medical assistance. In Suritha's case the narrative of achieved motherhood is inextricably interwoven with technological assistance in reproduction. The recognition of her inability to reproduce and the urgent need to undergo repeated IUI and IVF cycles is linked to the theme of technologically facilitated naturalness of the maternal body.

These two troubled narratives of achieved (an achievement that is either disavowed or naturalized) naturalness of the maternal body and the myriad (un)anticipatable directions they take is also evident in the conceptions which emanate from these narratives regarding adoption and *third party reproductive services*. In Nirupama's narrative the absence of reference to the involvement of the egg donor and the return of the disavowed in the same narrative through the psychosomatic symptom of claustrophobia and the fear of imminent miscarriage is indicative of the frustrated attempt to

retain the fullness of maternal role, genetic and gestational. Yet there is a sustained attempt to foreground the fullness of experiencing motherhood. In Suritha's narrative also, there is a clear indication that a child born through IVF is always one's own child and that an adopted child can never be one's own. The lack of involvement of the maternal body in adoption renders it a less socially legitimate way of coping with infertility. It is precisely for this reason that Nirupama says with a sense of deep pride that she had conceived successfully in the very first *embryo transfer*, an instance she possibly deploys to foreground that she is not 'incapable'. This shows that the notions of 'capability' and 'incapability' come to be redefined in the contexts of technologically facilitated conception. This should not however obscure the profoundly naturalistic assumptions of such redefinition which renders adoption an impossibility as motherhood in this case defies the logic of mediation of the maternal body.

In summary, the two narratives show that one cannot think of generalities as monolithic and coherent, one should be responsive to the variations that constitute these generalities. When universal constructions, which are conjointly produced by the clinical standards and the cultural norms, sustained and rearticulated by commercial interests, are seen from the plane of co-constitution of the universal/general/disembodied /objective claims on the one hand and the particular/singular/located accounts on the other, (un)anticipatable perspectives on the workings of ART is produced.

***Conclusion: Of the inter-implication of objective claims and located/alternative accounts***

This paper engages with the inter-implication and dynamic interaction between the universal/general notion of women's body which acts as the lynchpin of ARTs practice and the alternative notions of body emanating from the location of the intending mothers. The invocation of the word alternative however does not mean that the notion of women's body emanating from the location of intending mothers necessarily represents a radical opposition to the universal/general notion of women's body in ARTs practice. The word alternative here refers to the different perspectives on the imperatives and mechanisms of ARTs enterprise as an objective medical domain which emanate from the location of intending mothers contending with infertility and infertility treatment. The mapping of the specificities of each narrative and the generalities which cut across each narrative in their specific variations, and the accounts emanating from the location of intending

mothers cannot be thought to represent an authentic outside to the workings of power and ideology, they nevertheless embody the possibility of fracturing the self-sameness of the generalities of infertility experience, motherhood and maternal body, which mutually reinforce each other in the realm of ARTs. To think in terms of Judith Butler's (1990) ideas, this subversive possibility is built into the very process of reiteration of the heterosexual norms, which necessitate sensitivity to the constitutive (un)anticipatability built into the reiteration of the heterosexual norms, into the performance of the sexed body in society in general and in the domain of reproductive medicine and ARTs practice in particular.

In the narratives presented above, it is evident that some obvious anticipatable elements unfailingly feed into the construction of women's subjectivities in accordance with the established heterosexual norms. But these anticipatable elements should not obscure the unanticipatable possibilities created by ARTs practice, possibilities which both reinstate and exceed the limits of the possible drawn by the latter. Nirupama's narrative is an instance of the anticipatable maternal grief associated with infertility, it also embodies the (un)anticipatable element of disavowal of biological lack, and the unanticipatable return of the disavowed with psychosomatic manifestations. In a similar vein, in Suritha's narrative, her attempt to achieve technologically facilitated motherhood is anticipatable, but she does it in opposition to her husband's decision to avoid the 'gambling' involved in the costly, uncertain IUI and IVF cycles, which is an unanticipatable moment. This is unanticipatable because in patriarchal societies the institution of motherhood serves male interest, yet in the highly globalised economy in which we live ARTs practice may produce conditions in which 'institutionalized motherhood' may not necessarily serve male interest, at least not in every case.

But isn't it a too structured reading of the stabilizing and subversive possibilities, and the (un)anticipatable elements built into the performance of heterosexual norms and the sexed body? Isn't it a matter of rendering possible, through an act of theoretical and methodological bracketing, what is otherwise (im)possible? To remain sensitive to and to map the (un)anticipatable elements which structure experience is not a reductionist move. On the contrary, it is an ideological move to grasp those elements which would otherwise escape our attention owing to the foreclosure of the diverse possibilities into ideologically given anticipatable moments and conjunctures. But, since, to embody knowledge is to be implicated in the nexus of power and ideology, there is no illusory claim about producing a



reading from outside the nexus of power and ideology. It is just an attempt to locate some (un)anticipatable moments in the two narratives of experience presented above, and the ideological character of this act is embodied in its recognition of the ideological foreclosures which render motherhood a trans-historical and trans-cultural institution, infertility a 'curse'-a 'curse' that can only be overcome by technological assistance, and reproduction of the heterosexual family an ethical imperative and any departure from it morally reprehensible.

This is how intending mothers' located accounts give us the much-needed insight into the dynamics of the inter-implication of universal/general/objective constructions in ARTs practice from the particular locations of intending mothers in their encounter with infertility and ARTs practice. This inter-implication is characterised by both anticipatable and unanticipatable moments, by conjunctures of stabilization and subversion of the sanctified universal/general constructions of ARTs practice, which cannot be reduced to a specific calculus and which calls for a nuanced working through the messiness of the narratives and the (un)anticipatable twists and turns they embody.

The ideological plea of the present paper is that any attempt to holistically grapple with the domain of ARTs practice cannot rely solely on the objective medical claims. Inclusive perspectives on the workings of this domain will have to rely on the located accounts of intending mothers, who are also major actors in this domain, but mostly as recipients of reproductive service. Such located accounts have the epistemological and political charge which can help us rethink the dominant conceptions of the ARTs practice, and the generalities which sustain them, from a feminist standpoint.

### ***Acknowledgement***

The author of this paper is grateful to Dr. Anirban Das, Associate Professor of Cultural Studies, CSSSC, for his supervision and guidance during the author's MPhil research on Assisted Reproductive Technologies with ethnographic focus on Kolkata, of which this present paper is an outcome.

### ***References***

- Butler, Judith, 1990. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Das, Anirban, 2010. *Towards a Politics of the (Im)possible: The Body in Third World Feminisms*. London and New York: Anthem Press.
- Foucault, Michel, 1980. *The History of Sexuality Volume I: An Introduction*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Franklin, Sarah, 1997. *Embodied Progress: A Cultural Account of Assisted Conception*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Haraway, Donna, 1999. 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspectives', in Mario Biagoli (ed.) *The Science Studies Reader*. New York and London: Routledge: 172-188.
- Harding, Sandra, 1987. 'The Method Question' *Hypatia*, Vol. 2, No. 3: 19-35.
- Kleinman, Arthur, 1995. *Writing at the Margin: Discourses between Anthropology and Medicine*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.
- Marwah, Vrindah and Sarojini N., 2011, 'Reinventing Reproduction, Reconceiving Challenges: An Examination of Assisted Reproductive Technologies in India', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XLVI: 104-111.
- Nadimpally, Sarojini, Vrindah Marwah, and Anjali Sheno, 2011, 'Globalization of Birth Markets: A Case Study of Assisted Reproductive Technologies in India', visit: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3169454/pdf/1744-8603-7-27.pdf> for the article (accessed on 1 July 2013).
- Pande, Amrita, 2010, "At Least I Am Not Sleeping With Anyone: Resisting the Stigma of Commercial Surrogacy in India", visit: [claradoc.gpa.free.fr/affdoc.php?ndoc=420](http://claradoc.gpa.free.fr/affdoc.php?ndoc=420) (accessed on June 26, 2013).
- Qadeer, Imrana, 2010, *New Reproductive Technologies and Health Care in Neo-Liberal India: Essays*. Monograph, Center for Women's Development Studies, visit: [www.cwds.ac.in/occasionalpapers.htm](http://www.cwds.ac.in/occasionalpapers.htm) for the full text (accessed on August 12, 2012).
- Rich Adrienne, 1986. *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*. New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Rose Nikolas, 2007. *The Politics of Life Itself: Biomedicine, Power, and Subjectivity in the Twenty-First Century*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

**Gendered Bengali: Expectations and Challenges,  
in Ashapurna Devi's '*Chhayasurya*' and Partha  
Pratim Chowdhury's '*Chhaya Surya*  
[*Chhayasurya*], and Sharadindu  
Bandyopadhyay's '*Dadar Kirti* and Tarun  
Majumdar's '*Dadar Kirti***

Anirban Ray

**Abstract:** *The paper offers a comparative study between two filmic 'adaptations' from two Bengali texts: (i) Chhaya Surya [Chhayasurya] (1963) adapted by Partha Pratim Chowdhury from Ashapurna Devi's short story 'Chhayasurya' (1988[?]: 130–139), and (ii) Tarun Majumdar's Dadar Kirti (1980), 'adapted' from the novella/novel Dadar Kirti by Sharadindu Bandyopadhyay ([1982] 2011: 259–289). With close textual and filmic references, the paper explores (i) the conceptions of masculine and feminine and connotations of the two, (ii) artistic expressions internalizing gender as well as challenging it, (iii) male interactions interpreted by domestic women, and (iv) women's interlocation in perspectives on heterosexual coupling and marriage.*

**Keywords:** Love, negotiated marriage, femininity, masculinity, effeminacy, artistic vocation, literature-film 'adaptation.'

***I. The Scope of the Paper***

A shift of conjugal responsibilities occurs from the parents to their married sons/daughters before and after the three-day event in negotiated (arranged) Indian (Bengali) marriages. Post-marriage, when the sons and daughters (who had yielded to the parental choice of locating the partner/bridegroom/bride try to communicate the failure of compatibility to their parents, the parents argue that following the marriage it is their children's responsibility to turn the coupling (fixed by the parents) into a successful affair. In other words, the parents having generated a partner/bride/bridegroom based on observation (according to their generational, temporal, and appreciated standards), refuse to take the responsibility further after the wedding is

completed (implying that they [the parents of the bride and bridegroom] refuse to accept that their choices had been unsuccessful). Pre-negotiated-marital exploration of sexual compatibility is still not quite concomitant with the Indian mindset. In many cases the parents pursue the marriage negotiation not keeping in mind their children's happiness as the foremost cause, but as a display of their own social prestige in having married their children, with apparent success, befitting the family's economic position. When youths (of both sexes, undergoing marital negotiations) confront their parents forwarding the logic that they cannot commit to a located partner/bride/bridegroom within such a limited time before marriage, their logic is sometimes countered with the parental logic that some of them (the parents, especially the elderly married women) had seen their husbands for the first time in marriage halls/spaces. This self-justification has elements of both pride and obedience being able to accept parental decisions; simultaneously it contains hurt pride for which there was no audience. It can be contextualized here, that those lost opportunities of romance, represented through the family dramas in films in the latter half of the twentieth century, starred by the gifted duo Uttam Kumar and Suchitra Sen surely had an appeal for people who compromised in their youth and silently learned to find happiness with the negotiated partner.

In this paper I have tried to address how the genders of Bengali man and woman are constructed, with references to the expectations and challenges of negotiated marriage in middle class standards perceived in the middle and the latter half of the twentieth century, in two specific texts and films 'adapted' from those.<sup>1</sup> The primary texts include: Ashapurna Devi's short story '*Chhayasurya*' (1988[?]: 130–139) and Partha Pratim Chowdhury's *Chhaya Surya* [*Chhayasurya*] (1963) (film 'adaptation' of Devi's story), and Sharadindu Bandyopadhyay's *Dadar Kirti* ([1982] 2011: 259–289) and Tarun Majumdar's 'adaptation' of the same, *Dadar Kirti* (1980).<sup>2</sup> The paper attempts to carry forward the texts/movies to the international audience stressing their visions which certainly were ahead of their times (and/or may have escaped the perceptive, and accepting potential of the readers/audience) rendering them relevant for critical studies for our times.

## ***II. The Primary Texts and Movies***

### **II. a. Comparative Summaries of Ashapurna Devi's '*Chhayasurya*' and Partha Pratim Chowdhury's *Chhaya Surya* [*Chhayasurya*]**

Devi's story is an exploration of gendered differences between the two sisters Ghentu (younger) and Mallika (elder), and under the convenient projection of the male persona (the sisters' younger uncle who is the story's narrator), does include criticisms of Ghentu's temperament primarily from the women's point of view since the elderly female members of the family cannot comprehend and endorse her un-womanish nature (Devi 1988[?]: 130–139). Instead of a progression of a plot, the story appears like fictive anecdotal recollections of the narrator whom Ghentu approaches in the film 'adaptation' by Chowdhury (1963) with a request for authorial justice through a fictional representation of her by him, thereby including her in the map of possibilities, and index of gender-acceptances. Ghentu develops a relationship with a low-class worker but fails to provide him treatment in dearth of which he expires (Devi 1988[?]: 135–139; Chowdhury 1963). Mallika receives a very prospective husband and Ghentu's 'theft' of 'one hundred rupees' (translation mine) (to arrange cure for her lover's 'illness' [translation mine]) brings her verbal curses from everyone, for being the cause of ultimate 'shame' (translation mine) in her prestigious family (Devi 1988[?]: 135–139).

Chowdhury's film (1963) provides visual scope for Mallika's negotiation to develop in which her future husband and Ghentu's (played by Sharmila Tagore) romantic interest are both shown as full-fledged individuals. Simultaneously the narrator-uncle (played by *Nirmal Kumar*) is provided fullest scope to act as a confidante of Ghentu, acting as a port of entry and exit between patriarchal expectations internalized by dependent women, and the (female) rebellious, emancipated possibilities which delight his (male) authorial self – since as a writer his eyes are keen in detecting anomalies and exceptions (as expressed by him to Ghentu's mother in Devi's story [1988(?): 132] and in Chowdhury's film [1963]). At the same time, the uncle-writer/narrator is also a career of those patriarchal injunctions with which he regulates and interprets Ghentu's movements; however, he certainly is neither traditional nor conservative Bengali man (Devi 1988[?]: 130–139; Chowdhury 1963). In fact, his own masculinity may be questioned: in Chowdhury's film (1963) he clearly expresses his discomfort with the marriage-system, and his desire to remain free from such ties also considerably frees him from practicing the expected gender trends/traits that distinguish between men and women, through marriage. This leads us to consider: should we not consider the sensibility of a male thoughtful person (a domestic loner) as a separate trait from the heterosexual married man, whose masculinity is judged through his decision-making which at

times may lack gender-sensibility towards the needs of his wife and the female sex in general?

## **II. b. Comparative Summaries of Sharadindu Bandyopadhyay's *Dadar Kirti* and Tarun Majumdar's *Dadar Kirti***

Kedarnath Chattopadhyay, a man fond of learning yet unable to qualify the examination-based assessment of merit, is sent to pursue bachelor's course away from Calcutta and is welcomed in his uncle's household where he is regarded warmly by Santosh (Bandyopadhyay [1982] 2011: 261–289), his junior cousin, who is a man of adrenalin charm but with decent control of testosterone and machismo (Bandyopadhyay [1982] 2011: 261–263, 266, 268). Santosh's engagement with Beena, the younger daughter of Kshitin Babu, is initiated by Santosh's mother whose decision/choice, as the text implies, is based on close proximity, identical professional status, and simultaneously a complementary pairing of appearances and temperaments of her boy and Beena (Bandyopadhyay [1982] 2011: 268). Kedar develops a passion for Saraswati (Beena's elder sister) – a girl of 'obstinate' (translation mine) temperament (Bandyopadhyay [1982] 2011: 263) and Santosh, along with Amulya play a 'prank' on Kedar and Saraswati, by 'forging' a letter from Saraswati to Kedar (Bandyopadhyay [1982] 2011: 261–278). Saraswati discovers the 'mischief,' and is later engaged to *Sharat Chandra* Ghoshal, (Bandyopadhyay [1982] 2011: 271–287); in the film her 'negotiation' was being pursued with Amarnath Chakraborty, son of Nibaran Chakraborty (Majumdar 1980). However, she turns against the 'negotiation' having received the visual (self-representation) and amorous addresses from Sharat (visual intrusion is thereby considered more intense encroachment upon her territory than the previously 'forged' letter by Amulya and Santosh) (Bandyopadhyay [1982] 2011: 284–286). Kshitin Babu agrees to discontinue the 'negotiation' (translation mine) between Saraswati and Sharat, and his appreciation for Kedar in considerable degrees had been meanwhile enhanced by Kedar's interest in Vedic scholarship, leading the reader to expect Kedar as his future son-in-law (Bandyopadhyay [1982] 2011: 277, 283–289).

In Majumdar's film (1980), the '*Dada*' (meaning a 'senior brother' in Bengali) in the story's title could be assigned to two male characters. Bhombol Bhattacharya (played by Anup Kumar), the good-for-nothing yet certainly the wittiest foil to Kedar (played by Tapas Paul), pursues the metamorphosis of the delicate, vulnerable Kedar to a well-groomed desirable

match for Saraswati (played by Mahua Roychoudhury), whom he had earlier heaped with fabricated information regarding Kedar's physical as well as cerebral successes (Majumdar 1980). There were not many Bengali films in the 1980s that projected masculine 'peer pressure' and addressed the problem we now identify as 'ragging'; although those issues had been projected under a coating of humor in Majumdar's film (1980). Boudidi (meaning 'elder sister-in-law' in Bengali and played by Sandhya Roy) (Santu's sister-in-law) is given an active role – by mock testing of Santu, she instils the degrees of conjugal responsibilities within Santu for Beena (played by Debashree Roy), so that the audience is not led to perceive Santu's right over Beena (backed by parental consent) as to be taken for granted (Majumdar 1980). In this regard, Majumdar's film (1980) not only gives precedence to parental supremacy in negotiations but also leaves room open for partners to turn that negotiation to a romantic attachment. Ultimately Bhombol forestalls bridal inspection of Saraswati (by Amarnath [played by Kaushik Banerjee]) and her subsequent marriage to Amarnath when he (Bhombol) produces a letter right before the inspection – in which he admits his faults, glorifying Kedar's unblemished nature, thereby instantly acquiring Saraswati's preference back for Kedar (Majumdar 1980). Audience, watching Majumdar's 'adaptation' (1980), but not having read Bandyopadhyay's novel ([1982] 2011: 259–289) would more decidedly identify Bhombol as the '*Dada*' and not Kedar.

### ***III. Bengali Negotiated Marriage and Gendered Partnerships<sup>3</sup>***

Before moving to theoretical review and application, let us briefly identify the issues of gender tied with tradition and conservative mentalities in Bengali negotiated marriage, which is not very different from all other racial arranged weddings in India. Marriage regulation, rituals, and the entire gamut of performance could be either traditional or conservative or both. It is traditional to go for horoscope consultation before arranged marriage, but it can lapse into a conservative endorsement to subject the prospective bride to corrective rituals. At times, even the people who consider themselves cultured may fall back upon selective doctrines (without any will to consider if these were sexist or misogynist). For example, no matter how fashion-conscious/fashion-trendy the bridegroom is, the '*topor*' (the bridegroom's decorated headgear: two provided from two households: the bridegroom's family and the bride's family) would form an essential part of the custom, costume, and code, and will be kept as a material memory even after the

marriage. But for the bride, her sari, and jewellery are also the material counterpart to the intangible blessings she earns, more crucially in case if she were the groom's parents' selection. To endorse a working bride (financially independent) to go through the '*bhaat-kaporer anusathan*' (the symbolic ceremony of the husband acquiring responsibilities for his wife's survival) is both traditional and conservative; often female members are the witnesses to it, not willing to realize how the ritual places the newly-wed wife (a member of their own sex) in a hierarchy lower than the men: the ceremony urges the symbolic (expected) dependence of the newly-wed wife on her husband to get accepted as mutually, conjugally beneficial. If asked regarding this ritual, an average family member (both male and female) may dismiss any critical inquiry into it, considering it as 'just another ritual' or an event of harmless photo shoots. Below are four, out of many, gendered perspectives of conservative negotiated Hindu (Bengali) marriage:

III. a. The bridegroom's living guardians are supreme; primary information regarding age, profession of the bridegroom should be exchanged between his parents and the bride's parents; the bridegroom may be expected to pay a visit for the bride-inspection following the primary inference regarding her suitability drawn by the bridegroom's parents. If the bridegroom wished to verbally settle with the bride's parents (when both his parents are in authority) then the bridegroom may be inferred as disrespectful and non-compliant even though the bridegroom's consent and comfort should be given priority. It is interesting that Majumdar (1980) does not feature Kedar's parents in the developing negotiation but discussions regarding the engagement between Kedar and Saraswati occur between Kshitin Babu and Kedar's uncle (Santu's father), and it is Boudidi, who subtly plays the significant role in negotiation through women's quarters, beneath the men's decisions: advising Saraswati to consider Kedar as her future husband, providing her scope to think independently about her happiness.

III. b. Between the confirmation of the negotiation and registry/blessings, the would-be bride (still in many households) is not expected/permitted to meet and travel to the groom's parental house.<sup>4</sup> Occasionally, interviews of men precede inspections of women and clearly there is a difference between the two since the man's viability as the earning unit has to be justified to the would-be bride's parents/family. The uncomfortable yet necessary fact-collection is pursued by male members of the girl's family though it is made to look like a friendly conversation by appointing the girl's cousin-brother(s) and/or uncle(s) as the interviewers. In this regard, how can a second-generation scholar or an artist bridegroom/bride whose parents



still endorse the traditional and/or conservative exercise of marriage, be provided a justified image of the special attributes of his/her immediate future life-companion? Are the bride's cousins and uncles better judges of the bridegroom's artistic pursuits and vice versa? Obviously, the replies are negative: the bridegroom's talents are considered unnecessary before the marriage; what matters most is the bridegroom's financial position. This seems to subscribe to the publicly well-perceived view of marriage as an 'investment' itself; that a woman's economic settlement is more important than the recognition and fulfilment of her and her husband's other talents.<sup>5</sup>

III. c. Registry is the ultimate legal sanctioning of marriage; the complex rituals and/or exchange of rings are mere performances for social ratification, exhibition of status, and archiving of memories, all pursued to prove that it was a 'happy wedding ceremony.' As we hinted earlier, apparently the pre-(negotiated)-marriage erotic assessment of one's potential/performance is still frowned upon by traditional and/or conservative parents/families; many parents would actually pursue the registry on the marriage day fearing that the partners might initiate a sexual encounter following the registry and later change their minds having found that they two are sexually incompatible and thus are not mutually suitable.

III. d. The onus of financial handling usually falls on the husband. In circumstances when the husband has to take a risk in financial investment, it is considered demeaning on his part to ask for financial help from his in-laws; even this hesitated plea might be mistaken for asking for (belated) dowry in a disguised mode.<sup>6</sup> Economy is thus severely gendered: the husband's masculinity being inflated, he is expected not to be dependent even on his wife in crisis. Gendering makes the husband masculine, at the cost of his humanity.

#### ***IV. Review of Selected Literature***

Esha Dey notes that those women who did not receive adequate opportunity to express and represent themselves before a cultured, emancipated audience, came to regard Ashapurna Devi as a source of inspiration (Dey 1996: 8–9). Dey observes that Devi could progress since in her own parental space there was no distinction drawn between male and female members/sibling in terms of studies, creative exercise with/before an understanding audience; following her marriage she was also equipped with economic stability, considerable emotional assistance from her husband, and received

convenient scope of publication (Dey 1996: 9–10). Phyllis Granoff has considered both the aspects of Devi's literary creations: Granoff draws reference to Manisha Roy's study ([1972] 1975), that considers the endorsement of women's compliance with 'traditional' perspectives set by men; Granoff also mentions Anima Bose (1976) who takes a reverse assessment of Devi as a spokesperson of upholding 'women's rights' possible only when such men-oriented 'traditional' expectations can be challenged (Granoff 1985: 195).<sup>7</sup> Granoff also highly appreciated Devi's unique stance taken towards the equilibrium 'with men' in achieving independence not only in finance but also in learning, apart from inner enrichment (Granoff, 1985: 195). Sharadindu Bandyopadhyay is a very different author altogether: remembered primarily for his investigator-protagonist *Byomkesh Bakshi* for which he still remains an author potential for film 'adaptation' and audio performance; we do not however considerably look for nuances of gender and its implication in his fiction, which this paper attempts to pursue. His *Dadar Kirti* received a wide audience due to Tarun Majumdar's 'adaptation' (1980), but very few may feel it required to compare with the textual source and also see if western theories regarding the implementation of gender could be applied to Majumdar's 'adaptation' specially - which is often precluded from serious study due to lightness of having apparent humor of family drama. The paper takes an experimental approach to carefully select western theoretical insights and consider reworking of the same in these two Bengali texts and films from them.

Sara Heinämaa, in discussion of the construction of the subject's 'sexuality,' following Maurice Jean Jacques Merleau-Ponty ([1945] 1993), notes that like the constituent parts of an 'art' form, 'sexuality' and its patterns form the constituted aspects of a person's 'behaviour'; thus the patterns found in companionship, cerebral reasoning, and artistic considerations are modulated by 'sexuality' (Heinämaa [2004] 2005: 143).<sup>8</sup> Heinämaa refers to the observation of Simone Lucie Ernestine Marie Bertrand de *Beauvoir* ([1949] 1993) who cited and followed Merleau-Ponty's view that womanly and manly features are subject to modifications and alterations: while woman does not constitute 'fixed reality,' man is built on 'a historical idea' (quoted in Heinämaa [2004] 2005: 144) and thus women undergo transformation (Heinämaa [2004] 2005: 144).<sup>9</sup> Heinämaa thus establishes the truth that the male-female binary is indeed traced from the male perspective and that maleness is defined in opposition to the femaleness (Heinämaa [2004] 2005: 137–151).

Heinämaa's discussions on the difference between male and female '[s]exual identities' and 'behaviour' (Heinämaa [2004] 2005: 137–151) can be applied in the studies of the paper's primary texts, contextualized in the Indian scenario. In Chowdhury's *Chhaya Surya* [*Chhayasurya*] (1963) the child Ghentu indeed argues that sports should not be gendered and she is shown enjoying cricket with boys in the alleys (how they perceive her as a player is not given much insight in the film) but Chowdhury features the grown-up Ghentu (possibly in late teens or early twenties) fidgeting with a chain, enacting the *mastan* (the arrogant male) temperament. In contrast, in Majumdar's *Dadar Kirti* (1980) Santu while enjoying the date with Beena covers her head with a veil, projecting her as a bashful wife (Majumdar 1980). Beena's cerebral faculties are not questioned, they are not essentially considered important in comparison to Saraswati, but Amulya in Bandyopadhyay's novel explains to Santosh that the latter had been considered as a potential son-in-law combining his academic merits with his robust health (Bandyopadhyay [1982] 2011: 266). Majumdar (1980) also projects Saraswati performing the role of Rabindranath Tagore's Chitrangada from his dance-drama *Chitrangada* – the story of the mythical Manipuri princess who imbibed masculine valour rendering her undesirable for the hyper-male Arjuna (See Tagore [1905] 1954[?]), but it appeals to Kedar – who gets romantically vulnerable with her, perhaps because he himself lacks the masculine firmness (but not aggression) that is internalized by a woman like Saraswati (Majumdar 1980).

Based on Raewyn Connell's (R.W. Connell) (1995) observation, Mimi Schippers notes that one is provided the opportunity to be considered 'masculine' through pursuing habits associated with 'masculinity,' indicating that a person does not inherit 'masculinity' (Schippers, 2007: 86).<sup>10</sup> Schippers refers to Connell (1987) who held the belief that 'hegemonic' 'femininity' does not exist as a counterpart to 'hegemonic masculinity' (conceptualized by Connell [1995]) (quoted in Schippers 2007: 87) since men's positioning of women as lower than them is a global scenario (Schippers 2007: 87).<sup>11</sup> However, Schippers mentions following Connell (1995) that men also experience 'subordination' such as the straight men's domination of homosexual males, thereby forcing the latter to experience '*subordinate masculinities*' (mentioned and identified by Connell) considered 'feminine,' possessing degrees of passivity (Schippers 2007: 87–88).<sup>12</sup> Bhombol's coercion on the vulnerable Kedar to pursue the constructs of the 'hegemonic masculinity' (as discussed by Schippers [2007: 85–102] following Connell [1987, 1995]) and the demands of it can be observed in this regard (Majumdar 1980). Building upon Judith Butler's (1990) observation,

Schippers notes that the ‘hierarchical relationship’ between ‘femininity’ and ‘masculinity’ is based on ‘difference’ which initiates ‘erotic attachment,’ which acting as a ‘natural attraction’ draws men and women mutually leading to the constitution of ‘complementary opposites’ welcomed for coupling, considered ‘as natural’ (Schippers 2007: 89–90).<sup>13</sup> Thus Schippers aptly sums up that a ‘masculine’ male is expected to have sexual attraction towards a ‘feminine object,’ while the ‘feminin[ity]’ of a female is perceived as ‘being the object of masculine’ ‘attraction’ (Schippers 2007: 90). Thus, Bhombol can dismiss Saraswati as ‘blotting paper’ because she cannot be held in attraction like other ‘feminine’ ‘object’ (Majumdar 1980).

Schippers notes that exhibition of rebellion by women or exhibiting excessive sexual drive or complete lack of it, feeling lesbian attraction or keeping multiple (male) partners are considered ‘threatening’ as they challenge ‘hegemonic masculinity’ (Schippers 2007: 95). Women who feature these traits, as Schippers observes, are considered as possessing ‘*pariah femininities*’ (as termed by Schippers [2007: 95]) but even then, these identities are thought of as ‘*not masculine*’ but ‘feminine’ and they are ‘undesirable’ to men (Schippers 2007: 95). We can argue that Ghentu imbibes the ‘*pariah femininities*’ (as termed and discussed by Schippers [2007: 95]) and because of her unruly nature and lack of discipline, is addressed in harsh terms like ‘*Rokkhe Kali*’ (Devi 1988[?]: 130, 134) and ‘*Smashan Kali*’ (Devi 1988[?]: 137). Curiously these terms are actually names of Kali’s fierce manifestations. The hypocrisy of the Bengali mindset is manifested here: Shakti worship is held in almost similar reverence like that of the cult of Vishnu: Kali is held in awe, but women having dark complexion, rough physical features, and unruly hair, are disliked, but we hardly have male counterparts to these terms in usage, that is arrogant boys/men are not identified with Shiva’s ferocity. Schippers’s observation can be cited here: the assumption is that ‘masculinity’ is inherently ‘superior’ and ‘legitimate’ conditioning of maleness, hence only ‘femininity’ can be seen ‘as contaminating’ but ‘masculinity’ is thought to be above such risk (Schippers 2007: 96).

Jyotirmaya Tripathy notes that though gender-awareness has initiated development in ‘femininity,’ simultaneously a hierarchy is generated between women of the ‘Third World’ requiring support and liberation, and the women of the ‘First World’ as progressive and emancipated (Tripathy 2010: 116). Perhaps Devi is wishing Mallika to come out of her shell in the West, following her marriage, while Ghentu is already self-emancipated (Devi 1988[?]: 130–139). Tripathy aptly observes that ‘masculinity’ is less complex,

easily discernible concept, which implies that one does not bear patience to distinguish different degrees of 'maleness'; the male human is thus conceived adding 'masculinity' with 'men' which is made to exercise its implications globally (Tripathy 2010: 119). Tripathy conjectures the reality of '[f]eminine universality' and considers the diverse influence of 'cultures' in shaping womanly features; men seem to benefit from a consolidated concept of masculinity but progression amidst women is suspected and their success is questioned (Tripathy 2010: 120). Conceptions of 'gender,' Tripathy derives, are thus classified under 'feminist' label and 'maleness' is believed to be beyond the purview of 'gender,' kept in the label of 'sex' as it resists 'change' (Tripathy 2010: 120). Thus, in both Bandyopadhyay's novel ([1982] 2011: 265–268, 271–277) and Majumdar's film (1980), the letter 'prank' (translation mine), as Saraswati and Boudidi both point out – could potentially harm Saraswati's 'reputation' (translation mine), though it is just a 'prank' for Amulya, Santosh [Santu], and Bhombol.

How relevant are the two texts and the 'adapted' films for our contemporary Indian scenario? Jennifer L. Bowman's and David C. Dollahite's article on approaches to negotiated and love marriages in India (Bowman and Dollahite 2013: 207–225) can be cited here. In the developing scenario, we seldom hear of coerced persuasion of young people by their parents to accept the negotiated partner/bride/bridegroom; the parents are also ready to hear their children's denial of the matches initiated (Bowman and Dollahite 2013: 208). Steve Derné (1994), referred to by Bowman and Dollahite, observes that a typical Hindu considers a married man leading a life of respect if his previous and following generations reside in the same house (Bowman and Dollahite 2013: 212).<sup>14</sup> This is reflected in Saraswati's mother's wish to ensure her elder daughter's bliss of mind by getting Kedar as her son-in-law, since Kedar and Santosh [Santu] are blood related cousins, forming a greater family (Bandyopadhyay [1982] 2011: 286; Majumdar 1980). Bowman and Dollahite observe through a comparative survey that Indians, contrary to the citizens of United States prefer 'understanding' to 'love' in the tying of the knot and this emphasis on 'understanding' follows the initial absence of romantic attachment in negotiated marriage which does not provide much scope of acquaintance with the selected partner (Bowman and Dollahite 2013: 214). Bandyopadhyay projects that marital reality through the conversation between Amulya and Santosh – the former dismisses the pre-marital 'romance' as a western affair and plans to cure Kedar from his amorous fixation on Saraswati (Bandyopadhyay [1982] 2011: 265–266).

Unlike a straight man being calculative and actively involved in going on a date (generally implying that his ladylove accompanies in response and he fixes the date), Ghentu moves at ease between her house and her lover (Devi 1988[?]: 134–139; Chowdhury, 1963). Ghentu's Tabla-learning-aspiration may be a product of competitiveness with Mallika's Sitar-training (Devi 1988[?]: 133–134; Chowdhury 1963). It may be noticed that Sitar requires nimble fingers, slender ones, while much strength of the palm is required for Tabla; in fact, the hardness in the hands is an evident sign of physical labour but also a sign of masculine toughness. Bengalis have hypocrisies regarding gender coding of artists and gender associations with art. A prosperous parent may appoint an instrumental player (for example, Tabla) for his/her musician/dancer daughter, but there is a clear specification of task involved: the male Tabla player/trainer maybe seen as nothing more than a distinguished (paid) assistant, if not a paid servant. In that case any love-tryst between the Tabla player and the musician/dancer girl may be frowned upon (if both the families were not liberal and artists themselves), and as Devi's short story (1988[?]) and Chowdhury's film (1963) note, 'the daughter of a revered family' (translation mine) should not engage in Tabla-practice (Devi 1988[?]: 133–134; Chowdhury 1963) lest the physical exertion may reduce the delicacy of her hands and hinder her chance of getting married. Hand gestures and softness of a woman are still much in demand in negotiated marriages; in fact, inspection of the delicate hand of a woman occasionally transpires in negotiation.

## ***V. Female Sibling-pairings***

### **V. a. Ghentu and Mallika**

The author is at odds in exploring the masculinized femininity in Ghentu, which he infers, as both fascinating and undesirable, and is particularly difficult in attracting the opposite sex (male), as Ghentu's maleness precludes such amorous possibilities (Devi 1988[?]: 132–135). Ghentu's straightforward nature is complemented with her lover's inwardness, which she specifies as 'shyness' (translation mine), which any careful reader may discern as having degrees of vulnerability and delicate nature in a man (but not effeminate) which makes Ghentu feel concern and tenderness for him (Devi 1988[?]: 134–136, 138–139). Ghentu's negative assessment of Mallika is for her passivity in being a medium for exercise of patriarchal expectations which she has complied with (Devi 1988[?]: 135). Ghentu considers Mallika a 'wax doll' (translation mine) which is generated only

through conditions set by men, for fulfilment of conditions expected by men (Devi 1988[?]: 135). In other words, Mallika's gifts do not enrich her; rather those enhance her family's reputation (Devi 1988[?]: 131–135). The author-narrator too is indoctrinated in the condition that the family name may acquire 'blemish' (translation mine) due to Ghentu's affair but what is interesting is: he hopes that any such 'stain' (translation mine) could be purified by Mallika's character but does not say that Ghentu's nature would be of any hindrance for Mallika's chance of getting a prospective husband (Devi 1988[?]: 136). Female achievements are seen more in terms of being approved and sorted out by male family members, and prospective groom: Mallika has surpassed the females in the family by pursuing 'college' course, and her crossing India's boundary through marriage is certainly a path-breaking achievement (Devi 1988[?]: 136). One may question: whose achievement is it actually? Is it the groom's, charmed at Mallika's looks and qualities, or is it fate's own achievement that ensured Mallika's coincidental good fortune?

There is a slight patronizing tone in the description of Mallika's 'delicate' figure (translation mine) (yet considered beautiful in terms of negotiation) from the author-uncle-narrator, but there is certainly an intrigued look at Ghentu's 'strong physique' (translation mine) since she appears to be potential subject (not object) of observation for him (Devi 1988[?]: 130–139). The male persona of the narrator, inspecting a woman's looks before her qualities, is unsettled that a masculinized girl has found a male lover, rather than a conventionally pleasant-appearing girl like Mallika (Devi 1988[?]: 130–134). Instantly he corrects his thought process by referring to Mallika's penchant for norms even at the cost of letting another man – institutionally acknowledged, claim her unsoiled identity, which an illegitimate amorous investment, unsanctioned and unapproved, can never pursue (Devi 1988[?]: 134). Mallika is successful in deregistering the appeal displayed by her male domestic instructors, and the descriptions seem to rather lament the fact that there is a lack of spontaneous, visceral response in her character (Devi 1988[?]: 130–139). The degrees of appreciation stem from the narrator's success in 'comprehending' (translation mine) Mallika's character, which is not however conveniently simplified in case of Ghentu, since Ghentu is not a stereotype like Mallika (Devi 1988[?]: 134–135).

### **V. b. Saraswati and Beena**

In Bandyopadhyay's text, the two families have been introduced through the perspective of women (Santosh's mother's pursuit of Beena as her daughter-in-law [Bandyopadhyay (1982) 2011: 268]), though the men execute the decisive actions in both the novel (Bandyopadhyay [1982] 2011: 259–289) and the film (Majumdar 1980). Santosh's father readily provides a comfortable space for his nephew Kedar in his house (Bandyopadhyay [1982] 2011: 261), and in the film Kedar is also affectionately accepted by his daughter-in-law (Santu's Boudidi) who considers the advent of a new brother-in-law to provide a friendly companion for her own brother-in-law Santu (Majumdar 1980). In Majumdar's (1980) film, Boudidi is shown to be almost in a sisterly bonding with Santu as both are shown enjoying friendly conflicts over pen for epistolary romance with her distant husband. It is through her that we learn of an engagement between Beena and Santu; however, Santu's mother shows doubts regarding Beena's parents' decision (Majumdar 1980). At the mention of Saraswati, Boudidi expresses the society's discomfort with Saraswati from both male and female perspectives: Saraswati's scholarly outlook and achievements (her brilliant performances in English as well as mathematics) are to be dreaded as well as appreciated in a woman, and it is evident that her primary conception of Saraswati is that of a girl with resolutions (Majumdar 1980). Saraswati applies her authority/custodianship on her mother and sister and enjoys the autonomy through representing the engagement as a regulating yardstick for Beena, thereby keeping herself outside the loop of marriage (Majumdar 1980). Saraswati's father communicates Nibaran's account of his son's visual delight at watching Saraswati, inviting her instant disapproval (Majumdar 1980). Saraswati does enjoy this autonomy as she refuses to provide information regarding Beena to Santu in one scene, thereby creating feminine, secured space where women are controllers of facts and are proficient interlocutors (Majumdar 1980). Saraswati is aware that Beena's allegiance is being divided between her elder sister and Santu, and Saraswati may have also known that her own ego might not fetch her a good husband; so, the only space she can keep control is over her mother and sister, and her sister's silent disobedience (in going out on a date with Santu) punctures her ego and makes her cry (Majumdar 1980).

## ***VI. Women as Interlocutors***

### **VI. a. Interaction between Ghentu and Her Uncle**



In Chowdhury's (1963) 'adaptation' of Devi's '*Chhayasurya*' the two sisters' recitations (the topic, content, and style of recitation) before their younger uncle constitute a distinction between their own insights into their feminine natures. Mallika recites with melodious tone and certainly adjusting her mood (Chowdhury 1963). Ghentu's recitation comes out of her own volition, in a slightly competitive mood, eager for attention, while Mallika had to be requested by her younger uncle (Chowdhury 1963). Ghentu perceives her younger uncle as her confidante, and her younger uncle admits that his attachment is more towards Ghentu than towards Mallika (Devi 1988[?]: 130–139; Chowdhury 1963). Mallika recites from Rabindranath Tagore's poem '*Chirayomana*' (Chowdhury 1963) – in which the poet/speaker wishes spontaneity from his female lover, to approach in a tryst without any affectation and/or artificial beautification (Tagore [1987(?)] 1995(?): 253–255): it is ironic that Mallika recites it without considering the internalizing of the spirit of the poem: to break the polished look of a female lover, since love is not like a crafted jewel but a continuous process of realizations and modifications. Ghentu recites Tagore's '*Bor Esehhe Birer Chhande*' in a non-academic, casual, yet entertaining way and quite successfully brings out a comic effect (Chowdhury 1963). In fact, this poem by Tagore is a satire on how Bengali bridegrooms/men consider the fun, and separation (between father and daughter) in marriage (Tagore [1990(?)] 1995(?): 19–20). Weeping, crying (indeed out of sorrows of separation) are also considered expected performances before the invited, sanctioning guests, relatives, and neighbours, and are included within the complex, trailing rituals of marriage.

Devi's text stresses that Mallika's nimble fingers are adept in 'miniature' 'work' (translation mine) and her faithful reproductions preclude any detection of difference between the source and the reproduced: one can extend her penchant for painting in terms of her attention towards detailing which requires patience, but it also includes the temperament to 'imitate' (translation mine) (Devi 1988[?]: 131–132). If changes in artistic vision and exercise involve interpretation, careful selection and editing, then Mallika lacks ingenuity despite enormous skill. This also implies that she prefers to follow without embracing change, and she is shown producing a visual replica of Parvati and her husband Shiva where in Bengali and Hindu culture women are socially and ritually influenced and inspired to gain 'a husband like Shiva' (Knapp 2006: 95) (Devi 1988[?]: 131–132; Chowdhury 1963). Ghentu's visual composition of a buffalo is just the 'vehicle of Yama' (translation mine) for her father (Devi 1988[?]: 131–132; Chowdhury 1963) and the visual extension of her 'thought-process' (translation mine) as

interpreted by other family members (Devi 1988[?]: 131–132). The elders, even with their collected experience and wisdom, fail to realize Ghentu's ingenuity: that a female human artist had sketched a male beast raging, and completely out of her memory, without having the living subject in the front to make imitation of (Devi 1988[?]: 131–132; Chowdhury 1963). In Chowdhury's (1963) film Ghentu's younger uncle's face displayed an understanding smile because he alone finds Ghentu's art showing its subject in its true essence: an active animal in motion and without human hypocrisies.

As his authorial self admits, and the meeting with the publisher communicates in Chowdhury's (1963) film projects: the uncle-author/narrator's literary creations are economy-bound, and in both Devi's story (1988[?]: 130–139) and Chowdhury's (1963) film, the uncle-writer-figure considers the 'truth' - not the everyday 'truth,' but the author's 'truth,' (translation mine) that transcends the representations of characters encountered in the life of senses, and includes the unrepresented too, providing a room for an unusual girl (Ghentu). From her body language it is clear that Mallika sees her younger uncle as any other male elderly member, and maintains a reverential distance; Ghentu, as the narrator observes, is incapable of 'respecting' (translation mine) someone, but a strange form of 'love' (translation mine) is given to the author-narrator by her (Devi 1988[?]: 130–139; Chowdhury 1963). Chowdhury builds upon this intimate interaction in the film, thereby allowing Ghentu to tour with her younger uncle, where he is also permitted to read her 'love letter' (translation mine) and interpret her mind (Chowdhury 1963).

#### **VI. b. Relation between Santosh [Santu] and His Boudidi**

As Majumdar (1980) projects through his cinematic direction, the spaces in the Bengali locality are thoroughly gendered: Kedar learns that the 'Sharadiya Festival' is celebrated with cultural programs (drama), in which chronology of references is based on hierarchy of age and gender: firstly, the elderly men, secondly, the post-adolescent/youthful men, and thirdly, the women/girls, and the three groups participate separately (Majumdar 1980). In a very interesting scene, we see the elderly married women in a separate room, preparing refreshments for the men-folk who were rehearsing (Majumdar 1980). The girls' participation is seen more as entertainment rather than as a creative focus and attempt: Bhombol dismisses the perseverance in their rehearsal, uttering a blatant sexist remark that the girls' energies should be targeted at marriage rather than in investing

their mind and energy in performance (Majumdar 1980). This directs Saraswati's indignant glare at him and his friends, and in consequence she is branded in contempt as a 'blotting paper' (indicating that she lacks the feminine charm and delicacy) by Bhombol (Majumdar 1980). Even the sexes apparently sit separately in the public spaces - in the cultural event of the 'Spring Festival' (translation mine) (Holi) we see women sit together, which means that even husband and wife, complying with gender-division as endorsed by social etiquette (without realizing that such etiquette expects the society-driven difference between women and men to continue) may not sit side by side but take seats with other family members of the identical sexes (Majumdar 1980). The colloquial Bengali of the film also is given an emotional control - Boudidi, while referring to Kedar, asks Santu for confirmation if Kedar indeed have developed '*maya*' (the word '*Maya*' generally means 'delusion' [Pattanaik 2006: 167, 200] but here it implies softness towards someone) in thinking about Saraswati (Majumdar 1980); any sensible reader will understand that '*maya*' is not a suitable translation of 'love,' but in a culture where romance is rather cultured discreetly through parental consent and social management, '*maya*' is a rather disguised substitute for '*prem*' (meaning 'love'). We can argue: if a man projected '*maya*' instead of '*prem*' towards a woman, does it make him less masculine and less a lover? We cannot consider Kedar as effeminate as far as Bandyopadhyay's text ([1982] 2011: 259–289) and Majumdar's movie (1980) are concerned: he has tenderness in his approach towards both women and men, which also implies that like a masculinized straight male (viewing women as inferior by randomly deriving that women are always in need of protection), he does not distinguish between a man and a woman in terms of importance (Majumdar 1980).

In both Bandyopadhyay's text ([1982] 2011: 259–289) and Majumdar's film (1980), Boudidi is not a restricted wife in her in-law's place. She has generated a bond of femininity with Saraswati and Beena that involves both sibling-affection and female-female friendship (Bandyopadhyay [1982] 2011: 278–280, 282–283, 287–288; Majumdar 1980). Beena complies with Boudidi's instructions reverentially, not only out of senior-junior difference, but also out of fear of not disrupting the planned marital connection: Boudidi is Santosh's sister-in-law which indicates a power-equation separately between women (one married and another unmarried) which is however, pivoted on [heterosexual] married relations (Bandyopadhyay [1982] 2011: 279). Boudidi holds a respectful position as Beena's future sister-in-law, but the former employs it to strengthen female bonding with the latter instead. Boudidi is equally adept in conversation regarding marriage with Santosh

(Bandyopadhyay [1982] 2011: 280, 282, 287–288). While Boudidi quite appropriately considers the justification of parental interference in marriage, Santosh quite sensibly advocates the room for Saraswati's individual 'opinion' (translation mine) in the denial of the parental imposition (Bandyopadhyay [1982] 2011: 280). He distinguishes this marriage from the doctrine and sanctities of '*gouridaan*' and despite being described as a hyper-male, a '*gunda*' (a roguish male) (Bandyopadhyay [1982] 2011: 266) definitely values the 'opinion' (translation mine) of the bride/woman (Bandyopadhyay [1982] 2011: 280). It is interesting that this sensible conversation is appropriately occurring between a woman in her late youth, within marital sphere (whose husband is away for professional requirements), committed to regulations, and a post-adolescent male youth yet to enter into it, fed with hopes of conjugality, which he has conveniently been able to develop into love (Bandyopadhyay [1982] 2011: 280). Yet Boudidi feels deeply for Kedar, almost empathizing with him and helping him with his pursuit of Saraswati (Bandyopadhyay [1982] 2011: 279–280, 282, 287–288; Majumdar, 1980). Bandyopadhyay's text itself stresses Santosh's planned dependence on Boudidi in indirectly conveying Kedar's love-interest to his (Santosh's) mother (Bandyopadhyay [1982] 2011: 263).

## VII. Conclusion

In the twenty-first century, our engagements with traditions of marriage have certainly changed; however, in case of a second general male/female scholar, though financially aided by their (self-made) first generation learner-parents who pursued a different profession - it remains a challenge to have similar opinions on the ritual aspects of marriage. For example, it is not entirely uncommon for a female/male academician to feel that her/his years of cerebral engagement - which may or may not have received an empathetic understanding from his/her parents - does not receive adequate acknowledgement when it is just summed up in the midst of social gathering and conversation. Their achievements are solely attributed to their parental sacrifices, leaving no specific recognition of their independent efforts. This gets extended to the marriage negotiation and post-marriage crisis if the marriage happened between a college/university professor and a spouse who has received higher studies but does not have the inclination to pursue a job or rather is not advised to do the same (she may still very much love her husband and take care of the household). Such a spouse, in consequence, would mentally split the identity of her husband under two categories: (i) as

a college/university professor, the difficulties and successes of which she may hear about but remains unable to gauge and participate in, and (ii) her sexual partner and the everyday man she knows in managing the household chores with. To such a couple there may be still domestic peace but without mutual recognition of possibilities and potential. From that context, we can argue that Devi (1988[?]: 136) sends Mallika off with her husband to the West, where we can hope she gets her talents duly approved and acknowledged (in a professional sense) and not just appreciated as ornamental, suitable means for earning a polished bridegroom, as seen in the Indian scenario of negotiations. In a similar mode, Majumdar (1980) takes a future vision in projecting a gender-reversal: providing a scope for Saraswati to domestically train and cerebrally enrich Kedar as her husband. Such a closure is possible, thanks to Bandyopadhyay's calculated plot, in which both Kedar and Saraswati are from economically empowered families, so the sole dependence on a viable earning husband in supporting his wife can be temporally deferred (as perceived from the conversations between Kshitin Babu and his wife [Bandyopadhyay (1982) 2011: 286]). Both Devi's '*Chhayasurya*' (1988[?]: 130–139) and Chowdhury's *Chhaya Surya* [*Chhayasurya*] (1963), and Bandyopadhyay's *Dadar Kirti* ([1982] 2011: 259–289) and Majumdar's *Dadar Kirti* (1980) in terms of courtship thereby remain relevant in our times, and the author of the article feels it suitable to recommend the studies of these texts and the films 'adapted' from those in academic curricula having found within them the convenient loci of application of the gender theories developed in the West, validating the theories' worldwide scope of praxis.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> For detailed studies on the usage and application of the term 'adaptation' consult Julie Sanders, 2006, *Adaptation and Appropriation*, London and New York: Routledge.

<sup>2</sup> Ashapura Devi's '*Chhayasurya*' was written before Partha Pratim Chowdhury's film 'adaptation' *Chhaya Surya* [*Chhayasurya*]. For reference I have consulted a collection of Devi's short stories, collected and published later (1988[?]), hence the date provided in References and parenthetical citations is later than that of Chowdhury's film (1963). Also, the date of the published anthology provides the year of publication according to the Bengali calendar. I have tried to estimate and provide the

corresponding date in English calendar; however, a question mark has been used as sometimes calculations vary. This uncertainty is also visible in the cases of citations of Rabindranath Tagore's *Chitrangada* ([1905] 1954[?]), Tagore's '*Chirayomana*' ([1987(?)] 1995[?]), and Tagore's '*Bor Esechhe Birer Chhade*' ([1990(?)] 1995[?]). The Bengali titles, while being spelt in English, are kept in italics; the italicized titles within quotes indicate poems and short story. In case of two dates provided for citing a particular text/source, the first date is within square brackets and the date of republication follows it. See the References for details. Also, please note that in cases of references to the two films, the names of significant actors and actresses are provided in the article but not in the Reference list because the emphasis is more on the issues of gender in the films and not on individual performers. Hence the directors' names are provided along with dates in parenthetical citations of movies.

<sup>3</sup> The reader will realize that these observations are quite common in our society. We may have all experienced these in degrees but we do not quite notice their implications. The author has tried to arrange the relevant ones keeping the scope of the paper in mind.

<sup>4</sup> The author posted discussion about this common scenario in Bengali on the Timeline of his Facebook Profile on October 18, 2017.

<sup>5</sup> The author posted a similar observation in Bengali on the Timeline of his Facebook Profile on April 20, 2017.

<sup>6</sup> The author posted a similar observation in Bengali on the Timeline of his Facebook Profile on April 20, 2017.

<sup>7</sup> Words within quotation marks are Granoff's (1985: 195). See 'Selected Indirect References' for bibliographic information. To avoid confusion with the secondary critics/scholars cited in parenthetical citations, the publication dates and details of the primary/original critics'/scholars' works (cited indirectly) are also provided in a separate list.

<sup>8</sup> See 'Selected Indirect References' for bibliographic information.

<sup>9</sup> See 'Selected Indirect References' for bibliographic information.

<sup>10</sup> See 'Selected Indirect References' for bibliographic information.

<sup>11</sup> See 'Selected Indirect References' for bibliographic information.

<sup>12</sup> See 'Selected Indirect References' for bibliographic information.

<sup>13</sup> See 'Selected Indirect References' for bibliographic information.

<sup>14</sup> See 'Selected Indirect References' for bibliographic information.

### **References**

Bandyopadhyay, Sharadindu, [1982] 2011. *Dadar Kirti*, in Sri Pratulchandra Gupta [Sri Pratul Chandra Gupta] (ed.), *Sharadindu Amanibas* (by Sharadindu Bandyopadhyay). Vol. 10: *Uponyas Natok*. 17th Printing. Calcutta [Kolkata]: Ananda Publishers Private Limited: 259–289.

Bowman, Jennifer L., and David C. Dollahite, 2013. “‘Why Would Such a Person Dream About Heaven?’ Family, Faith, and Happiness in Arranged Marriages in India’, *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 2: 207–225. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43613089> (accessed on March 22, 2018).

Chowdhury, Partha Pratim (Dir.), 1963. *Chhaya Surya* [*Chhayasurya*]. Calcutta [Kolkata](?): Pics Studio; India Film Laboratory; R. D. B. and Co.(?). Film [VCD].

Devi, Ashapurna, 1988(?). ‘*Chhayasurya*’, in *Swa Nirbachita Shrestha Galpa* [*A Collection of Self-selected Stories*] (by Ashapurna Devi). 1st Edition. Kolkata: Model Publishing House: 130–139.

Dey, Esha, 1996. ‘An Authentic Voice Ashapurna Devi (1909–1995)’, *Indian Literature*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (171): 8–16. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23335711> (accessed on August 7, 2013).

Granoff, Phyllis, 1985. ‘Traditional Goals for Modern Women: The Paradox of Ashapurna Devi’s Fiction’, *Journal of South Asian Literature*, Vol. 20, No. 1, Part I: Essays on The Mahâbhârata: 195–204. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40872746> (accessed on August 7, 2013).

Heinämaa, Sara, [2004] 2005. ‘The Soul-Body Union and Sexual Difference: From Descartes to Merleau-Ponty and Beauvoir’, in Lilli Alanen and Charlotte Witt (eds.), *Feminist Reflections on the History of Philosophy*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers: 137–151.

Knapp, Stephen, 2006. *The Power of the Dharma: An Introduction to Hinduism and Vedic Culture*. Lincoln, NE: Universe, Inc.

Majumdar, Tarun, (Dir.), 1980. *Dadar Kirti*. Calcutta [Kolkata]: Ram Cine Arts. Film [VCD].

Pattanaik, Devdutt, 2006. *Myth = Mithya: Decoding Hindu Mythology*. New Delhi: Penguin Books India.

Tagore, Rabindranath, [1905] 1954(?). *Chitrangada*. Calcutta [Kolkata]: Visvabharati Granthalay. *State Central Library, Kolkata, Digital Library of India, Internet Archive*, September 2, 2015 [Uploaded by Jayanta Nath]. URL: <https://archive.org/details/Chitrangada1905> (accessed on April 28, 2018).

Tagore, Rabindranath, [1987(?)] 1995(?). 'Chirayomana', in Sri Ashok Mukhopadhyay (published), *Kshanika, Rabindra-Rachanabali* (by Rabindranath Tagore). Vol. 4. Calcutta [Kolkata]: Visvabharati Granthanavibhag: 253–255.

Tagore, Rabindranath, [1990(?)] 1995(?). 'Bor Esechhe Birer Chhande', in Sri Ashok Mukhopadhyay (published), *Khapchhara, Rabindra-Rachanabali* (by Rabindranath Tagore). Vol. 11. Calcutta [Kolkata]: Visvabharati Granthanavibhag: 19–20.

Tripathy, Jyotirmaya, 2010. 'How Gendered Is Gender and Development? Culture, Masculinity, and Gender Difference', *Development in Practice*, Vol. 20, No. 1: 113–121. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27752191> (accessed on March 21, 2018).

Sanders, Julie, 2006. *Adaptation and Appropriation*. London and New York: Routledge.

Schippers, Mimi, 2007. 'Recovering the Feminine Other: Masculinity, Femininity, and Gender Hegemony', *Theory and Society*, Vol. 36, No. 1: 85–102. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4501776> (accessed on March 21, 2018).

### *Selected Indirect References*

Beauvoir, Simone de, [1949] 1993. *Le deuxième sexe I: Les faits et les mythes*. Paris: Gallimard. For English translation, see Simone de Beauvoir, 1952, *The Second Sex*, translated by Howard Madison Parshley, New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Bose, Anima, 1976. 'Ashapura Devi: Perspective on a Bengali Novelist', *Indian Literature*, Vol. 19, No. 3: 80–95.



Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.

Connell, R. W. [Raewyn Connell], 1987. *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics*. Cambridge: Polity.

Connell, R. W. [Raewyn Connell], 1995. *Masculinities*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Derné, Steve, 1994. 'Hindu Men Talk about Controlling Women: Cultural Ideas as a Tool of The Powerful', *Sociological Perspectives*, Vol. 37, No. 2: 203–227.

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, [1945] 1993. *Phénoménologie de la Perception*. Paris: Gallimard.

For English translation, see Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 1962, *Phenomenology of Perception*, translated by Colin Smith, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Roy, Manisha, [1972] 1975. *Bengali Women*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

## Relatedness, Integration and Reality: An Exploration in Counsellor's Chamber

Arpita De

**Abstract:** *This is an autobiographical paper which intends to explore relationship in the continuously changing world through our stories of life. I tried to explore some of my childhood experiences and some stories of my life in different times. Besides, I have included the case study of a 27 year-old-girl who consulted me seeking counselling help. Her stories, her relationships with her parents, friends and others along with her suffering from depressed mood, intense anger acting out, vacillating sexual involvement with others, tendency of self-injury, anxiety, lack of concentration, indecisiveness were explored in the counselling sessions. She urgently felt the need of professional help as it was becoming increasingly difficult for her to bear it alone. In this study I have tried to analyse our journey in the counselling chamber on a step-by-step basis to find out the aetiology of her symptoms from different theoretical perspectives. It led me not only to personal environment of the person but also to some structural issues. As a counsellor besides my conceptualization of the aetiology of the symptoms I also tried to reflect on my own role as a counsellor, how the sessions contributed to enriching my insight and my praxis as a professional.*

**Keywords:** Relationship, relatedness, counselling, the praxis of a professional, time-space.

### ***The Background***

'Relationship', for me, is a continuously changing concept; it is like a story - a story of the term relationship. All of us have stories of our own. All of us are heroes and heroines of our stories. Integrating numerous stories, we sometimes get a big story of our life. This integration is not always possible. The story starts when I am born. I am revolved around in a time space with my relatives, significant others, friends with whom I am related or not related, acquainted and sometimes not acquainted. They are not necessarily all human beings or living things. There can be many other objects and articles with which we can get related - there are non-human creatures also who take meaningful part in our stories.

My little pet dog, my most favourite childhood acquaintance whom I generally forget in the noisy everyday life, is alive in my dream. She plays with me in my dream, I wander here and there with her. I sometimes visit my house where we used to live in our childhood days, in my dream. Our dreams jumble up or pull materials from my conscious, unconscious, present and past - symbolizes my thoughts in a different way. But I am not interested to analyse dreams and interpret them. I am only interested to talk about different materials, articles, our languages we make relationship with. They also change in course of time. Even childhood games we used to play change over time.

I was born in early 60s. I can remember some childhood games - anyone from our generation and culture may relate to them. We used to put our thumbs together on the ground and utter - RASH, KASH, SINGARA, BULBULI MASTAK - a loud chorus was heard in rhythm. We didn't even know what it meant, why we were doing it. But we felt connected, happy in an envelope of childish joyfulness. All those moments I reminisce with happiness. I found it fascinating to investigate the meaning of those words. RASH means essence. It also can be the flavour of something which gives me pleasure. KASH is not an enjoyable thing, the touch of which makes me stained. SINGARA was an alluring and attractive thing for children then. BULBULI is a small and little bird who wanders here and there. Children resemble bulbuli. The last word MASTAK means head, the brain. The meaning of the words does not really seem to be simple. We have no idea how these words originated as a game. But what I understand is that we were in a different time and social space and we are continuously moving from one time-space to another.

The word Time-Space has a subjective connotation. I conceptualize it to be bounded by a person's mental periphery of his/her relatedness. In this journey of relatedness, we have numerous things - may be our conscious and unconscious thoughts, persons around, dominant habits, different discourses, beliefs and values in the family and also in the society, different articles around us, materials from our collective unconscious too.

The difference between two time-spaces lies in the difference in their practices, cultures, tit and bits of nurturance. This can easily be understood by a person who has experienced both. The relationships are continuously changing as the parameters are changing.

Relationship is situated in a time-space. In the last three decades the exceptional advancement of technology has brought notable changes in

our life. Ultimately, with a smart phone in hand the patterns of our stories have taken a new shift altogether. The smart phones are now inseparable articles in our everyday life where social network and virtual relationships are dominant new parameters in reshaping the relationships. Children and youngsters today visit the world in a single mouse click. They play on-line games. The games we used to play in childhood are not popular now. The new generation plays smart games. The audio-visual electronic smart virtual games are capturing the market. It is now possible to visit anywhere in the world too easily, getting information of anything immediately and even to enter the world of blues instantly where may be the blue whale is waiting to grab the mind of the children and adolescents.

I myself started my life with the light of hurricane lamp. My father used to work in Forest department and I incidentally was in an environment surrounded by forest in the first 7 years of my life. My father was transferred from Dooars of Jalpaiguri district to different district towns. I studied in three schools of three district towns and ultimately went to Kolkata to complete my graduation and post-graduation. I experienced changes. We all experience change but our generation got the opportunity to witness this havoc technological change which transformed us gradually from 'no-TV' life to 'smart phone-mandatory' life.

As a counsellor I get the opportunity to come close to different individuals, different perspectives and different lifestyles. How people leave in a time-space, how they move from one time-space to another, what are the dominant things/stories/articles of a particular time-space as perceived by a particular person and how relationship is a situated concept in a time-space.

In the counselling chamber I came across with a 27-year-old girl who consulted me seeking counselling help. She calls herself a professional *macha* singer. The process of counselling led me to find out not only some personal environment of the person but also some structural issues in the aetiology of her symptoms which may be situated in her time-space.

### Case Vignette

Mili (not the real name) is a 27-year-old girl from a Kolkata suburb who stays with her parents. She is currently the only surviving child of her parents. She is continuing her MA in Bengali from Rabindra Bharati University in distance mode. She is a seasonal singer (Macha singer).

It was her decision to come to a counsellor as she was feeling lonely and depressed, could not concentrate properly, and was very much anxious and in a dilemma as to whether to be involved in a permanent relation or marriage with her current boyfriend. She had trust issues not only with her boyfriend but also with herself. She gets irritated and depressed over minor things. She informed me that she used to cry a lot and at times felt like killing herself though she never tried to do so. Every morning she awakened early with depressed moods and irritating thoughts. Thoughts which disturbed her were cantered on her distress from interpersonal relationships (mainly peer group and special relationship), her guilt feeling from maladjustment and past events, and her chronic anxiety from fear of abandonment, loneliness, emptiness and worthlessness. She was unable to carry out her regular practice of music (rewaz) due to lack of concentration and turbulent thoughts.

### *Childhood*

Mili was born in a hospital in Kolkata in a lower middle-class family. Her birth order was second. Her elder brother died of Thalassemia before she was born. She perceived her mother to be very depressed and emotionally unavailable when she was a child. Now she thinks this was due to the tragic death of her elder brother. About her relationship with her mother she said: 'there was no good bonding between us, but since the last 5/6 years our relationship has improved.'

Mili's father was a driver by profession. They were not well-off at that time. They had to face scarcity of money in her early years. She could remember her mother being always sad. But their economic condition gradually improved when her father got a job in Kolkata Corporation. They shifted from a suburb on the outskirts of Kolkata to a suburb closer to the city.

She got admitted in an English medium preschool. She had an incident of abuse at that time. The son of the house owner molested her. After that incident they left that house and the locality too. She got admitted in a Bengali medium school. When she was in class II, a shameful event occurred in school. She with one of her friends was caught in a washroom where they were showing their private parts to each other. News of the incident spread throughout the school and there was a guardian's call. Mother scolded her badly but did not inform her father. Her father was

very strict and had a punishing mentality. She remembered her teachers to be very rude with her after that incident. Mili doesn't feel comfortable to face anyone from that school even now.

Mili remembers herself to be very naughty in her school days. She used to tear her own hair over a problem, be in confrontation with her mother frequently and used to throw pieces of brick to others and got guardian calls. Her father used to beat her in a closed room with tremendous rage.

When she was in class I her mother conceived but had a miscarriage. Mili made herself responsible for that. It was her birthday and she had demanded that a party be held for the event. Her mother agreed but there was an accident in an auto rickshaw in which she was travelling and ultimately she had a miscarriage. Her mother herself blamed her for the incident once. Her self-blaming for the incident still haunts her.

### *High-School Life*

Mili got admitted in a Bengali medium Higher Secondary school in class V from where she completed her Secondary and Higher Secondary degrees. She failed in class VIII once and ultimately passed her Secondary exam and Higher Secondary examinations. She stated that she never liked studies. She was an excellent singer from her very childhood. She used to perform in stages frequently. She took music lessons from various singers who had good connections with media. She got involved in her first relation when she was in class XII. It didn't last for more than two/three months.

### *College Life and University*

Although Mili wanted to build a career in music she got admitted in a regular college (not with music) and in the very first year she started taking alcohol. She got herself gradually involved in multiple heterosexual relationships and most of the relationships evolved from Face book contacts or acquaintances of college friends. Most of the relationships were both developed and terminated very casually. She reported a great number of different sexual partners, spoke of her promiscuity and engagement in homosexual experiences. At present she is pursuing a Master's degree in Bengali in distance mode but she doesn't love studying.

*Parents and Significant Others*

Her mother was mostly sad, sick and used to cry a lot. Even now her mother cries a lot and blames her husband for her problems. Mili's mother sees her own life to be a lost case. Mili also conveyed that she finds her mother too interfering sometimes. She follows her whenever Mili is on the phone with her boyfriend. She feels that her mother disturbs her privacy.

Mili's father tries to control every aspect of her life. She was always very fearful as he used to beat her badly during her childhood. At the same time her father extends his help by accompanying her everywhere she goes to enhance her music career. But he is very harsh and criticizes her for being fat and not taking her singing practice seriously. He makes sarcastic comments about her voice saying that it is not like that of Lata Mangeskar. He never utters a single word of encouragement. Often, he uses abusive and sarcastic words against her and her mother and never uses a soft tone while talking to them. She and her mother would love to visit nearby places, to dine in a restaurant but her father never allows that. They never go anywhere together for refreshment. They have no happiness in their family life.

She used to love her aunt (mother's sister) very much but could not accept her aunt's closeness with her father. When she was in college she reacted about their closeness and it stopped. Since last 4/5 years she has been finding her mother to be closer and understanding.

*Professional Life*

Mili is a professional Macha singer (Machas are whole night programs, organized by clubs in different localities, performed on temporarily constructed stages). Mili earns money singing in Machas in winter months. It is a thing of pride for her that she has performed as a playback singer in a movie which has not been released yet. She knows that to be successful in this line a girl has to compromise her honour. She faced many negative experiences from persons whom she never thought would behave in that manner. She admitted that although she has a tendency to get involved in multiple relationships she cannot think of using her body in her profession. Sometimes she becomes depressed and feels like killing herself. She did some self-harm but never attempted suicide. The only person who understands her is her present boyfriend. Although he doesn't like the culture

of Macha, he encourages her to continue singing and plan to tutor others in future.

### *Likings*

Mili loves to do needle work, loves to cook and likes to take photograph of nature. She respects her *gazal* teacher very much. She informed that her teacher is also in the middle of interpersonal complications which make her sad. She also loves to travel, to shop branded materials and dine in good restaurants. In later sessions she showed me some photographs in her phone most of them were pictures of flowers her boyfriend gifted her.

### *The Boyfriend*

Mili perceives that the only person who understands her and tries to make her calm is her current boyfriend. She always refers to him as BF. Her current boyfriend did not approach her at first and initially she did not like him. One year ago, she got acquainted with him. Three months earlier her parents pressurized her to get married. They started the marriage negotiation to her disliking. Suddenly a thought came to her mind that she could propose to her current boyfriend who seemed to have become handsome. She proposed and he accepted. She perceives now that her current boyfriend loves her very much and tries to understand her and comfort her when she gets irritated or depressed with minor things. He is the person who suggested her to see a counsellor. Sometimes she feels that she is utilizing her boyfriend as she never loved him. The thought disturbs her. At times Mili becomes suspicious about him also. She is in a dilemma now.

Her boyfriend regularly calls her in the morning, before going to office, from the office, during lunch time, while coming back from office and after coming back. She cannot stand it if he is unavailable anytime and she becomes extremely angry and distressed. At that moments she behaves very rudely with her mother and her mother also starts crying and ultimately Mili feels guilty. She said: 'I cannot make anyone happy so I should die'.

### *The Sessions and my understanding*

In the counselling sessions we explored many events of Mili's life, her extreme feelings, her extreme disgust for relationships, her thought and



action about becoming a lesbian. Sometimes she feels that others cheated her and sometimes she feels that she is responsible for everything.

I looked at her stories from different angles. I addressed her self-blaming tendency by explaining the societal peculiarities and norms related to gender. We also explored whether it is natural for a preschool child to have curiosity about her private parts and how it is important for a child to understand the difference between a 'good touch' and a 'bad touch'.

Regarding the bad touch and sexual abuse some incidents were coming to my mind. I could relate to my story of getting bad touch. One of my cousin brothers did it to me when I was a girl of class V. I could not remember a single friend of mine who has not experienced abuse/harassment or bad touch. Most of the times those were from persons from the very close circles. We now know this fact from 'Me too' movement. We were exploring these patriarchal power norms which are almost embedded in the structure of the society. In the back of my mind I was revisiting my coping mechanism to handle that person. I never told my mother about it and took the coping of avoidance. I tried to avoid being with him alone. It became easier for me because that person lived in a different city and we used to meet occasionally. But question that haunted me is why a person 'otherwise nice' behaves like this. Now I think that I was fortunate enough to get proper emotional support in my immediate environment like my family and school which helped me to deal with my problems in a mature way. But Mili perceived her immediate environment to be hostile. There was lack of proper emotional support and guidance from her parents.

We also talked about her guilt-feeling about her mother's miscarriage. We came to an understanding that it is very natural for a child of class V to ask for her birthday celebration. The accident had nothing to do with her desire to celebrate. We also explored many incidents of her having multiple relationships and came to a view that she may be hungry for emotional support and has developed a tendency to cling to whoever is available to her. Initially she used to cry while narrating her stories, but she told me that she is feeling relieved as she has been able to tell me her stories.

Rapport was established very quickly and it seemed to me that she needed someone to listen. I felt that she has numerous psychological wounds and she needs help. I could feel her pain, anger and irritation, observe her inconsistent thinking, irrational tendency to devalue and idealize the same person and herself to the extreme. I also recognized her leaning towards emotional blackmailing by manipulative self-injuries. It seems that her

disturbed and sometimes distorted self-image makes Mili feel lonely and empty. She oscillates between good and bad. I acknowledged Mili's inability to reconcile alternatives or opposite perceptions or feelings within the self or others (splitting). This phenomenon leads to view self or others as idealized (i.e. 'all good') or devalued (i.e. 'all bad'). Her reality testing is highly vulnerable. In the back of my mind I was trying to monitor her emotional feelings towards me and my feeling towards her. A boundary was automatically evolving as we were progressing from session to session. I never defined anything tightly but only informed her that she can call me up if she becomes suicidal.

In the first three sessions we were busy exploring her distressing, repetitive and extreme thoughts which she used to experience with intense levels of anxiety, depression and anger.

Mili asked: 'Can my BF be gay?' Or, 'I have a lesbian friend, she wanted to be physically close to me but I didn't like the idea'. Such queries could be an expression of her own thought and feeling onto her boyfriend.

She said: 'All boys are alike. They are cheaters. Is he like my father only?' 'Again, she said: 'He is ideal for me, he is the best' One can see idealization and devaluation at the same time: splitting, it can also be an example of black and white thinking.

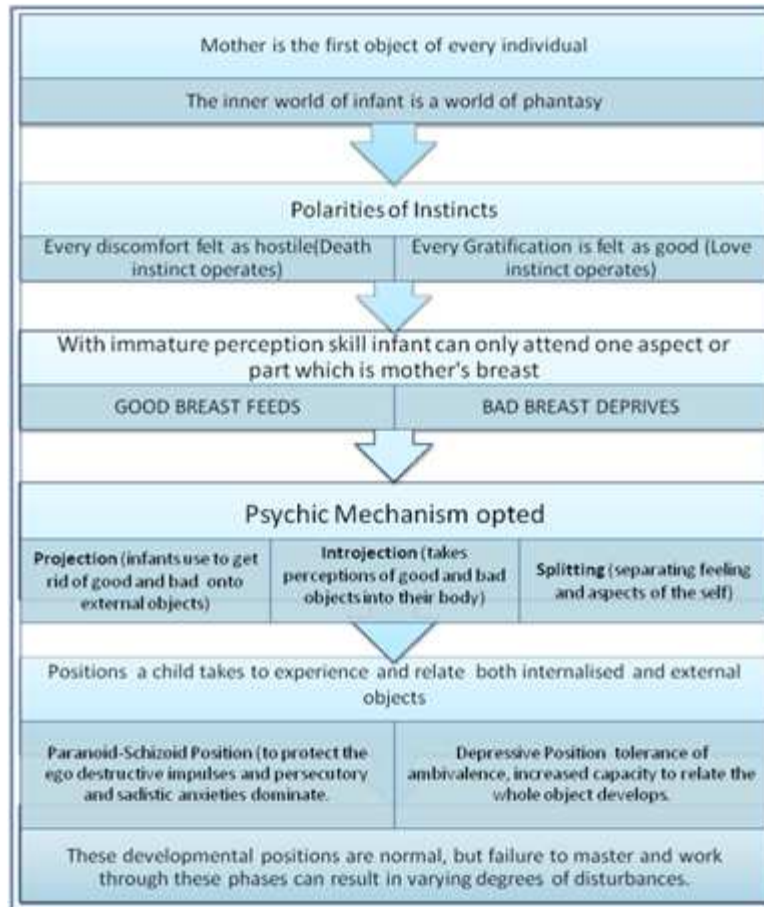
'Will I be able to make him happy? What if, there is a divorce?' This can be 'imagined abandonment'.

Mili asked: 'Will I be able to be honest with him? What will happen if I get attracted to a new boy?' 'Am I using him? I sometimes feel I don't love him.' Such conflicting thoughts may be an example of unstable and distorted self-image.

'Can I be infected with sexually transmitted diseases as I have multiple sexual involvements?' - An expression of intense fear without problem solving action.

She used to tell me 'I can't make anyone happy, I should die'. This can be an expression of a chronic feeling of emptiness.

Many theories were coming in my mind to explain Mili's case. Adlerian concept of birth order, trust vs mistrust stage put by Erik Erickson, Freudian stages of psychosexual development and mainly object relation theories born in the paradigm of Freudian analytical concepts but they differ from Freud in many ways.

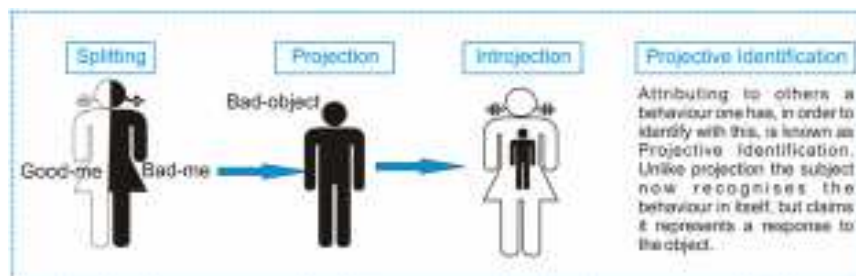


Object relation theories are essentially developmental theories that examine developmental processes and relationship prior to the oedipal period and put a greater weight to the influence of environment in the shaping of personality than other, more traditional psychoanalytic theorists.

According to Melanie Klein infants' inner world of phantasies face polarities of instincts with the cycles of gratification (love instinct) and frustration (death instinct). The breast gives or denies gratification and becomes, in the mind of the infant, either good or bad. The infant copes with the anxiety by projecting unmanageable destructive impulses onto external object. Other coping mechanisms are introjections and splitting. Introjections is opposite of projection. Here the infant phantasizes that their mother is always present inside their body. Therefore, relationships are maintained with parts of objects (e.g. breast rather than mother), and split between good and bad. Klein

mentioned about two development positions. One is Paranoid-schizoid position. It is dominated by destructive impulses, persecutory and sadistic anxieties, low tolerance of frustration, extremes emotional reactions of good and bad. Another is depressive position where recognition of the loved object as outside of the self takes place. In this position the child experiences guilt for previous aggression towards the loved object, desires to make reparation to the object for previous attack. Here ego becomes more integrated, the process of projection reduced, Depressive anxiety enables the capacity to establish and maintain a mature object relation. Tolerance of ambivalence develops. Oedipal desires intertwine with depressed anxieties as the infant struggles to integrate love and hate. Sexual impulses and phantasies emerge to repair the effects of aggression. This movement from part to whole relationship represents the movement from one position to the next.

Mili had to compete with a ghost child as her brother died before she was born. She had an emotionally unavailable mother, a strict punitive father and a history of abuse. Mili remembers her father as a cold and aggressive person who has not been changed over time. Her father used to lock her in a room and beat her for any mischief. Her mother used to report Mili's disobedience and misbehaviour to him. Mili remembers her mother to be very passive and sad. When she was in preschool (2-3 years) she experienced sexual abuse. This was approximately the beginning of her oedipal period. As she was advancing from pre oedipal to oedipal period the incidence of guardian's call happened as she was caught with her friend in washroom showing their private parts. In class I (5-6 years) incidence of miscarriage of her mother makes her guilty as she demanded a celebration of her birthday. She was not a well-balanced child loved by her parents as she perceives. Her immediate environment was not at all congenial. It may be the case that the social environment and pressures made herself unable to complete the journey from paranoid-schizoid state to depressive state. It becomes more evident when we try to analyse her defenses.



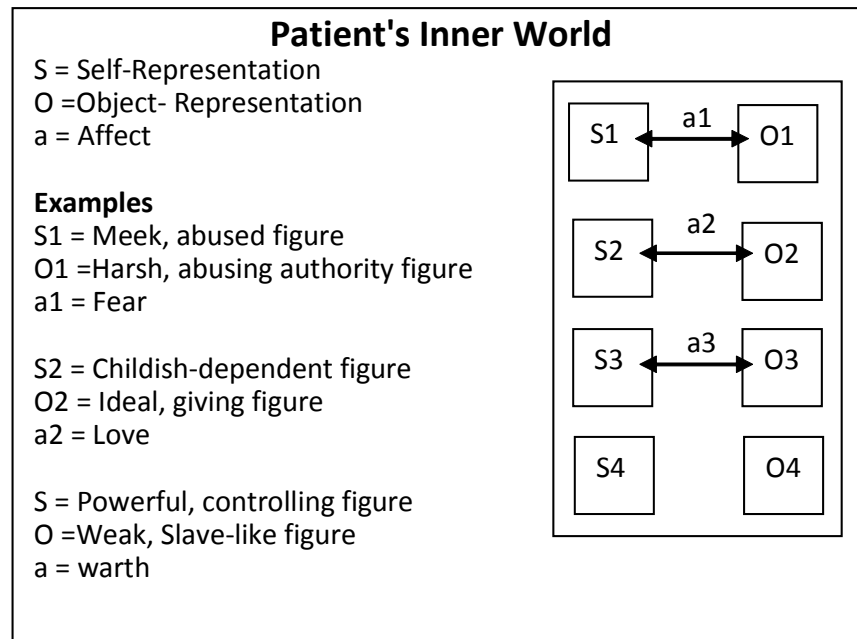
She uses projection, introjections and splitting as her main defenses. She has developed a pattern of unstable and intense interpersonal relationships. She oscillates between extremes of idealization and devaluation. These developmental positions are normal, but failure to master and work through these phases can result in varying degrees of disturbances.

According to Margaret Mahler, there are three development stages. Normal Autism, Symbiosis and separation-individuation, which are organized and integrated in the emergence of self. During the symbiotic period, the child experiences a sense of omnipotence from the psychological fusion of mother. Gradually, the child differentiates self from the psychological fusion with mother. Gradually, the child differentiates self from the mother and moves through a sense of grandiosity to establish a more realistic sense and separateness during the separation-individuation period. Two important sub phases of separation-individuation, namely, practicing and rapprochement seem to be especially vulnerable periods in the formation of self and serious developmental arrest can occur here.

We find Mili's deficits occurring in the developmental phases. Mili perceives that her mother is uncomfortable and passive in her own environment. It may have evoked anxieties in Mili. Traumas (may be experience of various abuses) and disturbances of development processes may have induced borderline symptoms in case of Mili. In her Normal Symbiosis phase, absence of good care from passive mothering may have failed the infant to pull from the tendency towards negative regression to an increased sensory awareness of the environment. (Mahler 1968:10). As a result, Mili may have failed to establish basic trust in relationships, tolerating anxiety and frustration, and differentiating oneself from the others. Naturally Mili has failed to resolve rapprochement crisis leading to great ambivalence and the splitting of objects into 'good' and 'bad'. Some children like Mili grow up to be adults who have tenuous Object Constancy and as a result fails to begin to develop a stable individuality.

Otto Kernberg introduced the term Borderline Personality Disorders between Neurotic organization and Psychotic organization. Clinically he suggested that they are people with a non-specific ego weakness, disturbed interpersonal problems with commitment to work and love, some pathology in sexual relation and superego (Yeomans et al. 2002). He also emphasized that those who have a history of extreme frustration and intense aggression during the first few years of life can develop borderline personalities. These personalities may exhibit signs of ego weakness like chronic diffuse anxiety and lack of impulse control. Irrational fears and obsessive-compulsive

thoughts and feelings can also be there. According to Kernberg, if a child at preoedipal level struggles with intense aggression and hate, it influences the instinctual struggle of the child. The presence of early aggression prompts the premature emergence of oedipal phase of heterosexual striving as an attempted solution. But this solution usually fails and the compromise solution usually involves disturbed sexual patterns and poor interpersonal relationships. This might have happened in case of Mili.



Source: *Yeomans et al. (2002).*

Kernberg understands the object as human object, conceptualized affectively charged relational units as the basic building blocks of psychic structure. The self-other-affect units are termed as object-relation dyad. It is a partial representation of the self, linked by an affect to ascertain representation of the object as it was experienced at a certain point in the early years of life. The vehemence of the affect in the earliest relationships – for example of a strong need to avoid pain – is appropriate to the infant's primitive defense mechanism. Characteristics of borderline personality organization is that primitive defense mechanism are still in use.

In case of Mili, we find lack of integration or splitting into segment with idealized images and a segment with negative images of the relationship.

Maybe her memory structure is charged with affect and forging influence the internalization of all good or rewarding, object relations or aversive, or all-bad, object relation.

In relation to the concept of dyad, at the one end there is an idealized image of a dyad with a perfectly nurturing other and a completely satisfied self and at the other end, influenced by frustrating experiences, there is a completely negative dyad of the hostile and threatening other and a need, helpless self. Mili has developed this pattern.

From the fourth session she used to give names to her problems, such as GHURNI (the repetitive thoughts), CHINTAJWALA (a burning sensation from her thought, in her language thinking error), NIRBHOR (too much dependence on her BF), BANDHBHANGA (the impulsive reaction of extreme anger, distress or irritation which lead her towards self-injury) and tried to analyse each thought and how she came out of that. I applied this technique of narrative therapy to externalize the problem from the person. The sessions used to accommodate events from the past and plans of the future.

In the fifth session, Mili entered the chamber with a perturbed mood about NIRBHOR (which means dependent in Bengali). She felt that she was thinking of getting rid of NIRBHOR by amputating the relationship itself. But when she thought of it, it was giving her immense pain at the same time. She had a dream about the relationship involving marriage, a baby and a sweet future. Her mother also talks to her about such events and also showed up in the dream about their marriage. So, it was very painful for Mili to think about breaking up the relationship. It reminded her of many tender moments with her boyfriend. But at the same time, she wanted to be free. She feels that she doesn't love him. She has many questions. Can she live together with him? How will the relationship be impacted if she get a job? Her stormy impulsivity prompted her to do self-harm but she controlled.

We explored some questions like what independence is. Can one be in a position of independence while in a relationship with someone? What is a society? What does she understand by a 'live in' relationship? How to get a job? What is a career? Is it important to do career planning? What is her idea about herself? We explored these questions from many perspectives. I was observing that she has a poor reality testing capability.

In another later session, she came in a highly distressful mood. Her boyfriend is from a district town and he went home. But he did not call her or message her as he usually does. Mili was very disturbed and on the verge of such extreme negative emotions she tried to make a wound in her hand with her ring and sent the picture to her boyfriend immediately (Mili's mother also joined her in grieving and blaming, as Mili reported.) There were devastating floods in her boyfriend's home town. We explored the context and I tried to validate her feelings at the same time. A session started with her extreme thought about her friends. No one loves her, all of her friends are jealous with her beautiful voice. We explored on it – what friendship it – a single incident with her friend which makes her happy – how does she judge her voice and that of others. She came to a conclusion that there are many others who are friendly and have a good voice too but the world is so competitive that people behave peculiarly sometimes.

Once I requested both of her parents to come. We talked about her problem, how they perceive the problem, is it possible to give her support, to make a tie, to make a family trip etc. I tried to impart some psycho education without taking any technical term. They informed me that it will be better if the gap between the sessions can increased from the point of view of economic affordability. I talked with Mili and decided on the schedule. I became flexible on the issue and Mili told me that she will inform me whenever she feels comfortable to increase the schedule from once in 7 days to once in 10 days. We also decided that gradually we will make it once in 15 days.

I was observing the pattern of her behaviour and Mili also was becoming aware of it from the explorations we made in different sessions. Sessions were going on with exploration of her dissociative behaviour and current issues that may lead to such a behaviour. She used to refer the problems by the names she gave and informed me that her problems are residing with her but the intensities of which have been decreased.

In another session we tried to explore some of the good moments she cherished. It was about her experience of her performance in a Macha. Her performance was so good that the audience fanatically cheered her. Her father was also present there and he also become very happy. We explored singing as a profession and she informed me that she loves to sing but she doesn't love to practice. She becomes bored easily. Her BF loves her singing but does not want her to be a Macha singer. He encourages her to learn more and tutor others. She conveyed me that her BF also wants her to become thin as her father also desires likewise. Mili's boyfriend, as



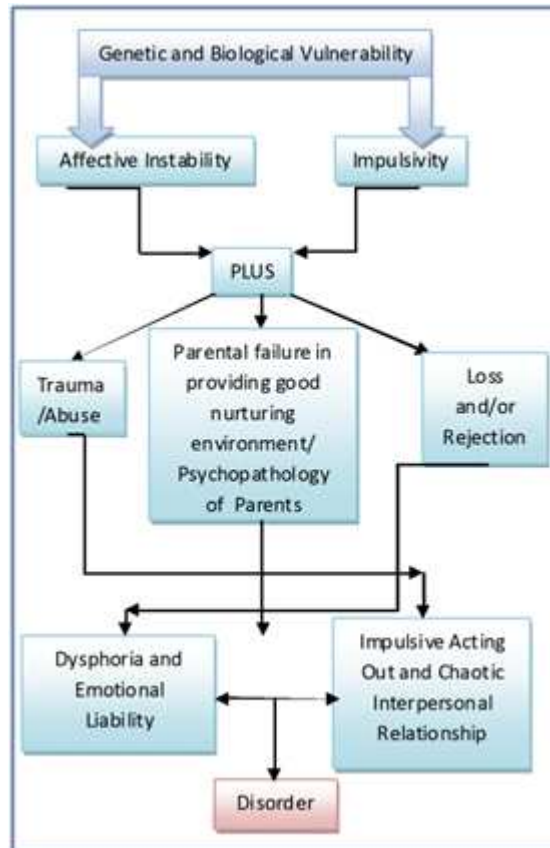
Mili informed, has not disclosed their relationship in his family. We also explored the reality of making career in the media-oriented world. She wanted to learn some deep breathing exercise which we did.

As a counsellor, I was also observing myself and Mili using the collaborative method. Once on my entry into the hospital lounge I found her waiting for me. Entering the chamber, she asked me that one of her friends has come with her who is waiting outside. She started talking about her friend's negative comment about me. 'How can a lady with shoes and short hair be a good counsellor? She herself looks like restless!' It was the comment of her friend. Mili and I started exploring the concept of 'ideal'. Gradually we reached to the concept of 'brand'. She talked about the importance of branded gifts among their relationship. She informed that her friends asked her about the brand and price of the gift she is receiving from her BF or giving to her BF and perhaps Mili herself also puts much importance on what other people are saying.

Mili loves to do needle work, loves to cook and likes to take photograph of nature, loves to shop branded materials and dine in good restaurants. In later sessions she started exploring her creativity and showed me some photographs in her phone. They were beautiful pictures of flowers, sky and plants. She used to post pictures of her creative works in the mobile phone as status. Initially I used to reply her and gradually I stopped responding. It reminded me the concept of Transitional Object as put by Winnicott.

Donald Winnicott in 1960 defined development in terms of the child's relationship with the environment. The child develops within the environment of good-enough mothering, progressing from an original un-integrated state to a structured integration, with the capacity for object relationship and 'living with' that is, relationships with whole, external objects (Winnicott 1960). The infant journeys from absolute dependence, through relative dependence, to independence, and these three kinds of dependence correlate roughly with the three overlapping stages of parental care: 'holding', 'mother and infant living together' and finally 'mother, infant, and father living together' (Winnicott 1960). The healthy child uses the transitional object as the illusion of the mother. His concept of the transitional object is not a replacement for the mother, but rather a representation of the mother during her absence. The child uses various objects, such as thumb, a blanket, or a toy, as transitional objects that symbolically represent the link between the child and the mother. The therapist creates a holding environment for the

person and works as a transitional object that helps the patient whom we know as borderline.



After the Durga Puja festival in 2017, she came to me in a relaxed mood. She was happy that she would be performing some programs in areas located on the outskirts of Kolkata. She has started doing *rewaz* again. She enjoyed a lot with her BF during the festival. Now her boyfriend has gone to his home town. The session includes exploration of types of relationships young people share today. She informed that there are very few relationships in her friends' circle which

last. I also explored different possibilities of her current relationship and her future. She informed me that she had started doing Yoga and was maintaining a diet chart to become slim. Mili also talked about some bad dreams she was having and sometimes they were about the death of her mother and father. She narrated that she saw herself crying frantically in those dreams. She also dreams about her marriage but with a different person, not with her current boyfriend. Another dream, which Mili termed 'shameful', was about her sexual intimacy with a person who is just a friend. She conveyed that she never thought of having sex with that person. All those dreams make her sad and guilty. These may be her prohibited unconscious wish censored by the ego for repression. Her dreams about her parents' death and a crying self may be symbolic representation of

Mili's ambivalence towards them. The situation reminds me of what Freud has said about dreams: We dream of what we have seen, said, desired or done (Freud 1900).

Multidimensional Diathesis-Stress Theory of Borderline Personality Disorder. Source: Paris 1999

Mili's situation can also be understood in terms of Paris's multidimensional theory (Paris 1999). Research suggests that genetic factors play a significant role in the development of these symptoms. Personality traits such as impulsivity and affective vulnerability are very prominent in borderline symptoms. He proposes that persons who have high levels of two normal personality traits – impulsivity and emotional instability-may have a diathesis to develop this disorder, but only in the presence of some psychological risk factors such as trauma, abuse and parental failure.

Mili, as she pointed out was very naughty in her school days, used to tear her own hair over a problem, be in confrontation with her mother frequently. She perceived the rage of her father to be fearful. As the theory suggests, it can be a possibility that her impulsive and emotionally unstable nature along with the psychological risk factors like child abuse, trauma and parental failure has helped to develop these symptoms.

### ***Social Context: Some Structural Aspects***

All the above-mentioned theories emphasized mainly a good enough supportive holding environment and a capacity of structured integrations of parts into a whole in object relationship.

But what about Mili's family, the socio-cultural context where they belong to? It reminds me of the concept of 'other'.

Simon De Beauvoir's work on the nature of man and woman introduced the concept of "other" in feminist theory in early 1950s. Otherness can be seen as a process of alienation to place a labelled person at the margin of the society. It can also be a political exclusion by state or persons with socio-political [power](#). I was trying to analyse Mili and Mili's case in the light of this concept.

Her family is a nuclear family of three members. The father plays the dominant role in taking any decision and the mother, as Mili mentioned,

continues to be in a passive position. Mili and her mother are 'others' in the family beside her father who is a powerful, dominating, strict and patriarchal male member.

Patriarchal culture gives the woman as mother a double bind message she cannot escape.

The first message is that a married woman's value lies in motherhood. This is a cultural taboo but also a culturally powerful aspect of our collective unconscious.

The second message relates to the gender code which infers that masculinity is dominant and femininity is subordinate (Leria and Krips 1993).

So, what I realized is to rediscover the other truths of life too considering the aetiology of symptoms in Mili. The concept of Masculine Dominance came into my mind.

As far as the history of the origin of masculine dominance is concerned, we must point out that this phenomenon does not occur naturally. The fact is born by the large body of legislation that is necessary to guarantee male domination (Adler 1921).

I was thinking of another double bind message. Her father being a driver cannot be placed in the category of the conventional educated and elite class. Since from a socioeconomic and cultural perspective the family is marginalized, the members are the 'others' in society. So Mili cannot escape another double bind message too. She is the 'other' in the family and the family is also 'other' in the society. Otherness is hindering the person to develop proper self-esteem and understand the need of autonomy.

I was observing a new generation, a new life through Mili's narratives, the lifestyle of this new era, the patterns of relationships they are experiencing. The area where she lives is situated in a remote suburb of Kolkata. Mili conveyed to me that the locality where they live is not up to the mark. Her neighbours are very curious about their family and Mili and her family do not reveal her profession to them. She has a different name as a Macha singer with a prefix 'Miss'. It appeared to me that Mili suffers from inferiority complex. Her locality, her profession makes her feel inferior. She cannot respect herself living in a locality like that and being in a profession like that. I could relate to Adler's (1870-1937) concept of inferiority/superiority complex. It is a complex of emotionally toned ideas arising from repressed

fear and resentment associated with real or imagined inferiority. People develop an inferiority complex if they are overwhelmed by the forces of the people around them holding them in contempt. It becomes a psychological problem. People can respond to inferiority by developing a superiority complex. A superiority complex involves covering up one's inferiority by pretending to be superior. Mili with her fragile self-esteem is too sensitive to psychosocial and interpersonal stressors and often seeks to support her sense of self by borrowing a stable identity from another, usually an idealized, person. Mili knows that to be successful in her music career she has to please the men in power to get a chance. According to Mili, it is a game of money and many other things. There are many small pockets of authorities for people like Mili. Still she sometimes (her split self) impulsively thinks of going to Mumbai (for good) and becoming something. Everyone will cheer her – she will become a renowned singer! Her father wanted her to pursue an academic career and become a teacher. He wanted her to control always - sometimes with a stick in his hand and sometimes as a judgmental authority figure deciding what is good and what is bad for her.

Two of her important problems are non-integrated self and emotionally charged impulsivity. It occurred to me to analyse the lifestyle of people like her with respect to her context, the group in which she belongs. In today's lifestyle smart phone, social network, the world of profile pictures, status update, emojis, likes and dislikes are playing a very dominant role. This may be true for most of the people. Through her narratives I could visualize how strongly they play a part in their interpersonal relationships. Their ideal life, concept of freedom and individual autonomy may have merged with these articles. The world of brands and shopping malls has a beckoning influence on all of us. People from socioeconomic backgrounds such as Mili's are prey to the consumer culture without the proper knowledge of how to balance this inner demand with their budget. Compulsive tendency to buy can be said to be an addiction facilitated by social conditions with the rise of globalization and consumer culture. Without knowing what to buy (brand culture) and how to buy, young people today only know that they have to buy to keep up with their friends. To me this resembles a social split where people like Mili are too vulnerable. In a different sense objectification of a human subject is taking place. Michel Foucault viewed all discourse which argues for the supremacy of one idea as a discourse of social control. Human subjects are objectified through systematic practices of discourse of social control which includes inseparability of power and knowledge. Interestingly objectification analyses the ways in which human beings turn themselves into subjects; i.e., people monitor and conduct

themselves according to their interpretations of set cultural norms. For example, certain specific body weights for women have shaped society's perception of good or bad. I could feel the social reality which reinforcing Mili's symptoms.

A new question was coming to my mind. In the last 3 decades, the technological revolution along with our unconscious attachment with some gazettes, our dependence on information banks like WhatsApp and Facebook etc. - are the structural issues becoming more important for all? People, especially the youngsters, are continuously engaged in accessing information. This very practice may be holding them back to think, analyse and integrate.

All the above-mentioned things were going in my minds which were enhancing my insight. I started to understand Mili's problem from both personal and structural perspective. I felt we cannot take anything as final since every human being is situated in a context and the truth – the reality – the ethics – all are situated. I was reflecting about my role as a counsellor and felt it immediately that response of the person who is sitting in front me in the chamber is most important for me. It is a journey of togetherness where I am learning a lot.

I initiated with a Time-Space of 'ikirmikirchamchikir' to a new time-space of 'emojis' with Mili.

To conclude, the journey of life and relations continue. I remember one line of Tagore from one of his songs

(Free translation: who brings a new perspective in our vision)

### ***References***

Adler, A., 2011. *Understanding Human Nature* (C. Brett, Trans.). Oxford: Oneworld Publications. (Original work published in 1929).

Ahuja, N., 2011 (1990). *A Short Textbook of Psychiatry*, (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). New Delhi, India: Jaypee Brothers Publishers (P) Ltd.

Banerjee, A., 2017. *Adler: Personality Theory* [PowerPoint slides].

Banerjee, A., 2017. *Jung: Theoretical Framework* [PowerPoint slides].

- Banerjee, A., 2017. *Object Relation Theories* [PowerPoint slides].
- Barich, N., 2014. 'Borderline Personality Disorder: A Mental Disorder or the Medicalization of Social Undesirability?' *Western Undergraduate Psychology Journal* 2(1). Retrieved from <http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1016&context=wupj>
- Batra, L., 2012. *Short Textbook of Psychiatry for Undergraduate Students*. New Delhi: Peepee Publishers & Distributors (P) Ltd.
- Bennett, D., G. Parry and A. Ryle, 2006. 'Resolving threats to the therapeutic alliance in cognitive analytic therapy of borderline personality disorder: A task analysis', *Psychology and Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice* (2006), 79, 395–418. DOI:10.1348/147608305X58355
- Beauvoir, S. D., 1948. *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, (Frechtman, B., Trans.). New York: Citadel Press, Kensington Publishing Corp.
- Carson, R.C., J.N. Butcher, S. Mineka, & J.M. Hooley, 2013 (2007). *Abnormal Psychology*, (13th ed.). Noida: Dorling Kindsley (India) Pvt. Ltd.
- Cramer, P., 1991. *The Development of Defense Mechanisms*. New York: Springer-Verlag New York Inc.
- Freud, S., 2002. *The Complete Works*, Retrieved from <http://holybooks.lichtenbergpress.netdna-cdn.com>
- Hall, C.S., G. Lindsay and J.B. Campbell, 1998 (1957). *Theories of Personality*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Jung, C. G., 1968. *Analytical Psychology: It's Theory and Practice THE TAVISTOCK LECTURES*, (Bennet, E.A., Trans.). London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.
- Leria, H. & M. Krips, 1993. 'Revealing Cultural Myths on Motherhood', in J. V. Mens-Verhulst, K Schreurs & L. Woertman (Eds.), *Daughtering and Mothering Female Subjectivity Reanalysed*. London and New York: Routledge: 83-96.
- Linehan, M. M., 1993. *Cognitive-behavioral treatment of borderline personality disorder*. New York, London: Guilford Press.
- Madigan, S. P., 1992. 'The application of Michel Foucault's philosophy in the problem externalizing discourse of Michael White', *Journal of Family*

*Therapy* 14 265-279. doi/10.1046/j..1992.00458.x/abstract?globalMessage=0

Paris J, Zelkowitz P, Guzder J, Joseph S, Feldman R.  
'Neuropsychological factors associated with borderline pathology in children'. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*. 1999;38:770-774. [PubMed]

Practice Guideline for the Treatment of Patients with Borderline Personality Disorder Copyright 2010, American Psychiatric Association.

Reinecke, M. A. and J. A. Ehrenreich, 'A Cognitive-Developmental Formulation of BPD'. Retrieved from [http://lghttp.48653.nexcesscdn.net/80223CF/springer-static/media/samplechapters /9780826148353/9780826148353\\_chapter.pdf](http://lghttp.48653.nexcesscdn.net/80223CF/springer-static/media/samplechapters /9780826148353/9780826148353_chapter.pdf)

Sadock, B. J. and V.A. Sadock, 2007. *Kaplan & Sadock's Synopsis of Psychiatry: Behavioral sciences/clinical psychiatry*, (10th ed.). Philadelphia: Wolter Kluver/Lippincott, Williams & Wilkins.

St. Clair, 1986. *Object Relations and Self Psychology: An Introduction*. California: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.

Tagore, R. N., 1971. *Geetabitan, Vol I*, Kolkata: Viswabharati.

Verheugt-Pleiter, A. and M. Debenmager, 2006. 'Transference-Focussed Psychotherapy and Mentalization-Based Treatment: Brother and Sister?' *Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy (December 2006)*, Vol. 20, No. 4, 297-315. Retrieved from <http://www.debenmager.nl/tpp.pdf>

White, L., 2014. 'Borderline Personality Disorder: A Personal Construct Approach. A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of Hertfordshire for the degree of Doctor of Clinical Psychology'. Retrieved from <https://uhra.herts.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/2299/14439/10280099%20-20White%20Lauren%20-%20final%20DClinPsy%20submission.pdf?sequence=1>

Yeomans, F. E., J. F. Clarkin and O.F. Kernberg, 2002. *A Primer of Transference Focused Psychotherapy for the Borderline Patient*. New Jersey/London: Jason Aronson.



## Marxism, Bengal National Revolutionaries and Comintern

Bikash Ranjan Deb

**Abstract:** *The origin and development of national revolutionary movement in India, particularly in Bengal, in the beginning of the twentieth century constituted one of important signposts of Indian freedom struggle against the colonial British rule. The Bengal national revolutionaries dreamt of freeing India through armed insurrection & individual terrorism. But in spite of supreme sacrifices made by these revolutionaries, almost after thirty years of their movement, in the thirties of the twentieth century, they came to the realisation about the futility of the method which neglected involvement of the general masses so long. In the first half of the thirties most of these revolutionaries were detained. While in detention in different jails & camps for a pretty long period many of the revolutionaries came in contact with Marxist literature there. Imbibed by the Marxist view of social change they gave up 'terrorism' as a method altogether after coming out of jails/camps in 1938 or later. However, a sharp debate developed among them on the perception of the Communist International (CI), its colonial policy in general and the policy with respect to the Indian freedom struggle in particular. Further, CPI's policy of following Comintern decisions as its national section also came under scrutiny. A large number of revolutionary converts questioned the applicability of the Comintern formulations in the perspective of late colonial Bengal. They were not ready either to accept CPI as a real communist party or to pay unquestionable obedience to the dictates of the Comintern. As a result, instead of joining any of the existing Marxist political parties, these revolutionaries formed their own parties having Marxism as the guiding principle. It has been the common notion among many scholars and writers that the Comintern's colonial policy has, at least to some extent, resulted in the disintegration of the communists' in Bengal. The role of the Comintern and conflicting understanding about its role in the Indian context that led to the development of a number of Marxist political parties has been tried to be analysed in this paper with a newer perspective.*

**Keywords:** Anti-colonialism, National Revolutionary, Terrorism, Colonial Bengal, Anushilan Samiti, Jugantar Federation, Marxist, Indian National Congress, CPI, Forward Bloc, RSP, SUCI.

### ***The key issue***

The national revolutionary movement in pre-independent Bengal constituted one of the most significant aspects in the history of the Indian freedom movement. Imbued by the spirit of unrelenting fight against British imperialism, the national revolutionaries of India tried to set before the people of the country a bright example of personal courage and heroic self-sacrifice, and thereby wanted to instil a mood of defiance in the minds of the people in the face of colonial repression. The revolutionary trend in the Indian freedom movement of the twentieth century was most ably represented by the *Anushilan Samiti*, the *Jugantar Federation* and the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association - HSRA (formerly Hindustan Republican Association - HRA) and such other revolutionary parties and groups. As history has unfolded in later years, national revolutionism failed to reach its logical culmination. The revolutionaries came to the realisation that their achievements had been disproportionately small in relation to their sacrifices. As a result, by the thirties of the twentieth century, a large number of national revolutionaries started feeling that their 'exclusively petty-bourgeois movement ... had reached its climax'. It could not develop further. So, the national revolutionaries started engaging themselves in search for a new revolutionary ideology and programme which they expected would help them in rectifying faults and errors, if any, in their line of struggle pursued so long. This search ultimately culminated in most of the revolutionaries accepting Marxism. Incidentally, though the Communist Party of India (CPI) was founded in India in 1925 as the first organised Marxist party of the country, Marxism as an idea had come to India much earlier, mainly through the efforts of the Indian revolutionaries abroad. As a result, distinct swing towards Marxism was noticed clearly in many of the Bengal national revolutionaries and a form of transition from national revolutionism to Marxism was discernible.

This, however, in the process, gave birth to not one or two, but a number of leftist-Marxist political parties in the Indian soil. The year 1934 saw the termination of explicit national revolutionary politics, particularly in Bengal and the United Provinces. After 1934, no act of violence had been perpetrated which indicates that the national revolutionaries, by that time, had renounced the politics of 'terrorism' as a political weapon. In the meantime, as the colonial repression went on unabated, most of the revolutionary activists belonging to different revolutionary parties and groups were under detention. It was during these detention years that the national revolutionaries found time for reviewing their strategies and tactics followed

for the last thirty years. For some national revolutionaries, at least, Marxism offered the most plausible solution to their problem.

Most of the revolutionaries who were detained in various places in the mainland were released in 1937-38 (in the case of Andaman detenus, it was 1945-46). Many of them came out of the jail as staunch supporters of either Gandhism or Marxism, and some of them dropped out of politics altogether. But none of them were in the mood of pursuing the former line of action and reverting to the old 'terrorist' path. So, in 1938, the *Jugantar* and the HSRA were formally dissolved. The *Anushilan Samiti*, though not formally dissolved, also ceased to exist as a separate revolutionary party. The national revolutionaries who were still then in politics either joined the political parties already existing at the time or took part in forming new political parties in line with their newly acquired ideological preferences. Thus, 'terrorism' *per se* had become a thing of the past with all the parties. David M Laushey makes a conservative estimate regarding the number of national revolutionaries working in Bengal at any particular point of time and concludes it would not more than '3000 active members' at any one time. (Laushey, 1975: 135) He is further of the opinion that out of these estimated numbers, only fifty percent converted to political leftism. But, even after adopting new ideology, these national revolutionaries failed to unite in a single unified party. Some of the causes behind this disunity have been tried to be examined in this paper.

The national revolutionaries were basically nationalist; therefore, joining the mainstream nationalist politics under the Congress was naturally expected. But, barring a few, most of them did not join the Congress. Besides the INC, during the thirties, there had been the Communist Party of India (CPI-1925) and the Communist League (CL-1934). Further, in the then political milieu, there were also the Roy Group (the followers of MN Roy-1931), The Labour Party (1932) and the Congress Socialist Party (CSP-1934), all of which had some kind of Marxist leanings.

The revolutionaries who formed the 'Communist Consolidation' in different jails mostly joined the CPI after their release. Another group of Marxists comprising members both from the *Anushilan Samiti* and the HSRA, instead of joining the CPI, started working with the CSP as a separate group since 1938, though the venture proved to be a short lived one. Simultaneously, a rapid change in the political scenario, particularly in Bengal, was taking place. The Communist League became the Revolutionary Communist Party of India (RCPI) in 1943 under the leadership of Soumyendranath Tagore. The Roy Group became the League of Radical Congressmen in 1939, and

sometime later, 1940, took the name of Radical Democratic Party (RDP), and the Labour Party became the Bolshevik Party of India in 1939. Another important leftist party of the time was the Forward Bloc (FB) founded by Subhash Chandra Bose in 1940. The rank of the party was swelled by the joining of the national revolutionaries belonging to *Bengal Volunteers*, *Sree Sangha*, *Dipali Sangha*, *Benu Group*, other revolutionary groups and a number of leading *Jugantar* activists.

Three political parties, however, were formed exclusively by the national revolutionaries - turned - Marxists. These parties were the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP-1940), the Democratic Vanguard (1943), which became the Workers Party of India in 1960, and the Socialist Unity Centre of India (SUCI-1946/1948).

The RSP originated in 1940 through the efforts of a number of 'Anushilan Marxists' and the HSRA activists who did not join the CPI upon their release from the jails. As these groups- of Marxists had differences with those of the CPI on many counts, including the role of the Comintern in a colonial country and the characterisation of the INC-led freedom movement, they preferred to work rather with the CSP for providing an 'alternative to the official Communist line'. However, very shortly, these Anushilan and the HSRA Marxists severed their relationship with the CSP and formed their own party known as RSP.

Again, a group of Anushilanites who were associated with the process of formation of the RSP as a separate Marxist party soon started expressing their reservations by way of publishing political pamphlets relating to the organisational structure and the process of formation of the party, as well as its main ideological planks *vis-à-vis* the role of Stalin as a living authority of international communist movement and the Comintern. As these differences of opinion could not be resolved within the organisational framework of the RSP, this group of Marxists, under the leadership of Shibdas Ghosh, 'both in continuity of the struggle within RSP and after a break with it' evolved a 'Platform of Action with a party content' in 1946 and then, in 1948, founded the SUCI (renamed as SUCI-Communist since 2009), as a political party.

The purpose of the present paper is to investigate and explore the role of the Communist International with respect to the colonial countries, and more particularly, to India and its possible impact on the process of conversion from national revolutionism to Marxism and the consequent formation of multiple leftist- - Marxist political parties in Bengal with the

common purpose of establishing scientific socialism on the basis of the Marxist notion of historical development and revolution. Further, the national revolutionaries who accepted Marxism failed to organise themselves into a single unified Marxist party. Rather, they remained disunited as earlier. Whether the decisions of the Communist International (Comintern) had any bearing behind the disunity among these adherents of Marxism has also been tried to be enquired in this paper.

### *The Comintern and the Bengal Marxists*

By late thirties of the twentieth century, a heroic chapter in the history of Indian national movement came to an end. The most pertinent question which comes logically here: What would have been the future course of action of the revolutionaries who accepted Marxism? For David Laushey, the question was either to join the CPI/the CSP or to form a new leftist party of their own. (Laushey 1975: 124) Satyendra Narayan Mazumdar, an Anushilan revolutionary who was passing through this turmoiling situation during the time as a prisoner in the Andamans, expressed his mental turbulence in following:

1. The Communist Party of India is a section of the Communist International. Does it mean that the party in India will have to mechanically follow the directives of the Communist International irrespective of the peculiarities and specific features of our national situation?
2. Is internationalism and patriotism contradictory to each other? Will not loyalty to the principles of internationalism lead to the neglect of national tasks?
3. What will be the attitude of the communist party towards participation in the national movement led by the bourgeoisie? (Mazumdar 1979:274).

Buddhadeva Bhattacharyya, an Anushilan activist and an RSP ideologue as well, raised the issue in his own way:

Except for a section of the national revolutionaries, including Anushilan men, who went over to the Communist Consolidation and later the CPI, the majority of Anushilan members, though being convinced of Marxism-Leninism, still hesitated. While they accepted Marxism in principle and held the Soviet Union in high esteem for her magnificent achievements in the field of an economic reconstruction they seriously doubted the efficacy of the Comintern as an agency for promoting world revolution and more particularly for aiding the anti-imperialist movements in colonies. These

questions centred round the documents of the Sixth World Congress of the Communist International, namely, *Programme of the Communist International* and more, particularly, *Theses on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies*. The role of the CPI during the CD movement further alienated them from it and the CI (Bhattacharyya 1982:21-22: *Italics original*).

Shibdas Ghosh, an Anushilan activist and the First General Secretary of the SUCI (renamed as SUCI-Communist since 2009) had his share of views on the issues which agitated him and his compatriots prior to 1948: 'We profess to be communist representing the school of thought of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin and yet we cannot join the Communist Party of India nor can we support its present stand.' (Ghosh, 1948: Introduction) A 'platform of action' was formed with effect from May 01, 1946 in the name of 'Socialist Unity Centre' which declared:

SUC is not a Party, not a sectarian group in any sense but a propagandist platform and a TEMPORARY INSTRUMENT FOR THE UNIFICATION OF ALL SOCIALIST FORCES that identify their interests completely with the working class without reservation and pledge themselves to work for the Social Revolution on the basis of fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism, socialism or communism, as against capitalism, imperialism and fascism, as speedily as the objective conditions of the country would permit (Socialist Unity Centre 1948:8-9).

The debate and discussion among the converted revolutionary nationalists on joining either the CPI or the CSP or forming a new Marxist party centered mainly on two or three closely related issues—first, what would be the stages of revolution in the coming days, secondly, to what extent Comintern's formulation of strategies and tactics for the colonial countries, particularly for colonial India, were correct and whether the adherence to Comintern's policies for India by the CPI was really beneficial for India's anti-colonial freedom movement; and last but not the least, the issue of leadership of Stalin in his reported control of the policy-making process of the Comintern.

We can start with the opinion of Sobhanlal Datta Gupta, a longtime researcher and a prolific writer on the role of Comintern in shaping the future of India's communist movement:

The Third International, generally known as the Communist International (Comintern:1919-1943), was born out of a vision, originating in the dream of a world revolution. The visionary was Lenin...it was going to be the rallying point of all revolutionary forces who sided with the cause of the great October, and who pledged to struggle for the creation of a brave new world of the future, for the victory of socialism...In the inter-war period it emerged

as a massive structure of power, a gigantic international organization, claiming to represent the collective will of the Communist Parties. Consequently, the rigid disciplinary control of Comintern over the parties, ensured through the enforcement of 21 conditions, which constituted the preconditions for a party to be recognized by the Comintern, **made it imperative for the communist parties to accept its decisions as unconditionally binding on them and destinies of the parties thus came to be inseparably linked with shifts in the policies of the Comintern...** Consequently, a proper understanding of the Comintern provides not simply the most vital clue to the directions of international communism in the twentieth century, but is also a **pointer to how it virtually prefigured the destiny of the Communist Parties in different parts of the world** (Datta Gupta 2006:1-2; emphasis added).

Comintern's role in formulating policies for anti-imperialist movement in India guided by Marxian class analysis and correlation of forces came in for severe criticism from a group of Anushilan converts who had the support of the majority of converted national revolutionaries:

The Samiti members in detention were gradually released...in 1937 and early 1938. The alternatives before the Samiti leaders were: 1. to form a new open party with well-defined Marxist ideology and a Marxist-Leninist programme of action, or 2. merge the Samiti with one of the existing political parties. The first alternative was soon rejected...Merger, therefore, with one of the existing like-minded parties was the only alternative conceivable. The attitude and political line of the CPI was suspect. The CPI, since it allowed itself to be dictated to by the Comintern and the Communist Party of Great Britain, failed to ascertain correctly the objective political situation in India and the true nature of anti-imperialist struggle. This party consistently ignored and even opposed the mass struggles initiated by the Congress...alliance with CPI was absolutely ruled out. The CSP, on the other hand, had within its fold congressmen of the left-wing persuasion, some having firm Marxist conviction, who were committed to fight uncompromisingly for complete independence. So, Anushilan Samiti finally opted for the Congress Socialist Party, in 1938. (Ray 1993: 104-105).

We have another story regarding the conversion to Marxism and joining the CPI by a number of political deportees who were imprisoned in the Cellular Jail, Andaman. As stated by SN Mazumdar, a message was sent to the communist-minded prisoners by the CPI leadership in 1935. In that message, the revolutionaries who veered around Marxism were requested to unite in a Communist Consolidation. The Communist Consolidation was formally formed on May 01, 1935 and the red flag was hoisted. The Consolidation was formed with 35 members. They came from different

parties, Anushilan, Yugantar, Revolting group, the Chittagong group, the BV group and above all, the HSRA. Later on, the majority of the members of Anushilan and Yugantar gradually joined the Consolidation and swelled its rank (Mazumdar 1979: 259).

Upon their release, they formally joined the CPI. Similar Communist Consolidations were also formed in various detention camps situated in the mainland. So, the query about which Marxist party to join ended for the revolutionary converts who formed the Communist Consolidations. On this issue, Satyendra Narayan Mazumdar writes:

The Communist International is the vanguard detachment of the different forces of world revolution. It exposes the character, the designs and manoeuvres of world imperialism. It analyses the new turns in the world situation and outlines the common task before the different sectors of the world-revolutionary process...It is the duty of the communist parties in every country to implement the common tasks and to chalk out a correct plan of action in accordance with the specific features and alignment of forces in their respective countries. This is the theoretical position. It is true that in the implementation of that position mistakes have been committed by both the Communist International and its different national sections. But as for myself, while in the Andaman, the theoretical position as elaborated by Lenin was the sole concern. I was quite satisfied with what was written by Lenin (Mazumdar 1979: 275).

The SUC which had been acting as a 'propagandist platform of action' since 1946 tried to solve the issue of joining any existing leftist party or forming a new one of their own, in another way. Elaborating this point further, Shibdas Ghosh writes in a 1948:

The history of the Communist Party of India is the history of strategical mistakes, tactical blunders and theoretical deviations so much so that in the phase of bourgeoisie democratic revolution in 1929 it accepted the programme of socialist revolution and now in the phase of socialist revolution it clings to the old programme of bourgeois democratic revolution...The right wing deviation of the Communist Party of India, its organisational defects, and its present wrong policy demands its rectification of bonafide communists. But as it is not possible to do the same from within the party for mechanical rigidity and established bureaucratic leadership at the top, we as revolutionary vanguard of the people take it as our duty. In the absence of any organisation to lead the Indian masses in the coming revolution, the appearance of propagandist instrument like ours has become an indispensable objective necessity (Ghosh 1948: 25-27).



For them, as a general international programme, the stand of Comintern Sixth Congress was correct but its application to India, in particular, by the CPI was undoubtedly wrong. **‘But in the World Seventh Congress the acceptance of ‘United Front’ as the general international political theory as a result of which the Anti-Fascist Peoples’ Front with the Democratic Imperialist forces was accepted as the general programme during the war was a blunder’** (Ghosh 1948: 16- emphasis added).

Thus, we find at least four different patterns of thought over the issue. First, rejection of the Comintern as an international authoritative body of Marxists and the CPI as a Marxist party; Secondly, acceptance of both the Comintern and the CPI as mostly correct; Thirdly, CPI was full of blunders and vacillations and the Comintern was basically correct and, lastly, the CPI was just a mere pawn at the hands of the Comintern and the CPGB having no independence in formulating its strategies and tactics of the revolution.

This leads us to a further discussion on the interaction of Comintern and the Bengal national revolutionaries.

### ***Formation of the Comintern***

The Soviet Socialist Revolution of 1917, it appears, led to the establishment of two opposing systems, socialism and capitalism and, consequently, the believers of Marxian socialism started thinking about the necessity of effective forms of mutual solidarity and co-ordination between the revolutionaries operating in different countries. By December 1918, the Russian Communists were appealing to the Communists of other countries swiftly to unite in a Third Communist International. Hence, the setting up of the Third Communist International, or Comintern in Moscow in 1919 – a new proletarian international, which, according to Lenin, would begin the task of implementing the dictatorship of the proletariat. The recognition of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the struggle to secure it represented, in fact, preliminary conditions for membership.

For Lenin it was of the utmost necessity for proletarians around the world to be liberated from capitalist oppression, lest future world wars send more to their deaths, and a growing capitalistic machine takes more and more of their humanity and [freedom](#). Armed with these convictions, Lenin set out to establish the Communist International. In early January of 1919

preparations began for the Communist International with a meeting of representatives from a number of Communist Parties and Left-wing Socialist groups from all around the world who discussed the founding of the Third International. They adopted a manifesto entitled “For the First Congress of the Communist International”. The manifesto was published on behalf of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party, foreign bureaus of the Communist Workers’ Party of Poland, Hungarian Communist Party, Communist Party of German Austria, the Russian bureau of the Central Committee of the Latvian Communist Party, Central Committee of the Finnish Communist Party, Executive Committee of the Balkan Revolutionary Social Democratic Federation and the Socialist Labor Party of America. At the end of February, delegates began arriving in Moscow in response to the call to establish the Third Communist International. On March 1, a preliminary meeting took place under Lenin’s chairmanship to discuss the agenda of the Congress. March 2, 1919, was the opening day of the International Communist Conference, attended by 52 delegates from nations all around the world – 34 delegates with a vote (one delegate per party or organization represented), accompanied by 18 redundant delegates (their party or organisation already represented) with a voice but no vote (Summary of the First Congress, March 1919).

Each delegate gave a report on the revolutionary situation in their own countries, which was followed by discussing the platform of the Communist International. Lenin’s [thesis and report](#) on bourgeois democracy and dictatorship of the proletariat was placed. The thesis in Russian and German were circulated among the delegates before the speech. At the third session on March 4, Lenin read his thesis. The conference expressed its unanimous approval of Lenin’s thesis and decided to submit them to the Bureau for wide circulation. It also adopted resolution moved by Lenin as a [supplement to the thesis](#). The thesis drew attention to the ‘revolutionary ferment in all the colonies’ and put forward the following, ‘The emancipation of the colonies is possible only in conjunction with the emancipation of the metropolitan working class’ (Degras Vol. I: 43). It was assumed, further, that a socialist Europe would render all-round help to the liberated colonies. A Soviet commentator, A Reznikov, writes in this connection: ‘Thus, from the first moment of its existence, the Third, Communist International addressed the oppressed people of the East as allies in the fight against imperialism and colonialism, and acted as the first world, genuinely revolutionary organisation’ (Reznikov 1984: 55).

On March 4, on the motion of the delegates of the Communist Party of German Austria, Left Social-Democratic Party of Sweden, Balkan Revolutionary Social Democratic Federation and Hungarian Communist Party, the Conference resolved **‘to constitute itself as the Third International and adopt the name of the Communist International’**. The Conference formulated the policy statement of the Communist International, which contained the following main propositions:

- 1) inevitability of the replacement of the capitalist system by the Communist social system
- 2) necessity of the proletarian revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of bourgeois governments
- 3) destruction of the bourgeois state and its replacement by a new type of state, a proletarian state of the Soviet type, which would insure the transition to Communist society.

The Communist International soon became widespread beyond Europe. And by acquiring vital significance for all the communist parties, the Third International also exercised considerable social and political influence in the international arena. As socialism was being consolidated in the Soviet Union, the Comintern remained in existence until its dissolution in 1943. Seven congresses were held (the last taking place in 1935). Between congresses its highest organ was the Executive Committee (ECCI), which convened thirteen plenary sessions from 1922 to 1933. Juergen Rojahn categorised the Comintern history into three major periods: 1917-1923, 1924-1934 and 1935-1943. Marcel van der Linden classified the Comintern history in three periods: 1917-1921, 1921-1924 and 1924 to the dissolution of the Comintern in 1934 (Datta Gupta, 2006: 14-15). The Chinese Communist Party leader, Zhou Enlai classified the Comintern history into three: March 1919 to July 1927, July 1927 to July 1935 and lastly, 1935-1943 (Zhou Enlai 1989: 306-319).

The Second Comintern Congress took place from July 19 to August 7, 1920. The discussions were long and multifarious. A number of resolutions have been adopted but among these two theses are very relevant for our present study: 1. Theses on the Conditions of Admission to the International and 2. Theses on the national and colonial questions. Lenin guided the entire preparatory work of the Congress and did much to elaborate this aspect of

the agenda (Reznikov 1984: 56). The Congress accepted nineteen conditions for entry to Comintern.

Presenting the Theses on the conditions of Admission to the International before the delegates Lenin remarked:

The First Inaugural Congress of the Communist International did not draw up precise conditions for the admission of parties into the Third International. When the First Congress was convened, only communist *trends* and *groups* existed in most countries.

.....

The Second Congress of the Communist International resolves that the following are the terms of Comintern membership:

.....

***17. All decisions of the Communist International's congresses and of its Executive Committee are binding on all affiliated parties. Operating in conditions of acute civil war, the Communist International must be far more centralised than the Second International was. It stands to reason, however, that in every aspect of their work the Communist International and its Executive Committee must take into account the diversity of conditions in which the respective parties have to fight and work, and adopt decisions binding on all parties only on matters in which such decisions are possible.***

.....

***19. After the conclusion of the proceedings of the Second World Congress of the Communist International, any party wishing to join the Communist International must at the earliest date convene an extraordinary congress for official acceptance of the above obligations on behalf of the entire party.***(Lenin CW Vol. 31, 1965: 206-211—Emphasis & Italics added)

Lenin in his Address to the Second All-Russia Congress of Communist Organisations of the Peoples of the East on November 22, 1919, however, already adopted a flexible attitude for the colonial countries: ‘...you are confronted with a task which has not previously confronted the Communists of the world: Relying upon the general theory and practice of communism, you must adapt yourselves to specific conditions such as do not exist in the European countries; you must be able to apply that theory and practice to conditions in which the bulk of the population are peasants, and in which the task is to wage a struggle against medieval survivals and not against capitalism’ (Lenin CW Vol. 30, 1965: 206-211). So it appears that though

Lenin was strict in making the decisions of the Comintern binding upon the sections at the very infant stage of the formation of this body for checking any untoward development that may creep in like the two previous failed examples of building international communist organisation, he was in no way in favour of showing blind allegiance to any central directions that are not in tune with the socio-economic realities of the countries of the East.

The other one is the Theses on the national and the colonial questions. The preliminary draft was prepared by Lenin himself. After prolonged discussion on the draft by Lenin along with MN Roy's draft supplementary theses, the Thesis was adopted by the Congress on July 28, 1920. Zinoviev was the chairman of the session and the Theses was adopted unanimously with three abstentions. The most relevant areas of the Colonial Theses for the present study are as follows:

In relation to those states that have a more backward, predominantly feudal, patriarchal or peasant patriarchal character, special attention must be paid to the following points:

- a) All Communist Parties must support the revolutionary liberation movements in these countries by their deeds. The form the support should take must be discussed with the Communist Party of the country in question, should such a party exist. This obligation to offer active assistance affects – in the first place the workers of those countries on which the backward countries are in a position of colonial or financial dependence.
- b) An unconditional struggle must be carried out against the reactionary and medieval influence of the clergy, the Christian missions and similar elements. ...
- d) Support for the peasant movement in the backward countries against the landowners and every form and remnant of feudalism is particularly necessary. What must be striven for above all is to give the peasant movement as revolutionary a character as possible and wherever possible to organise the peasants and all victims of exploitation in soviets and thus bring about as close a link as possible between the Western European communist proletariat and the revolutionary movement of peasants in the East, in the colonies and in the backward countries.
- e) A determined fight is necessary against the attempt to put a communist cloak around revolutionary liberation movements that are not really communist in the backward countries...(Minutes 1920)

It was the Second Congress of Comintern which may be considered to have inaugurated the entry of the Orient in the European circuit in an

altogether new perspective, the principal text in this direction being Lenin's *Imperialism—the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1917) followed by the *Colonial Theses*, adopted at the Second Congress of Comintern (Datta Gupta 2006: 65) It was these two writings which, for the first time, made it possible for the East to be 'de-essentialised'; it is no longer operated as an essentialist Other to the West, as it did for Marx' (Seth 1995: 59). The East entered history, and Marxist theory, as the colonial question. The destiny of the proletarian revolution in the West now got linked up with the anti-imperialist struggle in the colonies.

***Third Comintern Congress to Fifth Comintern Congress - 'United Front Theory' continued***

The colonial question was not specifically discussed in the Third Congress of Comintern held in Moscow from June 22 to July 12, 1921 in which both Lenin and Trotsky played the leading role. Consequently, no such discussion on India was taken up in the Third Congress. But, on the eve of the Congress attempts were made by the Berlin Group of Indian revolutionaries in Germany, including Virendranath Chattopadhyaya, G A K Luhani, Bhupendra Nath Datta etc., to negotiate with the Comintern on the issue of understanding of the Indian question since they never recognized M N Roy as the authentic spokesman of India in Moscow. Further, Roy, who carried the mandate of the Communist Party of Mexico, could not officially represent India. Whatever be the reason, the Eastern question hardly figured in the Third Congress. This rather unceremonious treatment of the East evoked a sharp reaction from M N Roy. However, it is evident from the discussions of the Third Congress that in order to win over the proletariat in the colonies, there should be no hesitation in striking up an alliance with the nationalists in the Orient, knowing fully well that they would deceive the masses (Datta Gupta 2006: 78 & 86).

The Fourth Congress of the Comintern held from November 30 to December 05, 1922 witnessed a discussion on India and the colonial question. In this Congress also, like the previous one, both Lenin & Trotsky played the leading role. A 'Theses on the Eastern Question' was adopted by the Congress on December 05, 1922 which stated that the objective tasks of the colonial revolution go beyond the bounds of bourgeois democracy because a decisive victory for this revolution was incompatible with the rule of world imperialism. The colonial revolutionary movement was at first championed by the indigenous bourgeoisie and the bourgeois

intelligentsia, but as the proletarian and semi-proletarian peasant masses became more involved and the social interests of the ordinary people came to the fore, the movement started to break away from the big-bourgeois and bourgeois-landowner elements. A long struggle still lies ahead for the newly-formed proletariat in the colonies, a struggle that would cover an entire historical epoch and would confront both imperialist exploitation and the native ruling classes, who were anxious to monopolise for themselves all the gains of industrial and cultural development and to keep the broad working masses in their former 'pre-historic' condition. The *Theses* declared:

**The Communist Parties of the colonial and semi-colonial Eastern countries are still in a more or less embryonic stage and must take part in every movement that gives them access to the masses.** At the same time they must campaign hard against patriarchal-craft prejudices and bourgeois influence in the workers' unions in order to safeguard these rudimentary trade unions from reformist tendencies and turn them into militant mass organisations. They must make every effort to organise the numerous agricultural labourers and farm-girls and the craft apprentices of both sexes around the defence of their everyday interests (Fourth Congress 1922; emphasis added)

M N Roy by this time emerged as a leading figure within the Comintern but his 'Report on the Eastern Question' placed before the Congress was on sharp contrast with the *Theses* that was adopted ultimately. Roy's main thrust was on the belief that capitalism and industrialisation had sufficiently developed in colonies like India and that a revolution under the exclusive leadership of the proletariat was a real possibility in the advanced colonies of the East. The *Theses* adopted in the Congress while rejecting the Report of Roy also gave a warning to the delegates against the ultra-left understanding of the colonial question.

The Fourth Congress was the last Congress of Comintern which witnessed the presence of Lenin. He was quite convinced that the East was fast emerging as a force to be reckoned with. After Lenin's death in 1924, the leadership of the Comintern undergone a change and a relevant and leading role in Comintern affairs was also played by Joseph Stalin, elected in 1922 as secretary general of the RCP(B), later CPSU(B). His active involvement began at the Fifth Comintern Congress in 1924, when he was elected to the Executive Committee and its Presidium. But a striking feature of Stalin's relationship with the Comintern lies in the fact that, after a few years of intensive participation and engagement (his Works are filled with speeches

on Comintern and international affairs during 1924-25-26-27-28), Stalin ceased to participate in it from the late twenties onwards. He remained absent during its last two Congresses in 1928 and 1935, and his official Works contain no contribution to Comintern affairs after 1928.

The Fifth Congress of the Comintern was held in June-July, 1924. The official position of the Comintern can be understood from Manuilsky's Report on National and Colonial Question presented in the Congress. The Report highlighted, *inter alia*, that the anti-imperialist struggle in the colonies had reached a critical phase, following the increasingly compromising position of the nationalist bourgeoisie and direct link between the nationalist struggle in the colonies and the Comintern had to be forged. Secondly, in countries where the communist party was small and a section of the bourgeoisie had revealed its compromising face like that of India, the building up of WPP etc. was prescribed aiming at mobilization of the workers, peasants and non-compromising section of the nationalist middle class (Datta Gupta 2006: 105).

The Fifth Congress, continuing the tradition of the Fourth Congress, accepted the 'United Front Theory' as the correct tactical line for all the sections of the Comintern. As Stalin pointed out, this Congress 'merely sealed the victory of the revolutionary wing in the principal sections of the Comintern' (Stalin 1954: 306).

### ***The United Front tactics***

Despite serious opportunist errors and the distortion of united front tactics by the right—which in many cases might have meant the outright ruin of the communist parties—the application of united front tactics between the fourth and fifth congresses was, by and large, of undoubted use to us, and furthered the development of a number of Comintern sections into mass parties. In a period when the communist parties in a number of the most important countries are still in a minority, when social-democracy for a number of historical reasons is still supported by large proletarian masses, when the capitalist offensive is continuing in various forms and the working class cannot summon up sufficient energy to wage serious defensive struggles, united front tactics were and are correct and necessary. . . . United front tactics are only a method of agitation and of revolutionary mobilization of the masses over a period (Degras Vol. II: 163-164).



Just to highlight Stalin's initial problems in the Comintern (Lenin had withdrawn from active political life from December 1922), the composition of the Russian delegation to the Executive Committee, elected at the Fifth Congress in 1924 may be worth noting. Except Stalin, the other members – including Zinoviev, Bukharin, and Trotsky – were all in opposition to Stalin. Members of the Russian delegation to the ECCI elected by the Fifth Comintern Congress in 1924: Zinoviev (also Comintern's president), Bukharin, Stalin, Kamenev, Rykov; candidates: Sokolnikov, Trotsky, Lozovsky, Piatnitsky. In December 1926 Zinoviev ceased to be the Comintern's president, this office being replaced by a political secretariat. The presence of so many leaders' opposing Stalin's formulations in the Comintern during the twenties, however, did not prevent the acceptance of the views of Stalin, mainly, with regard to united front tactics and the defense of socialism in the Soviet Union.

As a matter of fact, the proletarian dictatorship in the Soviet Union was continuing, despite the Trotskyist opposition had made attempts to deny the possibility of socialism being built in a single country. According to Trotsky's theory of the permanent revolution, only the victory of the revolution on a world scale would save proletarian rule in the Soviet Union from "degeneration and decay." The construction of socialism in one country would – according to Trotsky – give up the prospects of the international revolution and neglect proletarian internationalism. A good number of writers on Comintern believe that a prominent role in defeating the Trotskyite line was played by Stalin himself in the Comintern. Together with the other delegations attending the Executive Committee Plenum in November/December 1926, Stalin recognised the fundamental necessity of the closest possible alliance and solidarity between the USSR, the international revolutionary process and the various liberation struggles. Stalin was emphatic in asserting that he was not giving up the cause of the revolution outside the USSR in upholding the principle that socialism could be built in one country. Indeed, the victory of the November Revolution represented, in Stalin's words the beginning of and the precondition for the world revolution.

There can be no doubt that the universal theory of a simultaneous victory of the revolution in the principal countries of Europe, the theory that the victory of socialism in one country is impossible, has proved to be an artificial and untenable theory. . . the victory of the revolution in one country, in the present case Russia, is not only the product of the uneven development and progressive decay of imperialism; it is at the same time the beginning of and the pre-condition for the world revolution... the

unfolding of the world revolution will be the more rapid and thorough, the more effective the assistance rendered by the first socialist country to the workers and labouring masses of all other countries. . . The world significance of the October Revolution lies not only in the fact that it constitutes a great beginning made by one country in causing a breach in the system of imperialism and that it is the first centre of socialism in the ocean of imperialist countries, but also in that it constitutes the first stage of the world revolution and a mighty base for its further development. . . not only does the October Revolution need support from the revolution in other countries, but the revolution in those countries needs the support of the October Revolution in order to accelerate and advance the cause of overthrowing world imperialism (Stalin 1954: 143-148).

Accordingly, the Comintern characterised the Soviet Socialist State as: 'the most important fortress of the world revolution' (Degras Vol II: 323)

### *Sixth and Seventh Comintern Congresses - the reversals*

Before entering into discussion on Sixth and Seventh Comintern Congresses, a look to what Stalin delivered at a Meeting of Students of the Communist University of the Toilers of the East on *May 18, 1925* at Tashkent may be of significance:

The distinctive feature of the colonies and dependent countries at the present time is that there no longer exists a single and all-embracing colonial East. Formerly the colonial East was pictured as a homogeneous whole. Today, that picture no longer corresponds to the truth. We have now at least three categories of colonial and dependent countries. Firstly, countries like Morocco, which have little or no proletariat, and are industrially quite undeveloped. Secondly, countries like China and Egypt, which are underdeveloped industrially, and have a relatively small proletariat. **Thirdly, countries like India, which are capitalistically more or less developed and have a more or less numerous national proletariat.**

Clearly, all these countries cannot possibly be put on a par with one another.

... The fundamental and new feature of the conditions of life of colonies like India is not only that the national bourgeoisie has split up into a revolutionary party and a compromising party, but primarily that the compromising section of this bourgeoisie has already managed, in the main, to strike a deal with imperialism. Fearing revolution more than it fears imperialism, and concerned more about its money-bags than about the interests of its own country, this section of the bourgeoisie, the richest and most influential section, is going over entirely to the camp of the

irreconcilable enemies of the revolution, it is forming a bloc with imperialism against the workers and peasants of its own country. The victory of the revolution cannot be achieved unless this bloc is smashed. But in order to smash this bloc, fire must be concentrated on the compromising national bourgeoisie, its treachery exposed, the toiling masses freed from its influence, and the conditions necessary for the hegemony of the proletariat systematically prepared. In other words, in colonies like India it is a matter of preparing the proletariat for the role of leader of the liberation movement, step by step dislodging the bourgeoisie and its mouthpieces from this honourable post. **The task is to create a revolutionary anti-imperialist bloc and to ensure the hegemony of the proletariat in this bloc...** But the Communist Party can and must enter into an open bloc with the revolutionary wing of the bourgeoisie in order, after isolating the compromising national bourgeoisie, to lead the vast masses of the urban and rural petty bourgeoisie in the struggle against imperialism (Stalin SL-Vol. VII, 1954: 135-154; emphasis added).

What appears from Stalin's speech on political tasks of the peoples of the East in general is very much significant for India's ongoing national liberation movement. Stalin, as back as in 1925, classified the Indian bourgeoisie into two categories: compromising section and a revolutionary section, of course, in relation to British imperialism. In view of Stalin's observation, the communists of India should try to unite with the petty-bourgeoisie revolutionary elements represented by the revolutionary nationalist' & the progressive section of the Congress represented, mainly, by Subhash Chandra Bose and his followers (Ghosh 2010: 54). The Comintern suggested the Indian communists the following: to work within the Indian National Congress; to form an alliance with its left-wing groups for the purpose of putting pressure on the right; to strengthen the left wing of the Congress, so that it went over to national-revolutionary positions. At the same time, in the opinion of the Comintern, the communists should fortify and extend their own influence and mass base within the INC (Reznikov 1984: 146).

The Sixth Congress of the Comintern was held from July 17 to September 01, 1928. Prior to holding of Sixth Congress, the conflict in the Soviet party took a decisive turn. While the Stalin-Trotsky conflict which was 'essentially a struggle for power', leading to the expulsion of Trotsky from the CPSU(B) in 1927, the period that followed seen 'an ideological as well as programmatic conflict' between Stalin and Bukharin. (Datta Gupta, 2006: 121) The economic restoration of the Soviet Union which was at the stage of socialist industrialisation and collectivisation in agriculture were accompanied by the emergence of political opposition to Stalin's leadership around prominent

figures such as Trotsky, Zinoviev (who was also the Comintern president), Kamenev, Sokolnikov who were all executive committee members in the Comintern. They were joined in the executive committee by two other influential members, Bukharin and Rykov, who would later put forward a common offensive against the leadership of Stalin. Of course, this factional fighting in the USSR also sharpened the struggle within both the Comintern and the various communist parties. In June 1926, for example, Stalin regarded the Zinoviev group as more dangerous than Trotsky's because of the former's control of the Comintern in his capacity as president.

In the backdrop of this, the Sixth Congress was held. The Congress marked the beginning of the decline of the authority of M N Roy on the colonial issues which ultimately led to his expulsion from Comintern. As he was involved himself in the political struggle of the Soviet party and sided with the anti-Stalin elements, Roy was expelled from the Comintern. The information of Roy's expulsion from Comintern was published in *Inprecor* of December 13, 1929, almost simultaneously with Bukharin's fall from grace.

The draft theses on the colonial question were placed by Otto Kuusinen. The finally adopted '*Theses on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies and Semi-Colonies*' witnessed a 'far left' shift on the question of forging an anti-imperialist united front, which had, till then, been Comintern's strategy in the colonies. The Theses declared:

**The basic tasks of the Indian communists** consist in struggle against British imperialism for the emancipation of the country, for destruction of all relics of feudalism, for the agrarian revolution and for establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasant in the form of a soviet republic. These tasks can be successfully carried out only when there will be created a powerful communist party which will be able to place itself at the head of the wide masses of the working class, peasantry and all the toilers, and to lead them in the struggle against the feudal-imperialist bloc.

**... The communists must unmask the national reformism of the Indian National Congress and oppose all the phrases of the Swarajists, Gandhists, etc., about passive resistance, with the irreconcilable slogan of struggle for the emancipation of the country and the expulsion of the imperialists...**

**It must be remembered that under no circumstances can the communists relinquish their right to open criticism of the opportunist and reformist tactics of the leadership of those mass organisations in which they work** (Sixth Congress 1928; emphasis added).

Thus, it appears that the Sixth World Congress of the Communist International took a negative stand with regard to the revolutionary prospect of the national bourgeois of the colonial countries (Ivanov 1985: 85). The *Theses* accepted the view that the petty-bourgeois parties had slipped into the position of bourgeois reformism and already discredited itself which posed main threat to the national liberation movement. Thus, in order to be able to attract masses to the communist movement, the communists had to fight the petty-bourgeois parties. However, in actual practice, the acceptance of the guidelines led to the communists' refusing to cooperate with the national bourgeoisie in colonial countries like India, isolated them from the masses and the national liberation struggle, thus depriving them of the opportunity to become mass organisations capable of leading the people at large.

The Soviet commentators writing on Stalin after 1956 Twentieth CPSU Congress are generally conspicuous in maintaining total silence on his role in the Comintern. But, non-Soviet writings are full of accusations against Stalin for this sudden 'ultra-left' twist in the Colonial communists' role *vis-a-vis* the national bourgeoisie. Sobhanlal Datta Gupta writes that the Colonial Theses bore heavy imprint of Stalin's understanding of the colonial question although Stalin himself was not present in that Congress (Datta Gupta 2006: 135). Stalin's 'class vs. class' strategy came out victorious, as written by many, indicating a shift from 'united front' tactics and it became the chief strategy applicable for all the colonial countries so far as the Comintern guidelines are concerned.

Those who are opposed to the idea of accusing Stalin for this reversal of Comintern's strategy in the Sixth Congress have argued that in most capitalist countries during the late twenties intense class antagonism was giving rise to what Stalin assessed as the preconditions for a new revolutionary upsurge of the working-class movement. And it was during this time that left sectarianism of united front policies began to emerge after the Sixth Comintern Congress through the class-against-class tactics. This new line, dominating the Comintern during the early thirties, was based on the assumption of an equation between social-democracy and fascism. Hence the theory of 'social-fascism', strongly opposed by Stalin who, avoiding a straight identification between the two, characterised them as 'twins', with social-democracy being 'objectively the moderate wing of fascism.' Contrary to Stalin's view, the Comintern now presented the social-democratic parties as 'the main enemy' of the working class, against whom the main blow should be directed. And by regarding the left wing of social-

democracy (that which supported united front tactics) ‘more dangerous’ than its right wing (that which opposed united front tactics), united front became permissible – under the ‘class against-class’ policies - only from below. Consequently, under Comintern instructions, a number of communist parties during this period put forward slogans such as that of a ‘Red United Front’ (i.e., a front limited to conscious revolutionaries alone) and that of revolutionary trade union opposition (i.e., withdrawing communist activity from the reformist trade unions in order to form new ‘revolutionary’ splinter unions). Stalin, on the contrary, regarded ‘trade union unity’ as ‘the surest means of winning over the vast working-class masses.’ Indeed, this unity represented the indispensable precondition for disintegrating the influence of social-democracy in the trade unions, exposing its leaders and ultimately achieving the dictatorship of the proletariat. For such purposes, provided that communists retained their independence, Stalin indicated that ‘temporary agreements with mass reactionary trade unions [were] not only permissible but sometimes positively essential.’ Due to its ultra-left policies of the early thirties, the Comintern could not successfully challenge the attacks of capitalism and the growing threat of fascism and war. As masses of workers were deserting the social-democratic parties, Stalin could not agree with pseudo-left ‘revolutionary’ agitation, but he regarded the appropriate consolidation of communist activities as an essential precondition for the revolution. Accordingly, the communist parties had to ‘be capable of appraising the situation and making proper use of it’ in order to ‘definitely fortify themselves on this road . . . and successfully prepare the proletariat for the coming class battles. Only if they do that can we count on a further increase in the influence and prestige of the Communist International’. The victory of the revolution never comes of itself – Stalin also indicated – . . . only a strong proletarian revolutionary party can prepare for and win victory (Steinmayr 2000).

In any case, the national sections that pursued this new line of the Sixth Congress had to face great difficulties. By denying a qualitative difference between bourgeois democracy and fascism, the Comintern also rejected the concept that the working class had an interest in defending bourgeois democracy against the threat of fascism. For the sake of striking the main offensive against social-democracy, for example, the German communists – under the Comintern’s directives – rejected proposals for joint actions and demonstrations with social democratic parties against the Nazis. For some time, after the 1933 Nazi coup in Germany, the Comintern insisted that its “class-against-class” tactics – tactics which had paved the way to that coup – had been correct. The Executive Committee even maintained

that the Nazi coup had been ‘accelerating the rate of Germany’s advance towards the proletarian revolution.’ Hence, an effective resistance to the Nazi advent to power was in deed sabotaged by dividing the German working class and avoiding the formation of a broad anti-fascist united front which, in the conditions pertaining to Germany at that time, would have been an integral component of the revolutionary struggle for socialism. The Communist Party of India also accepted this strategy by writing ‘Draft Platform of Action’ (1930) which was a faithful replication of the *Colonial Theses*. In the opinion of the then CPI leadership they had to face two enemies: British imperialism and the national reformists, especially the left wing (Datta Gupta 2006: 142). The CPI’s prospect of leading the anti-colonial movement was a total failure. But no question, whatsoever, has been raised by the CPI as to whether the failure was linked up with the flawed strategy of the Sixth Congress.

By 1934, it was evident that the strategy of the Sixth Congress had failed to reap dividends. At such a critical juncture the Seventh as well as last Comintern Congress was held in Moscow from July 25, 1935 to August 21, 1935. The ‘leftist’ swing of the early thirties as well as of Sixth Congress was discarded. A new strategy of supporting the establishment of people’s fronts, or popular fronts, in the struggle against fascism – was adopted at the Seventh Comintern Congress in 1935 under the new leadership of Georgi Dimitrov. Presenting the *Main Report on the Fascist Offensive and the Tasks of the Communist International in the Struggle of the Working Class against Fascism* on August 02, 1935 Dimitrov explains:

We must strive to establish the widest united front with the aid of joint action by workers’ organizations of different trends for the defense of the vital interests of the laboring masses.

.....

In *India* the Communists must support, extend and participate in all anti-imperialist mass activities, not excluding those which are under national reformist leadership. While maintaining their political organizational independence, they must carry on active work inside the organizations which take part in the Indian National Congress, facilitating the process of crystallization of a national revolutionary wing among them, for the purpose of further developing the national liberation movement of the Indian peoples against British imperialism.

.....

*And we want all this because only in this way will the working class ... be able to fulfil its historical mission with certainty — to sweep fascism off the face of the earth and, together with it, capitalism!*(Dimitrov 1972: Italics original).

A strange fact about this Report is that there have been a number of references of Lenin in the Report but not a single reference was made of Stalin by Dimitrov though Stalin was the top leader of the USSR at the time in whose capital city it was being held and who played the most important role in defeating Fascism. Stalin was also absent from the sessions of the Congress like the previous edition of 1928. A hard fact to believe, indeed. Some even argued that the Comintern reorientation – the switch from left to right – became possible at a time when the ‘Marxist-Leninist elements’ around Stalin remained a minority within its leadership. The new Political Secretariat elected by the Congress in 1935, for instance, included a strong majority of leaders who were the known critics Stalin. Members of the Political Secretariat elected by the Seventh Comintern Congress were Dimitrov (General Secretary), Togliatti, Manuilsky, Pieck, Kuusinen, Marty, Gottwald; candidates: Moskvina, Florin, Wang Ming. Further, the new popular front policies were never endorsed by Stalin which shows strong circumstantial evidence of his personal opposition to them. This opposition became almost evident at the 18th Congress of the CPSU (B) in 1939, when Stalin, in his long report, made no reference whatsoever to the Comintern policies. Besides, no attention at all to the people’s fronts was paid by the official History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks)—Short Course published in 1939. (Steinmayr 2000) Stalin’s problem with a section of the top most leaders of the CPSU has been the issue of plethora of writings and he was criticized severely by Khrushchev in his secret speech in 1956. However, ‘every “revelation” in Nikita Khrushchev’s infamous “secret speech” to the 20<sup>th</sup> Party Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on February 25, 1956, is provably false’. (Furr 2011) This study of Grover Furr substantiates the position maintained by Steinmayr to an extent.

If we look at some of the striking features of the Seventh Congress decisions, it would be found that the Congress rejected the previous assertion that the proletariat should be the sole leader of the national liberation movement. The policy of the Comintern, directed towards forming a united anti-imperialist front and establishing relations of cooperation with the patriotic strata of the bourgeoisie, provided new opportunities for developing the communist movement, for increasing the influence of the communists in



mass organisations and for consolidating the political role of the proletariat in the national liberation movement. The implementation of the new strategic line was not very easy for the Indian communists (CPI) as the party was banned in 1934 which continued till 1942. However, the main obstacle was the issue of reconciling the position of the Sixth with that of the Seventh Congress. Thus, soon after the Seventh Congress, the CPI leadership, referring to the new orientation, observed that the decisions of the Seventh Congress did in no way undo the work of the Sixth, but carried it forward by basing itself on the decisions of the Sixth Congress, and thus formulated a new tactical line for the changed situation. (Datta Gupta, 2006: 185) But the CPI, in practice, found it difficult to put the new strategy into action. They were confused about how to apply the policy of united front with those who were branded as enemies to national liberation movements just a few days back. An attempt was made, in the meantime, to come in terms with the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) but the project did not materialise and the CPI-CSP rift instead of bridging widened further. However, with the breaking out of Second World War in 1939 the tactical line of action changed somewhat. For the CPI, the War has become the 'imperialist war' between two greedy power blocs and full support was extended to the Comintern's characterization of War. Secondly, calls were now given to launch and intensify anti-British struggles throughout the country. Thirdly, the Congress and the CSP were severely criticized for their passivity in regard to anti-British struggle. The War, the CPI believed, provided an opportunity for the seizure of power.

The Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941 created a decisive turn in the history of the Comintern. The 'Imperialist War' now turned out to be the 'People's War' for the Comintern. The Comintern asked the communist parties to reverse its line and go back to the understanding of the Seventh Congress that a difference between bourgeois democracy and fascism indeed existed (Datta Gupta 2006: 205). However, it was not an easy task for the CPI to switch over to the new strategic understanding. Because, acceptance of the new Comintern line, they feared, would led the CPI to give up the policy of opposing the British war efforts and, at the same time, British imperialism too. What CPI pursued later on as the fall out of the Comintern decisions was to oppose the Quit India Movement launched all over the India in 1942 and, in the process, instead of cementing unity with the people further, got themselves isolated from the main currents of anti-imperialist movement.

It was not a coincidence that in 1935, as soon as the Seventh Comintern Congress was over, steps were taken to decentralise the organisation by giving individual parties a significant degree of autonomy in managing their affairs. From this time onwards, there would be no more congresses, no more Executive Committee plenary sessions, which had been very frequent in the past. In 1941 the management of its work was placed in the hands of three leading figures who were proved to be anti-Stalinist afterwards – Dimitrov, Manuilsky and Togliatti. The news of dissolution of the Communist International was announced in 1943. This took place without convening a congress but as a result of the ‘growth and political maturity’ reached by its communist parties. The Executive Committee of the Seventh Congress announced that ‘the Presidium of the E.C.C.I., unable owing to the conditions of the world war to convene the Congress of the Communist International, permits itself to submit for approval by sections of the Communist International the following proposal: To dissolve the Communist International as a guiding centre of the international labor movement, releasing sections of the Communist International from the obligations ensuing from the constitution and decisions of the Congresses of the Communist International’ (Dissolution 1943). By declaring that its dissolution had been ‘proper and timely’, Stalin must have reached the conclusion that the Comintern had ceased to be of any use as an organ of the socialist revolution. However, in 1947, on Stalin’s personal initiative, a new Marxist-Leninist international, on a restricted basis, was set up in the shape of the Communist Information Bureau, or Cominform, under a new leadership which excluded Dimitrov and Manuilsky. Significantly, the first acts of the Cominform were to express strong criticism of the revisionist lines of such communist parties as those of France, Italy, Japan and, later, Yugoslavia.

Leader of the Chinese Revolution Mao Zedong supported the dissolution of Comintern:

Comrade Mao Tse-tung pointed out that at present the form of revolutionary organization known as the Communist International is no longer adapted to the necessities of the struggle. To continue this organizational form would, on the contrary, hinder the development of the revolutionary struggle in each country. What is needed now is the strengthening of the national Communist Party [*min-tsu kung-chan tang*] of each country, and we no longer need this international leading centre... (Mao 1946).

***Role of Comintern and the CPI- perception of revolutionary converts***

Satyendra Narayan Mazumdar, an Anushilan activist who joined the CPI upon his release in September 1945, writes that he & his fellow travellers treated the CI as the vanguard detachment of the different forces of the world revolution. It helped in exposing the character, designs and maneuvers of world imperialism. It analysed the new turns in the world situation and outlined the common tasks before the different sectors of the world revolutionary process. Without the knowledge of such analysis it is not possible for the forces of revolution in any country to have a correct perspective of struggle or to devise any effective plan of action against imperialism. In spite of committing mistakes, the role of the CI cannot be undermined in any eventuality. (Mazumdar 1979: 274-276; Ghosh 2004: 122-123) So, for him and for his fellow national revolutionaries' who earlier became the members of Communist Consolidation in the Andamans or in various detention camps the only option acceptable was to join the CI affiliated CPI. After their release, the members of the Communist Consolidation joined the CPI. It appears here that though this group of revolutionaries was not fully satisfied either with the Comintern or CPI policies, after some initial vacillations, they found in the CPI the culmination of their search for 'A Revolutionary Ideology and A Revolutionary Programme'.

Again, a good number Anushilan revolutionaries who accepted Marxism for their future political battle and organized themselves as Anushilan Marxists since 1937 were not inclined to join the CPI and were the staunch critics of the Third International and its Indian national section, the CPI (Samanta 1995: 768-771). For them, as it has been recorded subsequently, the Third International had been following the opportunist policy of United Front and Popular Front which resulted in the complete betrayal of international socialism and world revolution. On the pretext of saving the world from fascist aggression, it was alleged, the Third International and its branches played into the hands of the international bourgeoisie (RSPI, May 1946: 152-153). A large number of Anushilan adherents who were converted to Marxism examined the implications of the policies formulated by the Communist International and their implementation by the CPI. More particularly, the Seventh World Congress line was subjected to close scrutiny. After prolonged debates and discussions, Anushilanites who were by that time convinced of Marxism clearly felt that the CI had lost its internationalist character and transformed itself into an agency for carrying

out the foreign policy needs of the Soviet Union and that the CPI's policy of shift from 'leftist' policy to 'United front' tactics was not the product of its own independent judgment of the correlation ship of class forces prevalent in the country *vis-a-vis* imperialism but of its unquestioned, uncritical allegiance to the dictates from the Comintern. Anushilan Marxists held that a considerable degree of unity among the broad sectors of the anti-imperialist masses had already been achieved under the Indian National Congress and as such the INC provided the most suitable basis for the organisational realisation of revolutionary anti-imperialist people's front. But they clearly understood that the INC was not already such a front but it had to be transformed into one. The dominant leadership of the INC was bourgeois reformist and the anti-imperialist masses were still prevented from exerting sufficient pressure on the leadership not being sufficiently organised themselves, the duty, as conceived by Anushilan Marxists, was to discourage the anti-imperialist rank and file of the Congress from the bourgeois reformist leadership and assume the leadership of the Congress on behalf of the masses and transform it into a real anti-imperialist people's front. This was in striking contrast to the line of thinking of the CPI about the formation of the anti-imperialist people's front. The CPI thought, according to Anushilan Marxists, that with the increasing offensive of imperialism since the days of the general crisis of capitalism the Indian bourgeoisie as a whole barring a handful of rabid reactionaries had moved to the left and it would be possible to retain them (even the Congress right wing) within the AIPF. This line of thinking, as Anushilan Marxists viewed it, was an 'illusion which fundamentally misunderstands the dual role of the Indian bourgeoisie'.

Under the circumstances, more advanced elements among Anushilan Marxists felt the impelling necessity of preparing a document defining their ultimate aim, immediate objective and attitude towards anti-imperialist struggle from an authentic Marxist-Leninist point of view. By 1936 they thought of introducing a new Marxist trend in Indian politics as an alternative to the current official communist line. The draft document of Anushilan Marxists was prepared in the Deoli Detention Jail in Rajputana by the close of 1936 which was subsequently discussed and debated in different jails and detention camps. It was only when most of them came out of jail in the middle of 1938 they adopted their thesis in September 1938 (Bhattacharyya, 1982: 29-30) The Anushilan Marxists formed their own party as a 'Marxist-Leninist working-class party', shortly, in March 1940 and took the name of Revolutionary Socialist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) [From May 1946, as RSPI and, then from 1956 as RSP]. Thus, a

group of revolutionary converts gave birth to a new party based on 'non-conformist' 'revolutionary Marxism' as opposed to 'conformist, official communism of the CPI' (Bhattacharyya 1982: 49). At the same time, another important cause of their aversion to Comintern was the belief that under Stalin, the Comintern has lost its international character and became fully subservient to the needs of the Soviet Union.

Now, coming to third point of view which considered the 'CPI was full of blunders and vacillations and the Comintern was basically correct', we find another set of revolutionary converts', mainly from the revolutionaries who just started work in late thirties or early forties of the twentieth century as the supporters of *now-mostly defunct* Anushilan and Jugantar parties, formed a 'platform of action with a party content' in May 1946 in the name of SUC and, later on, from 1948 SUCI as a separate Marxist party. The ideologue of the party, Shibdas Ghosh, prior to the formation of the party in 1948 wrote that the general programme of the Sixth Congress of 1928 was adopted on the correct study of world economic structure nor did it fail to envisage the rise of fascism in Europe. Against the capitalist world economic structure, the programme of socialist revolution was accepted as the general international programme of the communist movement. But it does not follow from it that this programme is to be applied in toto in all cases and in all countries. The thinking of those who asserted that general programme is applicable to all countries irrespective of the objective conditions is non-dialectical and formalist. The application of the general programme must differ with different objective conditions. The general programme only provides guiding programme, ultimate objective which in particular is to be applied differently in different countries, differently to England than to India, differently to India than to China. A country in the phase of bourgeois democratic revolution cannot as such accept the general programme of socialist revolution as its immediate programme. India was in the phase of bourgeoisie democratic revolution at the time of Sixth World Congress of Comintern. So, the correct application of that general programme to India in particular would have been then to strengthen the national liberation movement along with other democratic forces and to lead this bourgeois democratic revolution to its logical conclusion, the socialist proletarian revolution through the establishment of working class leadership over the country by neutralizing the bourgeoisie hegemony (Ghosh 1948: 14-15). But, for Ghosh, instead the CPI blindly accepted the general programme as the particular programme of India, applied it in entirety, dissociated completely from the national liberation movement, declared the INC as a bourgeois party without taking notice of its all national anti-imperialist platform

character. 'This definitely wrong ultra-left move deprived the country of the possibility of establishment of working class leadership' (Ghosh 1948: 16).

On the question of Comintern's role, these young converts were of the opinion that as a general international programme the stand of the Comintern Sixth Congress was correct. But, the acceptance of united front policy in the Seventh Congress was a 'blunder'. This was a swing to the 'right wing' of liberalism. As a general international political programme, it was undoubtedly a deviation based on wrong analysis of correlation of world social forces. The general programme of the united front of the Comintern with imperialist capitalist betrayed the cause of socialist revolution in various countries of Europe, particularly in France. Therefore, the Comintern has been designated as 'corrupt and incompetent' with respect to the wrong formulation of policies following the Seventh Congress (SUC 1948: 12-13).

The last but not the least important perception is that the national sections of the Comintern had no other alternative but to follow the Comintern line without raising any question as they were bound to do so as per the Terms of Admission into the Communist International proposed by Lenin and accepted by the Second Congress. Sobhanlal Datta Gupta was one of those commentators/researchers on Comintern who believes that becoming member of the Comintern was fine but, at the same time, it was also a beginning of losing independence in formulation and political action on the part of the national sections. So, for Datta Gupta, it already prefigured the destiny of the communist parties in different parts of the world including India and not a single party affiliated to the Comintern were in the position to challenge the programmes accepted by the Comintern in various Congresses in spite of genuine misgivings regarding those policies. Once a member of the Comintern, the fate was sealed (Datta Gupta 2006: 1-2). In the concluding note in his seminal book, *Communism and the Destiny of Communism in India 1919-1943*, Datta Gupta makes the following observations:

The reconstruction of the history of Indian communism in the light of the new revelations on Comintern ...points to four moments when the intervention of Comintern decisively shaped its destiny. **First**, the birth of communism in India was marked by a sectarian stance from the beginning...

**The second moment** of intervention was the aftermath of the Sixth Congress, when, in 1928, the Indian Communists were expressly directed by the Comintern to disband the Workers' and Peasants' Parties... and to switch over to the line of left extremism...

**The third moment** was the Comintern's shift in 1935 to the united/popular front strategy but without admitting that the line of the Sixth Congress had been a mistake...

**The fourth moment** refers to the Comintern directives concerning the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact and transformation of the 'Imperialist War' into a 'people's War', which ...were channeled to the CPI through the CPGB...

All alternative notions of difference, locality and autonomy were thus destined to be erased and the Indian case was no exception to this process (Datta Gupta 2006: 297-298).

Hence, the fate of the CPI was destined to be doomed since its formation the party remained always a faithful follower of the Comintern dictates.

### ***Communist Party of China and the Comintern***

Here, an attempt may be made on the patterns of interaction between the Chinese Communist Party and the Comintern as CPC is the party which after its formation in 1921 always kept coordination with the Comintern and successfully led the Peoples' Democratic Revolution in 1949. So, how they responded to the Terms of Admission to the Comintern by keeping its independent political activities unabated, even going against the Comintern directions at times? These would help us in understanding better whether the CPI was, as has been argued by Datta Gupta, really helpless in exerting independence from the fetters as imposed by the Comintern!

Let us begin with Mao, the leader of the CPC and the Chinese Revolution:

**The Chinese revolution won victory by acting contrary to Stalin's will.** The fake foreign devil [in Lu Hsün's *True Story of Ah Q*] 'did not allow people to make revolution'. But our Seventh Congress advocated going all out to mobilize the masses and to build up all available revolutionary forces in order to establish a new China. During the quarrel with Wang Ming from 1937 to August 1938, we put forward ten great policies, while Wang Ming produced sixty policies. If we had followed Wang Ming's, or in other words Stalin's, methods the Chinese revolution couldn't have succeeded. When our revolution succeeded, Stalin said it was a fake. We did not argue with

him, and as soon as we fought the war to resist America and aid Korea, our revolution became a genuine one [in his eyes].

.....

**In short, our basic line is universal truth, but details differ.** This applies to each country and to each province. There is unity and there are also contradictions. The Soviet Union stresses unity, and doesn't talk about contradictions, especially the contradiction between the leaders and the led. (Mao, March 1958 - emphasis added)

Mao further discusses the issue of independence from the Comintern:

They did not permit China to make revolution: that was in 1945. Stalin wanted to prevent China from making revolution, saying that we should not have a civil war and should cooperate with Chiang Kai-shek, otherwise the Chinese nation would perish. But we did not do what he said. The revolution was victorious... Later when I went to Moscow to sign the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Alliance and Mutual Assistance, we had to go through another struggle. He was not willing to sign a treaty. After two months of negotiations he at last signed. When did Stalin begin to have confidence in us? It was at the time of the Resist America, Aid Korea campaign, from the winter of 1950. He then came to believe that we were not Tito, not Yugoslavia... (Mao Sept. 1962)

In the Talks on Questions of Philosophy Mao further stated:

**Stalin felt that he had made mistakes in dealing with Chinese problems, and they were no small mistakes.** We are a great country of several hundred millions, and he opposed our revolution, and our seizure of power... **Even before the dissolution of the Third International, we did not obey the orders of the Third International. At the Tsunyi Conference we didn't obey, and afterwards, for a period of ten years, including the Rectification Campaign and down to the Seventh Congress, when we finally adopted a resolution ('Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of our Party') and corrected [the errors of] 'leftism', we didn't obey them at all** (Mao Aug 1964-Emphasis added).

As an authority of Marxism, Mao Zedong clearly states the issue of independence of the national communist parties. In one of his essays written in 1936, Mao explained that the experience of the civil war in the Soviet Union directed by Lenin and Stalin has a world-wide significance. All Communist Parties, including the Chinese Communist Party, regard this experience and its theoretical summing-up by Lenin and Stalin as their guide. But this does not mean that it should be applied mechanically to their specific conditions. In many of its aspects, China's revolutionary war has



characteristics distinguishing it from the civil war in the Soviet Union. Of course, it is wrong to take no account of these characteristics or deny their existence. This point has been fully borne out, as Mao wrote, in China's ten years of war (Mao SL-Vol I, 1975: 194-195).

Zhou Enlai, another important leader of the CPC also spoke on the relations between the CPC and the Comintern. In this speech, Zhou Enlai also upheld the principle of independence of the national communist parties (Zhou Enlai SL Vol. II 1989: 306-309).

The above being the view of the two stalwarts of Chinese Revolution on the mutual relationship between the Comintern and the national communist parties, the fear expressed by many that by inserting some conditions of admission in its Statutes, the Comintern effectively worked as a stumbling block in the process of development of independent initiatives and, hence, the blind and unquestionable adherence of the Comintern decisions by its national sections may appear to be too simplistic and one sided. It has also been argued that even after the dissolution of Comintern in 1943, it was hard to reconcile that communist parties became, overnight, national parties that were wholly independent and without any links between them. (Claudin 1969-70: 15) An observation made by Stalin on February 09, 1951 is of great significance in this context. While conversing with a group of leaders of CPI in Moscow on the issue of programmes and policies of the CPI, the CPI leaders present their, viz., Rao, Dange, Ghosh, Punnaiah - all the top leaders of the then CPI- thanked Stalin for giving time and patiently hearing them and 'declared that on the basis of the instructions of Comrade Stalin they will reconsider all of their activity and would act in correspondence with these instructions'. To this, a very short & sublime answer of Stalin as concluding observation may act as an eye opener for many who were greatly averse to the leadership of Stalin: ***'I have given you no instruction, this is advice, it is not obligatory for you, you may or may not adopt it'*** (Record 1951; emphasis added).

Stalin was then the general secretary of the Soviet Communist Party and the head of the Soviet Government who was then enjoying tremendous authority over all the world leaders because of his leadership in defeating the German fascism in his country. A man of such a stature is so polite even while talking to leaders of the CPI whose party had been in a very bad shape during that time is really hard to believe. It makes one to raise question on the belief that Stalin himself dictated everything for the Comintern without considering the dialectical relationships between/among the national communist parties that pre-destined the fate of all the national

communist parties under the Comintern and even after the dissolution of Comintern.

What we could find here from our discussion that many of the Bengal national revolutionaries who were attracted towards Marxism were not satisfied either with the CPI or the Comintern. They were rather trying to develop party on Marxist Leninist line either separately or joining with some other like-minded groups except the CI affiliated CPI. As a culmination of this process, the Anushilan Marxists first tried to work sometime within the CSP maintaining their separate identity and, after some years of their strained relationships, formed their party, RSP. While the members of the SUCI(C), first started working as the members of the RSP but after sometime entered into a debate on the process of formation of the RSP as a Marxist party which led to their severing ties with the party. Then they formed the SUC as a platform of action in 1946 in association with three other like-minded groups, and, finally, in 1948 SUCI as a separate party through a founding convention on the basis of conventional structure. The party was given a constitutional basis only through its First Party Congress held in March-April, 1988.

However, the actual process of transition is another story which remains outside the purview of the present paper.

### ***References***

Bhattacharyya, Buddhadeva, 1982. *Origins of RSP*. Kolkata: Publicity Concern.

Claudin, Fernando, 1969-70. *The Communist Movement – From Comintern to Cominform, Part I & Part II*. London: Penguin.

Datta Gupta, Sobhanlal, 2006, 2011 (Second RE). *Comintern and the Destiny of Communism in India 1919-1943 – Dialectics and Possible History*. Kolkata: Seriban.

Degras, Jane (ed): *The Communist International, 1919-1943, Documents/ Vol I, 1919-1922*. Stable URL <https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/documents/volume1-1919-1922.pdf> (accessed on Jan 02, 2018)

Dimitrov, Georgi, 1972. *The Fascist Offensive and the Tasks of the Communist International in the Struggle of the Working Class against*

Fascism, Selected Works, Vol II, Sofia: Sofia Press. Stable URL [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/dimitrov/works/1935/05/08\\_02.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/dimitrov/works/1935/05/08_02.htm) (accessed on Jan 02, 2018)

Dissolution of the Communist International. Stable URL <https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/dissolution.htm> (accessed on Jan 02, 2018)

Fifth Congress of the Communist International: Thesis on Tactics in Degras, Jane (ed). The Communist International, 1919-1943, Documents/ Vol II, 1923-1928, Stable URL <https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/documents/volume2-1923-1928.pdf> (accessed on Jan 02, 2018)

Fourth Congress of the Communist International: Theses on the Eastern Question: December 05, 1922

Stable URL <https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/4th-congress/eastern-question.htm> (accessed on Jan 02, 2018)

Furr, Grover, 2011. *Khrushchev Lied*. Delhi: Aakar Books—First Published 2011/USA.

Ghosh, Ganesh, 2004. *Mukti Tirtha Andaman*. Kolkata: NBA.

Ghosh, Provash, October, 2010, 'Bharatiya Rastra, Samaj O Sasastra Sangram', *Samyabadi Drishtikon*, Kolkata: SUCI-C.

Ghosh, Shibdas, 1948. A Critique of Communist Movement in India. KOLKATA: COC-SUC.

Ivanov, YU. M., 1985. 'The Proletariat in the Revolutionary Struggle of the Peoples of the East', in Ulyanovsky, R (ed.), *The Revolutionary Process in the East: Past and Present*. Moscow: Progress Publishers.

Laushey, David M, 1975. Bengal Terrorism and Marxist Left. Calcutta: Firma KLM.

Lenin, V. I., 1965. *Collected Works, Vol 31, 4<sup>th</sup> English Ed*. Moscow: Progress Publishers.

Stable URL <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1920/jul/x01.htm> (accessed on Jan 02, 2018)

Lenin, V. I., 1965. *Collected Works, 4<sup>th</sup> English Edition, Volume 30*. Moscow: Progress Publishers. Stable URL <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1919/nov/22.htm> (accessed on Jan 02, 2018)

Mao Zedong, 1975. *Problems of Strategy in China's Revolutionary War, Selected Works, Vol I*. Peking: FLP.

MAO Zedong, 1962. *Speech at the Tenth Plenum of the Eighth Central Committee, SEP 24*. Stable URL [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-8/mswv8\\_63.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-8/mswv8_63.htm) (accessed on Jan 02, 2018)

Mao Zedong, March 1958, *Talks at the Cheng tu Conference*. Stable URL [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-8/mswv8\\_06.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-8/mswv8_06.htm) (accessed on Jan 02, 2018)

Mao Zedong, August 18, 1964. *Talks on Questions of Philosophy*. Stable URL [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-9/mswv9\\_27.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-9/mswv9_27.htm) (accessed on Jan 02, 2018)

Mao Zedong, May 26, 1946. *The Comintern Has Long Ceased to Meddle in Our Internal Affairs*. Stable URL [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-6/mswv6\\_36.htm](https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-6/mswv6_36.htm) (accessed on Jan 02, 2018)

Mazumdar, Satyendra Narayan, 1979. *In Search of a Revolutionary Ideology and a Revolutionary Programme*. New Delhi: PPH.

*Minutes of the Second Congress of the Communist international, Fifth session, July 28, 1920*. Stable URL <https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/2nd-congress/ch05.htm> (accessed on Jan 02, 2018)

Ray, Amarendra Nath, 1993. 'Anushilan Samiti Steps Towards Marxism' in Poddar, Arabinda (Ed.), *Freedom Struggle and Anushilan Samiti Vol II*. Kolkata: Lekhaka Samavaya Samiti.

*Record of the Discussions of J.V. Stalin with the Representatives of the C.C. of the Communist Party of India Comrades Rao, Dange, Ghosh and Punnaiah, February 09, 1951*. Stable URL <http://www.revolutionarydemocracy.org/rdv12n2/cpi2.htm> (accessed on Jan 04, 2018)

Reznikov, A., 1984. *The Comintern and the East*. Moscow: Progress Publishers.

RSPI, May 1946. 'Present Political Stand', in Murari Mohan Saha (Compiler), 2001- *Documents of the Revolutionary Socialist Party, Vol I, 1938-1947*. Agartala: Lokayata Chetana Bikash Society.

Samanta, Amiya K (Ed), 1995. *Terrorism in Bengal- A Collection of Documents on Terrorist Activities from 1905 to 1939, Vol I*. Calcutta: govt of West Bengal.

Seth, Sanjay, 1995. *Marxist theory and Nationalist Politics-The Case of Colonial India*. New Delhi: Sage Publications. P 59.

Sixth Congress of the Communist international, 1928. *Theses on the Revolutionary Movement in the COLONIES and Semi-colonies*. Stable URL <https://www.revolutionarydemocracy.org/archive/Col/Natq6.htm> (accessed on Jan 04, 2018)

Socialist Unity Centre, 1946. *Platform of Action*. Kolkata: Tribeni Bardhan.

Socialist Unity Centre, 1948. *The National and the International Situation*. Calcutta: PB of the Central Committee. pp 12-13.

Stalin, J.V., 1954. *Concerning the International Situation, SW Vol VI*. Moscow: FLPH. P.306 Stable URL <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1924/09/20.htm> (accessed on Jan 04, 2018)

Stalin, J.V., 1954. *Problems of Leninism*. Moscow: FLPH. pp 143-148.

Stalin, J.V., 1954. *The Political Tasks of the University of the Peoples of the East, Selected Works Vol VII*. Moscow: FLPH. pp 135-154. Stable URL <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1925/05/18.htm> (accessed on Jan 04, 2018)

Steinmayr, Norberto, September 2000. *Stalin and the Comintern*. London: Stalin Society. Stable URL <http://www.oneparty.co.uk/compass/intercom/stalcom.html> (accessed on Jan 04, 2018)

*Summary of the First Congress, March 1919*. Stable URL <https://www.marxists.org/glossary/events/c/comintern.htm#first-congress> (accessed on Jan 04, 2018)

'Theses of the Seventh ECCI Plenum on the International Situation and the Tasks of the Communist International, December 13, 1926' in Degras, Jane (ed), *The Communist International, 1919-1943, Documents/Vol II, 1923-1928*, Stable URL <https://www.marxists.org/history/international/>

comintern/documents/volume2-1923-1928.pdf (accessed on Jan 04, 2018)  
P 335.

Zhou Enlai, 1989. *Selected Works Vol II*. BEIJING: FLP. pp 306-319 Stable  
URL <http://www.marx2mao.com/Other/CI60.html>(accessed on Jan 04,  
2018)

Zhou Enlai, 1989. *The Communist International and the Chinese  
Communist Party, July 14-15, 1960* in *Selected Works Vol II*. Beijing:  
FLP.

## **Strength of Social Ties in Local Labour Market of Kolkata**

Jayeeta Deshmukh

**Abstract:** *In a world where labour market participants are not anonymous, social networks often play a major part in shaping labour market outcomes. Labour economists have long recognized that social networks play a very important role in shaping labour markets outcomes. Job-seekers often use their personal contacts to get employment-related information or job referrals. This paper provides an example, where workers use social ties to exchange employment information, in the context of the urban formal labour market in Kolkata. Workers are mainly employed in the healthcare sector, IT sector, data analysts, and in other service sectors, including banking sector, education (non-teaching) of Kolkata. The paper finds that a significant percentage of the workers irrespective of their age and gender, hears about the job vacancy through personal connections. This paper further finds that friendship ties are mainly used for searching jobs. Most of the workers hear about the job vacancies from their friends or acquaintances. The paper also finds that a worker, who is a newcomer in the labour market, is likely to get information through one of his direct ties rather than indirect ties. However, indirect ties are important for the workers who change their companies on a regular interval. Moreover, workers hear about employment information from both strong ties and weak ties. The paper also finds the empirical support of evolution of a triad.*

**Keywords:** Social networks, social ties, employment information, labour market.

### ***Introduction***

In a world where labour market participants are not anonymous, social networks often play a major role in shaping labour market outcomes. Labour economists have long recognized that social networks play a very crucial role in shaping labour market outcomes. Labour market participants often use their personal connections, friendship ties or family ties, to get employment information or employee referrals (Calvo- Armengol, 2001, Calvo- Armengol and Jackson 2004, Goyal 2007<sup>1</sup>)<sup>2</sup>. In this context, social

networks act as an alternative source of employment information, where information diffuses through the networks. This coexists with the formal source of employment information, e.g., advertisement in newspapers. The presence of networks reduces the search cost to find a job. In a similar manner, it reduces the cost of hiring too; researchers argue that employee referrals act as a helpful device for screening job applicants (Montgomery 1991). It plays a prominent role in matching job-seekers with vacancies within a short time. The presence of social networks increases the chances of getting a job even when there is a low probability of getting a job or when there is a downturn in the labour market. Hence, social networks play a determining role in shaping labour market outcomes.

Here, what happens is information spreads through word-of-mouth communication (Calvo-Armengol 2001) among the members of a network. In general, the information that a network member has is not communicated and extended to a non-networked person. In this context, a network is a club good where benefits are restricted to the members only. However, it may happen that one member of a network does not know another member of the same network directly, gets to know about him indirectly, i.e., through friends of friends. Sometimes, information comes from indirect links, i.e., from friends of friends of friends. It implies that the presence of indirect links generates a positive network externality in the labour market. However, a tie can be strong or weak and the quality and diffusion of information may depend on the strength of a tie. If information comes through a strong direct tie then one can get assured about the quality and the quick diffusion of information. However, the literature on the strength of a tie and information diffusion is divided into two groups. One group has found empirical support in the favour of strong ties and the other group has advocated for weak ties.

Granovetter (1973, 1974, and 1983) in his seminal papers has argued that job seekers hear about job vacancies through weak social ties rather than strong social ties and job seekers are matched to jobs more frequently through weak ties rather than strong ties. He has named it as the strength-of-weak-ties hypothesis.<sup>3</sup> This hypothesis says that the employment information from a strong tie is likely to be very similar to the information one already has. On the other hand, weak ties are wide ranging and provide much more crucial information than strong ties and acts as a bridge between two distinct social networks.

However, many scholars find an opposite result, i.e., strong ties are much more effective compared to weak ties (Bian (1997), Krackhardt (1992),



Montgomery (1991), Calvó-Armengol (2000))<sup>4</sup>. Boorman (1975), for example, argues that the rate of unemployment shapes the incentive to maintain a strong tie or a weak tie by a worker in the labour market when he faces a budget to maintain a link. He says that if the rate of unemployment is high then workers tend to maintain more weak links and if the rate of unemployment is low then a worker prefers to maintain strong links only. This literature focuses on the strength of a direct tie and developed their arguments. Zuo et. al. (2014) have examined the strength of an indirect tie on the information diffusion in a network and the speed of forming a new link between the two end players of the indirect tie in the labour market participants. Finally, they have shown that the strength of indirect ties can serve as a predictor for diffusion paths in social networks.

This body of literature focuses on the role of both direct ties and indirect ties to provide employment information. Calvo-Armengol and Jackson (2007) find that both direct and indirect ties are significant to provide employment information and an improvement in the wage or employment status of either an agent's direct or indirect contacts leads to an increase in the agent's employment probability and expected wage.

Since, the strength of a tie matters, the central focus of this paper is to see what kind of ties, i.e., weak or strong, matters the most to provide employment information in the context of an urban formal labour market in Kolkata. I have conducted a primary random and free-flowing questionnaire based field survey on the industry participants, who are mainly employed in the healthcare sector, IT sector, and other service sector, including data analysis, banking sector, education (non-teaching), of Kolkata in 2017. Out of the information that I have acquired through this process, I try to explain the role of friends and relatives as a source of employment information among workers and the role of both direct ties and indirect ties in affecting labour market outcomes. I further explore the strength of a direct tie in this context.

A tie is called a direct tie if there exists a direct relationship between two workers. They may be friends or acquaintances and need not to be employed in the same sector or in the same industry. A tie is called an indirect tie if there does not exist a direct relationship between two workers and they are connected through friends of friends. This paper measures the strength of a direct tie only and the strength is measured by the frequency of interactions between two parties. A tie is called a weak tie if the frequency of interactions is either monthly, or, yearly or rarely and a tie is called a strong tie if the frequency of interactions is either daily or weekly.

The paper finds a strong empirical support in the favour of the strength-of-strong-ties hypothesis. Many job seekers acquire jobs through strong ties. However, acquiring jobs via weak ties cannot be ignored. In addition with that this paper finds that direct ties are important for those who are the newcomers in the urban labour market and indirect ties are important for those who are experienced in the labour market and change their companies more than once to get employment information in the labour markets. The presence of indirect ties indicates that there exists positive network externality in this local labour market of Kolkata and the workers get benefit from this. Among various types of direct ties friendship ties are found to be the most important source of employment information for workers. In addition, the paper also finds the empirical support of evolution of a triad.

### ***The data***

Total number of respondents taken for the present study is 211, who are currently employed in different formal service sectors in Kolkata. They mainly work in IT and IT enable sector, healthcare sector including private nursing homes and hospitals, education sector (non-teaching), data analysis sector, banking sector of Kolkata. The respondents include 142 male and 69 female workers. Workers work both in the government sector and private sector. The numbers of workers who work in government sector and private sector are 25 and 186 respectively. The participation rate of female in the work force in this sample is 32 per cent. Respondents are mainly young workers; the average age of the respondents is 30 years. However, the range of age varies from 20 years to 55 years.

### ***Methodology***

It is very hard to get sector specific secondary data on the level of employment and employment information or from personal contacts; hence, a random and free flowing questionnaire-based interview process has been adopted to collect the data. The year of data collection is 2017.

### ***Descriptive statistics***

Most of the informants are highly educated; 61 per cent of the respondents in the sample are graduate, 24 per cent have done post-graduation, 11 per

cent of the respondents have Higher Secondary degree, and 4 per cent of them have secondary degree. Among 142 male participants 83 (58 per cent) are graduate, and 31 (22 per cent) have post graduate degrees; among the 69 female participants 46 (67 per cent) have graduate degree and 19 (28 per cent) have post graduate degree. Table 1 summarises this.

Table 1: Educational Qualification

<b>Educational Qualifications</b>	<b>Total Workers (in percentage term)</b>	<b>Male (in percentage term)</b>	<b>Female (in percentage term)</b>
Secondary	8 (4)	7 (5)	1
Higher Secondary	24 (11)	21 (15)	3(4)
Graduate	129 (61)	83 (58)	46 (67)
Post Graduate	50 (24)	31 (22)	19 (28)

Source: Primary Data (Sample size is 211)

Table 1 also shows that the female workers in the sample are better educated compared to the male workers. Among 69 female workers 65 (94 per cent) are highly educated having educational qualification equivalent to graduation and above. Among 142 male workers 114 (80 per cent) are highly educated having done graduation or post-graduation.

In this sample, most of the workers are newcomers in the labour market. The average number of labour years of the respondents is 7. There are 3 respondents whose work experience is exactly one year and there are two respondents who are in the labour force for more than 35 years. There are 96 respondents (45 per cent) who are in the labour force for less than 5 years and there are 144 respondents (68 per cent) whose work experience is less and equivalent to 7 years. In this sample, work experience of female workers (7.86 years) is higher than that of male workers (6.81 years).

Table 2 shows that 71.5 per cent (151 workers among 211 workers) have heard about job vacancies through their personal connections, whereas 28.5 per cent (60 workers among 211 workers) workers have used formal sources for searching a job vacancy. The Table shows that the information about low salaried jobs mainly flow via networks, via social ties. The table shows that the low-income group persons, whose annual income is below two lacs, rely mainly on their personal contacts for finding a job. 87 per cent of them have used their social ties for finding a job followed by middle income group workers (72 per cent). The data also show that workers who belong to very high-income group, very high salaried persons, also use their social ties to hear about job vacancies. More than half of them (37

workers among 68 workers) used informal sources of information to hear about job vacancies.

Table 2 further shows that workers who earn a high salary (5 to 9 lacs per annum) use the formal source of information the most (47.1 per cent) followed by the very high-income group workers (41.2 per cent), whose annual income is above 9 lacs. This is because most of them got job via campus placement, mainly joined in data analytics section of data analytics companies like HSBC Analytics, Cognizant etc. and start with a high salary.

Table 2: Source of Employment information (Income group wise)

Income per Annum in Rs. Lacs	No. of Workers	Sex		Average age in years	Employment Information	
		Male	Female		Informal	Formal
Low income group (less than 2 lacs)	75	47	28	28.5	65 (86.6)	10 (13.4)
Middle income group (2 lacs to 5 lacs)	68	49	19	28.33	49 (72)	20 (28)
High Income Group (5 lacs to 9 lacs)	51	32	19	30.25	27 (52.9)	24 (47.1)
Very High income (9 lacs to 15 lacs)	17	14	3	33	10 (58.8)	7 (41.2)
Total	211	142	69	30	151 (71.5)	60 (28.5)

Source: Primary Data (Sample size is 211)

Table 3 shows that workers, irrespective of their gender and sector of employment, government or private sector, used their social ties for finding a job. This is highest in the government sector compared to the private sector. 18 out of 24 workers, who are mainly female, used informal channel for finding a job. These workers are mainly employed in hospitals and earn a low salary.

Table 3: Sources of Employment Information (Sector wise)

Sector	No. of Workers	Male	Female	Used Informal source	Used Formal Source
Government Sector	24	7	17	18	6
Private Sector	187	135	52	133	54
Total	211	142	69	151	60

Source: Primary Data (Sample size: 211)

Table 2 and Table 3 show that workers use their personal contacts for finding a job irrespective of their age, gender, sector, and the income group in the labour market in Kolkata. This indicates that social ties play an important and significant part in accessing employment-related information in the local labour market of Kolkata.

Table 4 shows that personal ties are very important for those who frequently change their companies. The percentage of workers using personal ties for collecting job-related information increases with the rise of the frequency of changing companies. This is maximum (100 per cent) for the workers who have changed their companies thrice. However, it is also important for those who have entered into the job market newly; almost 55.7 percent of them collect employment related information from their personal connections. These workers are mainly experienced workers, who are in the labour market more than 10 years, mainly employed in the data analytics sector, and change their companies on a regular interval. They use their own contacts only to know about job vacancies in different companies. It is evident from this empirical survey that both experienced and fresh workers equally use their connections to hear about job vacancies in the labour market. Therefore, it can be said that social ties are the most important source of employment information for those who change their companies on a regular basis.

Table 4: Frequency of changing companies and employment information

Frequency of changing companies	Total Workers	Average Age	Used Informal Source	Used Formal Source
First Job (Zero Frequency)	104	27.9	58	46
Second Company (Frequency = 1)	72	29.7	62	10
Third Company (Frequency = 2)	30	34.5	26	4
Fourth Company (Frequency = 3)	5	40	5	0

Source: Primary Data (Sample Size: 211)

Therefore, networks matter and workers often use their personal contacts for recommendations and employment information. As networks matter the most the next question is what kind of social ties are important to provide employment information. The next table, Table 5, shows that friendship ties (63 per cent employees use their friendship ties) are the most important source of employment information among various types of personal ties.

Table 5: Various types of social ties used by employees for employment information

No. of workers used social ties	Family ties (percentage)	Friendship ties (percentage)	Friends of friends (percentage)
151	17 (11.2)	95 (63)	39 (25.8)

Source: Primary Data (Number of Observation: 151)

Workers get job related information from friends of friends as well (25.8 per cent). Some workers also used their family ties for getting vacancy related information. Table 5 also shows workers use both the direct ties (friendship ties and family ties) and indirect ties (friends of friends) for hearing job information. The presence of indirect ties in the labour market shows that there exists some kind of positive network externality which allows the information to flow through indirect links. This makes the network stronger and its acts as a safety net in the labour market as it increases the chances of getting more information from multiple sources when required. Better networked people get the job much easily.

As the friendship ties matter the most among other direct ties it is interesting to know how strong a friendship tie is. These friendship relationships are very long - term relationships in nature. The average duration of the relationship is 15 years. They have known each other since childhood or from school or college days. There is a recent trend of making friendships via social networking sites like Facebook and to share job vacancies through them. What they do is that they keep posting job vacancies in their walls whenever they get to know about them. Many potential employees get to know about job vacancies from their friends' walls or friends of friends' walls in Facebook. They share it even and hence information flows in the social networking sites through indirect friends. Ex colleagues, who became friends later, also provided them information about job vacancies (See Table 6).

Table 6: Sources of Friendship ties

No. of workers used friendship ties	School, College, and University	Neighbourhood	Social Networking Sites	Ex Workplace
95	27	12	21	35

Source: Primary Data (Total observation is 95)

The next table, Table 7 shows that the most preferred mode of maintaining a direct relationship (either a family tie or a friendship tie) is through different

types of social networking sites including messenger, whatsapp, etc. However, many of the informants prefer to communicate just by meeting each other. Most of the family ties are maintained by meeting directly rather than communicating over the phone or through social networking sites.

Table 7: Various modes of communication

Social Networking Sites	Telephone	Meet in Person
48	24	40

Source: Primary Data (Total observation: 112)

Most of the workers communicate or interact very frequently; 53 out of 112 workers said that they interact very frequently, on a daily basis and 25 others said that they interact twice or thrice a week either by meeting directly, or by a phone call, or by social networking sites. However, there are workers who interact not so frequently. They interact once a month, and there are some workers who interact with their friends rarely. Table 8 summarises this.

Table 8: Frequency of Interaction

Monthly	Weekly	Daily	Rarely
22	25	53	12

Source: Primary Data (Total observation: 112)

Here, the strength of a tie is measured by the frequency of interactions. What Table 6, Table 7 and Table 8 together show is that the strength of a direct tie is generally very high. As workers mainly use their friendship ties for acquiring information, Table 8 shows that friendship ties are strong in nature. This provides an empirical support for strong-ties-hypothesis (Marco and Goyal 2011) where the strength of friendship ties matter. This guarantees that information flows within the network very quickly and all of the members have the access to the information.

The Tables further show that workers maintain both strong ties, where frequency of interaction is very high as well as weak ties, where frequency of interaction is low. This supports the weak-tie hypothesis (Granovetter 1973; Valery 2005), where workers hear about employment information through weak ties.

In addition to that, the data show that all 151 workers want to return the favour to their friends or family members either by providing employee

referrals or information regarding job vacancies even in the future. 30 of my informants said that they have already returned the favour by providing employment information. They further said that they do it very often not only for those with whom they are directly connected but also for those who belong to their indirect networks, i.e., with whom they are indirectly connected. This implies that indirect links also matter. Here, the benefits flow in both directions, and social networks act as a medium of mutual favour exchange among the labour market participants.

Another important empirical finding is that all the informants want to maintain their personal links in future even though not all of their friends get employed in the same service sector or in the same company. 100 workers said that their friends are not from the same service sector. This indicates that links are stable in nature; no one wants to lose his connections even if the purpose for link formation has been served. This makes networks that are observed in the labour market in Kolkata stable. Workers build networks not only for current benefits but for future benefits as well.

This paper further finds an empirical support behind the evolution of triadic closure, which means if A and B are friends, and B and C are friends, then it is highly likely that A and C will become friends very soon. The data show that 39 respondents who used their indirect ties for getting employment information, 20 of them now become friends. This supports the hypotheses of triadic closure in the literature (Granovetter 1973).

### ***Concluding Remarks***

The central focus of this paper was to see the kind of ties that matter the most and to measure the strength of the tie in a section of workers in Kolkata. The paper finds that friendship ties matters the most to provide information among various types of social ties and they are strong enough in nature. However, in this paper, the strength of a direct tie is measured by the frequency of interactions between two parties, not by the duration of the relationship.

In this empirical survey, I have found an empirical evidence of the existence of triadic closures. I have also found that the job seekers want to return the favours that they get from their personal contacts even in the future. Moreover, all of them want to maintain their relationships in the future as well. This implies that social networks, where benefits flow both the ways, are stable in nature. It will be very interesting if the architecture, i.e., who



is connected to whom, of these social networks can be modelled along with their stability properties. It would thus be interesting to conduct a study on the strategically stable network architectures. The most striking finding of the present study is that the workers are guided by a strong sense of reciprocity and mutual help in sharing the job-related information in the social sites, where those who are in direct relations and those friends of friends are members.

### Notes

1. See chapter 6 in Goyal (2007).
2. See Section 1 in Montgomery (1991) for a detail discussion. See also Montgomery (1992).
3. See Wegener (1991), and Yakubovich (2005) who find empirical evidences in the support of the strength - of - weak - ties hypothesis.
4. Goyal (2015) finds that strong ties are much more effective than weak ties in a different context.

### References

- Bian, Yanjie, 1997. 'Bringing Strong Ties Back In: Indirect Ties, Network Bridges, and Job Searches in China', *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 62, No. 3: 366-385.
- Boorman, Scott, 1975. 'A Combinatorial Optimization Model for Transmission for Job Information Through Contact Networks', *The Bell Journal of Economics*, Vol. 6, No. 1: 216-249.
- Calvó-Armengol, Antoni, 2000. 'Job Contact Networks' *Journal of Economic Theory*, Vol. 115, No. 1: 191-206.
- Calvo-Armengol, Antoni and Matthew Jackson, 2004. 'The Effects of Social Networks on Employment and Inequality', *The American Economic Review*, Vol. 94, No. 3, pp. 426-454.
- Calvó-Armengol, Antoni and M. O. Jackson, 2007. 'Networks in labor markets: wage dynamics and inequality', *Journal of Economic Theory*, Vol. 132, No. 1: 27-46.
- Goyal, Sanjeev, 2007. 'Connections: An Introduction to the Economics of Networks' chapter 6:113-142: Princeton University Press.

Granovetter, Mark, 1973. 'The Strength of Weak Ties', *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 78: 1360-80.

Granovetter, Mark, 1974. *Getting a Job: A Study of Contacts and Careers*, 2nd ed. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Granovetter, Mark, 1983. 'The Strength of Weak Ties: A Network Theory Revisited', *Sociological Theory*, Vol. 1, pp. 201-233.

Krackhardt, David, 1992. 'The Strength of Strong Ties: The Importance of Philos in Organizations' in N. Nohria and R. G. Eccles (eds) *Networks and Organizations: Structure, Form, and Action*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press: 216-39.

Montgomery, James D, 1991. 'Social Networks and Labor-Market Outcomes: Toward an Economic Analysis', *The American Economic Review*, Vol. 81, No. 5: 1408-1418.

Montgomery, James D, 1992. 'Job Search and Network Composition: Implications of the Strength of Weak Ties Hypothesis', *American Sociological Review*, Vol.57, No. 5: 586-96.

Van der Leij, Marco and Sanjeev Goyal, 2011. 'Strong Ties in a Small World', *Review of Network Economics*, Vol. 10, No. 2: 1-23.

Yakubovich, Valery, 2005. 'Weak Ties, Information, and Influence: How Workers Find Jobs in a Local Russian Labor Market', *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 70: 408-421.

Zuo, Xiang, Blackburn, Jeremy, Kourtellis, Nicolas, Skvoretz, John and Iamnitchi, Adriana, 2014. 'The Influence of Indirect Ties on Social Network Dynamics'. *Social Informatics*, September 2014: 50-65.

## Life of the Middleclass Aged in the Light of Changing Family Relations: A Study in Kolkata<sup>1</sup>

Sinjini Roy

**Abstract:** *The present paper explores the life of the middleclass aged in Kolkata metropolis. The life of the aged has been studied in two different locations – in the family setup and in the old-age homes – in a comparative mode. The uniqueness of the study lies in the observation that the kind of life that the aged live depends much on the changing family situations. The composition of the family, the marital status of the aged, the dispersal of the family members and the household arrangements, the health status of the elderly, the kinship and neighbourhood support systems impact the life of the senior citizens significantly. One of the key findings of the study is that the aged women, especially those who have been single, are more vulnerable to take refuge in the old-age homes. Another key finding is that the aged move to old-age homes as the last resort, when the family care system breaks down completely, particularly when they lose their spouses and have broken health. I have found in this study that although the dispersal of the younger members is on the rise the aged take this as a logical and welcome development, although it takes a toll on the conventional care system in the family. I have also found that the stigma that was attached to old-age living is withering and the aged and the larger society have started accepting it as a rational solution to their real-life problems. My study does not support the widely held perception that the middleclass aged are the victims of the growing calculative rationalism and inhumanity in the younger generation.*

**Keywords:** aging, rationalization of family size, dispersal of family members, old-age homes, 'pity'.

### **Introduction**

The present paper is an outcome of my PhD thesis on *The Life of the Urban Middleclass Aged in Kolkata Metropolis* (Roy 2016). The study was located against the backdrop of the universal trend of greying population<sup>1</sup>, rationalization of family size and household arrangement, and widespread dispersal of the younger members, which leave the elderly lonely, having to resort to self-care, or depend on the professional service

providers. The life of the aged, both men and women, has been looked into in the light of changing social relations, which include family relations, kinship relations and neighbourhood relations. The study was designed to bring to light the significant impact of rationalization of family size and the large-scale dispersal of the younger members on the life of the elderly members of the family and on overall intergenerational relationship, which, I feel, is yet to be adequately documented in sociological or anthropological literature. The prime objective of the study was to prepare a sociological account of the life of the middleclass aged in metropolitan Kolkata, based on life-history of the senior citizens and their lived experiences (as expressed by them in their subjective articulation) in the changing family locale.

I have studied only the aged (loosely defined as the people above 60 years of age) among the urban middleclass in order to delimit the scope of my study since life of the aged in other locales (say, rural and semi-urban) and classes (upper and lower classes) is presumed to be significantly different. The scholars in disciplines like social work, psychology, physical anthropology have been studying the aged from their respective perspectives; my objective, however, would be to prepare a sociological account of the aged based on their life history (autobiography) and lived experiences, and interpret their life in the light of relevant sociological theories.

Urban middleclass has been chosen as the locale of the study because this class is widely taken as enlightened, educated and the 'vanguard' of social change; it is in this class that Weberian rationalism is perceived to be evident (Weber 1994). The 'middleclass' can be loosely defined as the class located between the poor on the one hand and the rich on the other; a heterogeneous class inclusive of the managerial class and the intelligentsia, the white-collar *baboos* (the *bhadraloks* in *bhadralok-chotolok* divide), and the petty-bourgeoisie (the owners of the small-scale business and trade who double their roles as worker and owner). A broad-based definition of the term would include most inhabitants in an urban neighbourhood (barring those who live in slums and squatter settlements and those who are rich) in the middleclass. Although a highly heterogeneous category, those who constitute the urban middleclass are expected to share a common social and cultural locale and show a largely similar response to the forces of modernization and other exogenous forces of social change. The middleclass ideally provides the cultural 'place' where the elements of tradition and conservatism and the elements of 'progress' and 'modernity' or 'post-modernity' interplay. The term 'urban' can be defined both in spatial and

cultural terms; in cultural term 'urban' is understood as opposed to 'rural'. Ideally, it combines the elements of rationality and modernity (in Western sense) although often retaining the elements of Indian traditions.

The Indian families are undergoing a course of rapid changes in recent years, especially in terms of rationalization of family size, engineering of reproductive behaviour, dispersal of family members, approaches to family relations, support to the aged and children – material, medical, emotional, and so on. What can be framed as a research question is whether the family locale, the relations and the family cultural frame are changing towards narrow, calculative rationalism (in Weberian sense) to spring a dehumanized approach to and treatment of the aged or they are still able to sustain the traditional forms and a humane, caring, supportive, emotional approach towards the elderly members who give so much for the younger generation and are running the last lap of their life. The approaches toward the elderly members need not be binary opposites as there could be a mix of rationalism and humane-caring outlooks and the quantum of the elements of the opposites in the mix could vary from case to case and from context to context. It will be important to observe if family level variations or common pattern(s) emerge in the social locale of the aged and the familial/social approach(es) towards them.

### ***The universe, sample and field study***

The metropolitan Kolkata and its aged persons (men and women above 60 years with middleclass background) constituted the universe of the study. Fieldwork was done in two social locales; the *old-age homes* and the *urban neighbourhoods* with a view to have an understanding of the conditions that keep the elderly attached to their own house and the point of breakdown of the family support system that takes the elderly to the old-age homes. I have done 32 case studies from amongst those who live in their own houses with family members in the urban neighbourhood and 32 case studies from old-age homes in order to understand the micro level familial changes and their impact on the life of the aged.

I did long interviews with the help of an interview schedule, took field notes while meeting my informants in family/social gatherings and mini music sessions to collect information and had telephonic conversation with some of them to fill-in the information gap. The reason behind choosing only middleclass population is that the members of this particular class are

presumably the bearers of the elements of modernity and rationalization which find manifestation in the control of family size by using various methods of contraception, in arrangement of household, in growing individualism and careerism and most importantly in changing family relations. In documenting information (mostly qualitative) and writing the 'text', the biographical/phenomenological method has been used, where the respondents were asked to narrate the stories of their life and their versions have been presented in descriptive style without much of analytical input or any factual distortion.

### ***How is my study different from other works on ageing?***

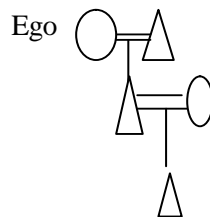
The available literatures on ageing have primarily covered the health aspects of the aged, support and care system, elder abuse and on old age home. I have, on the other hand, tried to comprehend the relationship between aged parents and their children against the backdrop of urbanization, modernization and calculative rationalization. I have examined how these external forces impact upon their relations, care-system, bonding between the aged parents and their children. I have tried to find out how Rousseau's idea of 'pity' (expressed in emotions, values, sentiments, love and care) comes into play in defeating these exogenous forces (Rousseau 1992). I have examined whether the relationships break down as a consequence of Western modernism and calculative rationalism (Weber) or the conventional values and care system still work in the life of the elderly. In sum, the study has focussed on how the micro and macro social forces bring about rational changes, which, in turn, impact upon the lives and relations between the aged and their children and extended kin. The study has found out that the incidents (as reported in the media and literature) of aged being the victims of inhumanity and ill treatment at the hands of their 'own relations' are not yet strong enough to defeat the care, compassion and humanity that constitute the foundation of all relations.

### ***Aged Living in their own Houses***

Based on the differential family compositions I have classified 32 families into five categories in order to draw an understanding of a few divergent facets of the life of the aged amidst the changing family relations in an urban setting. In the following section I would talk about five case studies,

selecting one from the five different categories. Keeping with research ethic I have hidden the actual names of my respondents.

***An ideal urban joint family:*** Despite large-scale nuclearization of families and ‘rationalization’ of family size joint families are still common in Kolkata and the members of such families preserve the values of love and care. The family of Mrs. A. Aich (61) is an example. Mrs. Aich has been living in her own flat with her family at DL 221, Nonamati Cooperative, Salt Lake, Kolkata, for the last 13 years. It is an 850 sq. ft. flat consisting of three bed rooms, a hall and a kitchen. She is Hindu by faith and Kayastha by caste. In her parental family she had two sisters and two brothers. Her husband had five brothers and five sisters. In her own family she lives with her husband, son, daughter-in-law and her four-month-old grandson – a standard joint family-cum-joint-household.

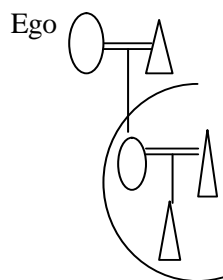


Mrs. Aich's household

A simple joint family is an ‘ideal’ even in an urban setting, which is in consonance with the Indian family values and expectations – the retired aging couple, living with their son and son’s wife and a grandson/granddaughter. Such family values also extend to kinship relations beyond the immediate family or household. The members of the patri-local joint family maintain a strong and trouble-free relation where life is largely family-oriented and child-centric. The aging ego fondly preserves happy memory of life she had in both family of orientation and family of procreation and the same is true of her daughter-in-law. The children are brought up with utmost care and are taught to uphold family values. The relations with the extended members of family of orientation and family of procreation appeared to have loosened primarily because of death and dispersal of the members. The downsizing of family has cemented the relationship among the members of the family who constitute the same household and where the emotional interdependence is total. The members of the family nurture

a strong neighbourhood bond which has assumed much of the functions of the waning kinship groups. It is revealing that even in an urban setting neighbourhood community plays an important role in terms of mutual support, care and recreation. The joint family, in the present case, works perfectly without any problem.

**Care from a distance:** The children of the aged in the city disperse to different places within the city and to different other cities, within and outside the country, primarily because of marriage (of daughters) and career compulsions (both of the sons and daughters). The dispersed child or children do not cease to take care of their aging parents. Here is a case. **Mrs. P. Sengupta**, aged 80, a Hindu, Baidya by caste, lives with her 87-year old husband in their own house at DI- 86, Salt Lake. They have been living in this house for the last 27 years. It is 1115 sq. ft. house with two bed rooms and a drawing room. Mrs. Sengupta has a daughter who lives in Mumbai with her family. She got married in 1990 and she has a son who is now doing M. Tech. in the USA. In her parental family Mrs. Sengupta had a brother and four sisters. Her husband had three brothers and four sisters. Mrs. Sengupta is a graduate and so is her husband. Her father was a graduate and her mother had primary level education. Her daughter is MA in Economics and has done B. Ed. After graduation Mrs. Sengupta taught in a school for some years but after marriage she left the job. Her husband worked with the Reserve Bank of India. Her father was headmaster and mother a housewife. Her daughter who now lives in Mumbai teaches Mathematics in a school. Mrs. Sengupta's monthly family income is Rs. 25000 approximately. She uses the modern gadgets like television, fridge, microwave, cell phone, washing machine etc. She has cardiac problem and high blood pressure.



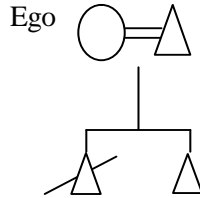
Mrs. Sengupta's household



In case of Mrs. Sengupta we find that, although dispersal of the younger generation is a fact of life it does not necessarily impact negatively on the relations among the family members. Mrs. Sengupta had a normal upbringing in a large family along with her siblings. Since the members of her family of orientation were refugees from Myanmar they had to undergo a long phase of hardship when they received support from their relatives. Mrs. Sengupta received a mixed kind of treatment from her in-laws; while her mother-in-law and her husband were supportive and caring the other members of her in-law's family did not treat her well. The tensions in the in-law's house prompted her and her husband to set up a separate household. Rationalization of family size is evident as her family of orientation had eight members, her husband's family of orientation had nine members but her family of procreation has only three members. The kinship bond, from both affinal and consanguinal sides, is weak; the neighbourhood bond has distinctly taken its place. Mrs. Sengupta now enjoys supreme authority as her aged husband is down with ailments. With her only child away, the relationship between the aging husband and wife has cemented further; they recognize this relation to be the most trustworthy of all relations. When the husband is ailing the wife, with relatively better health, steps out of the house to take care of the out-door activities. Only daughter lives in Mumbai with her family but takes all possible care of her parents. The aged parents' life centers on their daughter and her family. While dispersal is an inevitable process in urban middleclass families it does not necessarily impact the family care system adversely; the parents and the child miss each other badly and keep close contact using modern communication technology; the daughter rushes in to be by the side of the parents when the latter are in crisis.

***Family with a case of untimely death:*** There is no denying that in urban India the fertility rate is dropping and the number of children is being restricted to one or two. In the absence of the extended kin the members of the smaller families now become emotionally more dependent on one another. Untimely death of a member, either one of the parents or one of the children, spells disaster on the living members. I have come across some such cases in my study. **Mrs. K. Chatterjee** (aged 62), a Hindu Brahmin, has been living in her own flat (DL 224) with her husband and son since 1998. It is 1160 sq. feet flat consisting of three bed rooms, a drawing room and a kitchen. In her parental family Mrs. Chatterjee had two brothers while her husband had three brothers and five sisters. Mrs.

Chatterjee had two sons. Her elder son committed suicide in 2012. Her unmarried younger son works in a Bank.



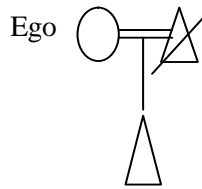
*Mrs. Chatterjee's household*

Mrs. Chatterjee was born in their rented house at Vivekananda road in North Kolkata. She grew up in a joint family consisting of her parents and two brothers and uncles. When she was three-year-old her parental family, along with her uncle and aunt, shifted to Dumdum, where her second brother had died. Her mother was in a state of shock and did not want to stay in that house; they shifted to a rented house at Nilmoni Mitra Street.

Mrs. Chatterjee's family, like all other families in the present study, appears rationalized in terms of size. Her family of orientation had 5 members and her husband's family of orientation had 10 members while her own family of procreation has four members. The affinal and consanguinal kin are widespread in the city and they are in touch through phone and social meetings, although they do not have any material interdependence. The family maintains a strong bond with neighbours. The life of the members is too much family-centric; parents' life is children-centric. The untimely death of the elder son has left the parents, particularly mother, in perpetual state of trauma and depression. The life of the parents has changed so much that they have lost the will to live, despite support from the younger son. When the family size is small, procreation is restricted to one child or two children, the emotional interdependence becomes total and any untimely death leaves a destabilizing effect on the living members, particularly on the aged parents, who are not emotionally strong to take the blow of the death of a grown-up child. Mrs. Chatterjee enjoys some authority only in matters of home-making, while Mr. Chatterjee and their grown-up son take care of the outdoor responsibilities.

***Family with troubled relations:*** Although rare, the urban middleclass families go through different forms of relational crises. One such crisis is strained conjugal relation leading to separation or divorce. Here is an

example. **Mrs. P. Saha**, a 66-year old Hindu Baishya lady, has been living in her 2300 sq. ft. house at DL 93, Salt Lake for the past 26 years. The house has three bedrooms, one guest room, and a drawing room. She lives in this house with her only son. Her husband died 8 years ago. In her own family of orientation Mrs. Saha had two brothers and a sister while her husband had a brother and a sister.



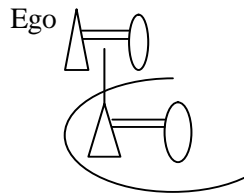
*Mrs. Saha's household*

Mrs. Saha is a graduate while her husband was MBBS-MS. Her father was also an MBBS. Her mother had school level education and her son is MBBS and MD who works as a radiologist in Medica Super Speciality Hospital in Kolkata. Her husband had built the present house spending all his savings. Mr. Saha draws Rs. 30000 as her husband's pension. Mrs. Saha uses modern gadgets like cell phone, microwave, and television and music system. She has high blood pressure and blood sugar and few years back she had an appendix operation. Now she is more or less fit.

Mrs. Saha's family is also rationalized in line with one-child norm, which is widely accepted in the urban middleclass. While Mrs. Saha's family of orientation had 6 members her husband's family had 4 members, her own family of procreation is restricted to one child (three members). Mrs. Saha grew up as a part of a joint family amidst siblings and cousins but ended up having a simple nuclear family. She maintains strong kinship bond with the members of her family of orientation, who are dispersed in different parts of the city, and maintains strong bond with neighbours, who come forward to help in times of crisis. Death of her husband has made her strong as a person; she now takes crucial decisions and handles both indoor and outdoor activities with confidence; she does community service as an office bearer of the block committee and ladies' club in the neighbourhood. Mrs. Saha's case bears testimony to the fact that given the space and challenge the 'agency' in the woman flourishes to its full while the elements of patriarchy take a back seat. Mrs. Saha had a cared upbringing and she has brought up her only son with utmost care and love. She maintains good relation with her in-laws and sustains good memories of living in a joint family. She is

economically self-reliant; emotionally, however, she is completely dependent on her son. She draws pride of the achievements of her son and her daily routine, future thoughts, worries are rooted in her son. Here is a rare case where her son and daughter-in-law fell apart; a case of domestic violence was registered by the parents of her daughter-in-law, following which Mrs. Saha's family members were put in jail custody, which inflicted so much of humiliation that her husband died of shock. Going to jail carried a lot of stigma in middleclass and there was a brief period of social isolation until they were acquitted of all charges by the court. Disturbance in conjugal life, domestic violence, police case and divorce, none of these fits into the middleclass values and when they occur there is always a risk of social seclusion.

**Longing father, careerist son:** Some members of the younger generation are coming are the grip of careerism and calculative rationalism, which impacts upon the familial relations negatively. **Mr. M. Dutta**, aged 76 years, a Hindu Kayestha, lives in his flat at DL-12/1 since 1999. It is 1200 sq. ft. flat consisting of three bed rooms and a drawing room. He had four sisters while his spouse had two brothers and a sister. Mr. Dutta has a son who now stays in his own apartment with his wife.



*Mr. Dutta's household*

Mr. Dutta is Ph. D. in economics while his wife is Ph. D. in Bengali. His father was engineer and mother had school level education. His son did MCA. Mr. Dutta taught in David Hare College and in Calcutta University. He was also the Dean of Calcutta University for five years and shouldered the administrative responsibility of W.B.B.S.E. His wife worked as a lecturer in Diamond Harbour College. His son works in a multinational company. Mr. Dutta draws a monthly pension of Rs. 35000. He uses modern gadgets like cell phone, television, music system, and computer. He doesn't have any serious ailment and is physically active.

Mr. Dutta's family is also rationalized in terms of size; his family of orientation had 7 members, his wife's family of orientation had 6 members, but his own family of procreation has only 3 members. Mr. Dutta had a struggling

middleclass upbringing. He taught in college and university and held high administrative positions. His wife also taught in a college. Mr. and Mrs. Dutta constitute their household while their son lives with his wife in a separate house in another part of Kolkata. Mr. and Mrs. Dutta wanted their only son to stay with them since the latter works in Kolkata and they have a big enough house to accommodate all but their son decided otherwise and lives a life of his choice disregarding his parents' wish. His selfish careerism has hurt his parents and the latter are pained to see that their son avoids them and does not take much care of them. The parents seem to have reconciled with this spiritual rupture. Mr. Dutta has a trusted and trouble-free relation with his wife but does not allow her much free space in terms of decision-making. Mr. Dutta visits his sister who lives close by but his relation with other consanguinal kin has become loose. He maintains good rapport with his neighbours and trusts them more than his relatives. Mr. Dutta is worried about the growing careerism in the younger generation which, he apprehends, would alienate them from all niceties of life and from parents and close relations. Mr. Dutta's is a typical case which demonstrates how Weberian calculative rationalism is creeping into the middleclass families, colonizing their psyche, taking over their value system while relegating the conventional family values, emotions, sentiments and care into wilderness.

### ***What do the Case Studies Transpire?***

The five case studies represent five of many distinct patterns indicative of the changes taking place in the micro locales of urban middleclass families, ranging between continuation of an ideal joint family that preserves all family values and a rationalized (both in terms of size and relations) family with selfish careerism overshadowing family values and responsibilities. In-between these two extremes, there are family with dispersal of its members, family nursing the wound of losing a grown-up son and family with strained conjugal relation ending in divorce. Since the family locales and the micro social space in each family are unique it is always difficult to identify a common or uniform pattern of change in urban middleclass families. One can see from the case studies that rationalization of family size and dispersal of family members are almost universal. Also universal is peoples' efforts to preserve family values and protect the otherwise flagging family relations and even extended kinship relations, both affinal and consanguinal. With downsizing and nuclearization the family bonds

have cemented and the emotional, not material, interdependence among the members has become total. The incidents like untimely and sudden death, tension in conjugal life or in other relations leave a serious destabilizing effect on the life of the members. When dispersal of family members has become a fact of urban life the members (both the parents and children) have geared up to accept it and face its consequences. Besides taking mental preparation to face the dispersal they widely make use of modern communication system, modern gadgets to keep close contact with their children who stay far. Even in crisis time the children living at a faraway place rush to be with their parents. In the generation of the elderly members there are some sincere efforts to sustain kinship relations. In a situation where the members are dispersed, but there is no material or emotional/spiritual dependence the relations are reduced to something of only symbolic value and the occasional interaction that they maintain stem from normative obligation.

### *Life of the Aged in Old Age Home*

At one stage of life some of the city elderly move to the old-age homes leaving behind their houses primarily because the family care system collapses and they change their living arrangements in search of security and a better care system. I have covered two old-age homes of Kolkata. One is Mukta Bihanga, situated in Sonarpur area of South Kolkata, and the second one is Rabindra Niketan, which is located in Naktala area, again in South Kolkata. I began with a field survey where I interviewed 56 respondents with the help of a survey schedule for a background survey and, in the second phase, I have done detailed case studies of 32 elderly selected from both the Homes.

In the old-age homes in Kolkata one can generally find three categories of aged: (1) the aged couples whose children live abroad or in a distant city, (2) the aged who have lost their spouses and have child or children who stay away, and (3) the unmarried women (or men) who did not have a family to support in their old age. Interestingly, the aged in old-age homes in Kolkata do not attach any 'stigma' to their Home-stay and consider the decision to move to old-age home as a rational solution to their problems like aging related insecurities and loneliness. They largely consider the move as a step forward in search of a better life. The general feeling about old-age homes is that since they work on profit motive the humane side of empathy for the elderly is by and large absent. Such a view may not be

true about all the Homes as one can find elements of 'care' in the treatment of the elderly, the ailing, 'dependent' Home inmates. Apart from the caring arrangement in the Homes the elderly inmates find the warmth of company of the other inmates, make informal groups to combat boredom and loneliness. The care-package, even for the ailing, half-crippled aged, proves to be handy. The prime questions of sociological relevance, therefore, are (1) whether the aged, living in homes, are the victims of neglect and desertion by their children and (2) whether wider kinship and social support get cut as the aged move into the homes.

**Reasons for moving to old-age Home:** Quantifying the factors that take the aged to the Homes we can see that 40 out of 56 (71 per cent) Home inmates were living alone in their own house; loneliness, insecurity, ill-health, unreliable service providers prompted their shift. Five of the respondents moved to Home leaving their sons, daughters-in-law and even grandchildren because they wanted to live a life with freedom while granting freedom to their children to live the life of their choice. It is quite possible that they had tension in the family and the elderly could not take the strain and pain of soiled relation with their close ones, the family members. For some, it was a mutually agreed upon decision for the convenience of both sides. In a way they preferred separation in order to save the relation. Three of the respondents have directly blamed the sons and particularly daughter-in-law for ill-treatment or cold treatment as reasons for their move to old-age homes. Two of the respondents, both widow, said their sons work in a distant city and they did not want to go with them. Two others have said that they have lost their spouses and their daughters are dispersed after marriage and therefore they have moved to old-age Home. Three respondents have mentioned space crunch in their house with the expansion of the family while one couple has chosen to live in the Home together. Besides, one childless couple moved to Home.

**Table 1: Reasons for movement to old-age homes**

<b>Reason</b>	<b>No. of respondents</b>
1. <i>Single member; loneliness and insecurity</i>	40
2. <i>Wanted to live an independent life</i>	05
3. <i>Tension in the family/ ill-treatment</i>	03
4. <i>Space crunch in the house</i>	03
5. <i>Sons dispersed; the elderly without spouse did not want to go with them</i>	02
6. <i>Spouse gone; did not want to depend on close kin</i>	02
7. <i>Childless couple moved to Home</i>	01
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>56</b>

**How the aged felt while moving to the Homes:** The social perceptions, the pressure of tradition, the stigma attached to living in the Homes, the micro situation in the family together create individual perceptions, a world of feelings, which determine how the aged members would feel about their movement to the Homes. Being asked how they felt while leaving their own house for the Home, 30 of the respondents out of 56 (53.5 per cent) unequivocally said they felt very bad and had problems in accepting Home life and the remaining 26 respondents (46.4 per cent) said they did not feel bad and they had no problem in accepting the Home life. The micro family circumstances are responsible for such contrasting responses. Those who felt bad might have had family members to leave behind and did not have a clear idea about the ambience in Homes while most other elderly who might have been living alone for some time (since they were unmarried, widow or widower or have children who live away) and they wanted to escape the loneliness and insecurities of life. For the latter group moving to the Home meant an escape from loneliness and an opportunity to explore a new social situation, in the company of fellow senior citizens.

**The relation of the aged with their children and extended kin after their shift:** One crucial sociological question to probe is whether family and kinship support system breaks down completely as the aged move to the Homes. The information at hand suggests that the relations do continue to work even after the shift. Out of 56 respondents, 28 (i.e., 50 per cent) informed that their children and relatives come and visit them frequently (once or twice a month), 17 (30 per cent) have said that their children and relatives visit them once in every two-four months while nine (16 per cent)



respondents have said that their relatives and children visit them once or twice a year; only two of the respondents have told me that they have no contact either with their children or relatives. In other words, 96 per cent of the Home boarders maintain contacts with their close kin and family members. Thus, the shift to the Homes does not mean, in any way, the end of family and kinship care system. The children and relatives of the aged try to maintain some form of relation with them and extend some kind of support (financial, material or in terms of care). Placing them in a scale it can be seen that in most of the cases the relation is very cordial although there are cases (very few in number) where there is no relation or a very faint relation. Although most of the respondents maintain some kind of relation with their family members and close kin the degree of emotive involvement varies from case to case depending on the micro family situations, particularly micro family composition at present and the quality of pre-existing relations.

***How do the aged compare their past life with Home life?*** The aged, in most cases, came to the Homes as a rational choice compelled by the circumstances; they, excepting a very few, are not necessarily the victims of the cruelty of their heartless child/children. They feel that the aged, after certain point in life, should come to the Home giving space to their children to live their life of their own. In the process, the aged also can live life peacefully and independently in the Homes. Most of the aged boarders miss their life spent in their own house with their close family members and recollect their fond memories but they gradually learn to enjoy their life at Home. In a way, they are not left with a choice; they accept the fact that this is the place from where they will leave this world one day. They Home-inmates, therefore, make efforts to make their life better. They engage themselves in lot of group activities and make positive efforts to make life better. In Rabindra Niketan the group activities are more compared to Mukto Bihanga, where the boarders do not do yoga or music classes; they prefer spending their time inside their rooms or by chatting among themselves at the veranda for long hours. The care and services are much better in Mukto Bihanga than in Rabindra Niketan. In Rabindra Niketan there are a lot of complaints about food, discriminatory treatment and indifference to the problems of the boarders but in Mukto Bihanga the boarders do not have many complaints; food is good, and what they like the most is the personal care of the owners-cum-managers. The boarders in general miss the luxury, comfort and the food that they used to have in their own houses

but here they have got a number of friends and are involved into a number of activities to make their life meaningful. The boarders have to adhere to the rules of the Home and compromise with many things which are beyond their control but what they appreciate is that their life here is secure, full of freedom and they are not answerable to their children or relative for their activities and do not have to think of their security or health. The boarders feel that the people outside have a negative perception about the Homes which does not match with their experience. They probably think that everything is rule bound, the manager and staffs are very strict, the boarders have to take permission to visit their relatives, and the services are also of very poor quality, and so on. The boarders admit that they also had this kind of perception before coming to the Home. They were not free of the social stigma that is attached to Home living. But from their experience of living in Homes they have realized that all such perceptions stereotypical and do not hold much water. Most importantly, living here they can keep healthy relations with their kin and family members and friends who live somewhere in the city. Those who have their sons and daughters living in the city feel that separate living saves them from being seen as ‘burdens’ and helps maintain the relations healthy.

One prominent observation that comes out of the study is that the women and men, who have lost their spouses, the women who never married, the ailing people who have none to take care of, the parents whose child/children stay away – all belonging to urban educated middleclass - are the ones who are numerically dominant among the residents in the two old-age homes. The women, particularly the unmarried ones and those who have lost their spouses, outnumber the men among the boarders; this points to their greater vulnerability in society. Living in the Homes is increasingly becoming a rational solution to the multiple problems that face the middleclass aging urbanites. The relations between the aged and their family members and larger kin evolve in course of time and go through different phases of stresses and strains. It has also been seen that the members largely value the relations even when the members lose warmth for one another. The close family relations work in finding the right kind of old-age home, extending financial support when necessary, keeping in touch and standing by the side of the elderly in moments of crisis. The siblings and close relations keep in touch with one another over telephone and by exchanging occasional visits.

Neither the Home inmates nor their family members feel ashamed of this fact of modern life. A large section of the elderly is not keeping good health.

They do not want to be 'burden'; on any one; they move to old-age home to live a life of freedom and dignity while allowing their children to live the life of their choice. The elderly, particularly the women, in some cases take the decision to move to old-age homes on their own in search of a secure and better life and this could be interpreted as an expression of 'agency' or assertion of 'self'. Thus, the stigma that was long associated with Home-living (and still is) is gradually weaning both from the shared perception of the urban middleclass and from the perceptions of those who live in old-age homes.

In this chapter we had set out to examine (1) whether the aged, living in Homes, are the victims of neglect and desertion by their children and (2) whether wider kinship and social support break down as the aged move into the Homes. The findings indicate that the answers to both the queries are in the negative. Only in a very few cases, the boarders have mentioned of troubled relation with their family members as the reason for their shift to the Home. There are a few cases where the elderly have cited 'neglect' and 'ill-treatment' at the hands of their daughters-in-law and sons as reasons for their movement to the Home. But even in those cases the relations and mutual care continue in one form or the other. In most cases the social circumstances, mainly lack of care and a sense of insecurity, took the elderly to the Home. After the shift of the elderly to the Home the family members and relatives do not shrug off their responsibilities towards them. The middle-class values of care and responsibility are strongly upheld by both sides.

The aged boarders in the Homes make efforts to live a meaningful life. They make efforts to be happy and enjoy their life in the Home. They are not in a mood to surrender to the burdens that aging heaps on them. Over time, they develop a sense of belonging with the Home and the room they live in. On the whole, one can see that most of the boarders in both the Homes make constant efforts not only to live fighting the problems of aging but to live a good life by engaging in creative, collective activities; they also engage in constant dialogues with the Home authorities over their problems in order to make the Home ambience better.

### ***Concluding observations***

The study has found out that some of the changes in the relationships in the middleclass families in Kolkata, which impact upon the lives of the aged, result from multiple tensions. One such tension emanates, on the one hand,

from the conventional urge to uphold the middleclass familial values (which can be termed as 'traditional consciousness' that demands holding all the members together) and, on the other, the pragmatic career considerations, on the part of the members, to disperse to different places and relay the relations on rational terms (i.e., 'practical consciousness', to use the terminology of Giddens 1984). The dispersal of the siblings, as they grow up, results into the family of orientation getting fragmented into a number of nuclear households (the families of procreation). Similarly, the child/children of the families of procreation (the families I have studied) also disperse because of marriage or career compulsions which again results setting up of new households. Thus, one can see that the urban middleclass families are going through a process of rationalization in terms of their size, living arrangements, relations and mutual expectations. While such rationalizations are inevitable the emotive side of the family relations largely remain intact, if not further cemented. The members of the smaller families make efforts to keep their ties close and keep the care system afloat even when they live in different places. The downsizing of family has actually brought the members even closer, at least in terms of emotive interdependence, although the aging parents and their children live with much economic independence. Away from each other, the family members make use of modern communication system in order to keep in close touch and evolve new mechanisms for sustaining the care system. Untimely death of any member of the small family or household leaves a serious destabilizing impact on the living members. In some cases, however, the extended family ties are retained although the emotive elements have withered from such relations.

The study has found that the urban elderly, in most cases, take shelter in the old-age homes when all their efforts to live as a part of their family in their own house fail because of dispersal of the children, death of the spouse, ill-health and insecurity, and strained relation with family members (in a few cases). The study has found that the unmarried women and those women who have lost their spouses are more vulnerable, compared to their male counterparts, and are the more likely to move to old-age homes. The study also shows that in the whole scheme of maintaining familial relationships, the female members exert (interestingly, I had a significant number of unmarried women as my informants) strong 'agency'. However, some of the middleclass elderly move to old-age homes (the number of which is growing fast) *by choice* in order to live in freedom while allowing their married children to live a life of their own. This, according to them, helps maintain healthy family relations.

The study comes out with the observation that the living in old-age homes, which is a logical solution to a complex body of worries associated with old-age, is fast becoming accommodated into the urban middleclass values. The elderly, who live in the Homes and their family members are getting over the 'stigma' that was long (and still is) associated with the *bridhyasram* and are getting in terms with the fact that the care system in the fragmented middleclass families is under serious threat and it is only 'rational' for the elderly and their close ones to accept living in old-age homes to take as a possible solution to the 'crises' that the urban middleclass life is bringing them. The decision to move to old-age homes, in most cases, is 'egotiated and agreed upon' in the small circles of close relations, and the care of the elderly by the close kin, in one form or the other, continues even when the latter live far and wide.

### **Notes**

1. An earlier version of the paper was presented at the 5<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Bengal Studies held at Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh, on 25-28 January 2018. I am thankful to Prof. Rajat Subhra Mukhopadhyaya and Prof. Sanjay K. Roy of the Department of Sociology for their kind editorial help.
2. Although India is generally considered a young population compared to the West in recent decades the population above 60 years has grown sharply – 56.7 million in 1991, 76.6 million in 2001 and 103.8 million in 2011 (Source: Office of the Registrar General, India 2013). The share of the aged population to total population stands at 6.8 per cent, which is expected to grow steadily over the next few decades (Mishra and Rajan 2017: 1-3).

### **References**

- Giddens, A., 1984. *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Mishra, Udaya S. and S. Irudaya Rajan (eds) *India's Aged: Needs and Vulnerabilities*. Hyderabad: Orient BlackSwan.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, 1992. *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*. Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing Co.

Roy, Sinjini, 2016. *The Life of the Middleclass Aged in Kolkata Metropolis: A Sociological Enquiry*. Unpublished PhD thesis, Department of Sociology, North Bengal University.

Weber, Max, 1994. 'Social Action and Social Relationships' in Max Weber, *Sociological Writings* (Ed. Wolf Heydebrand). New Delhi: Rawat Publications: 1-24)

## **Reflexive Society and Reflexive Relationships: The Changing Patterns of Family and Friendship in Late Modernity**

Maidul Islam  
Rozyana Begum

**Abstract:** *The conventional definitions and, meanings of marriage, family, family relationship, and kinship ties demand a serious relook as things are changing fast and drastically in the late capitalistic era. New structures and new designs of social relationships are coming up. This article deals with the nature of family formation and their margin of relationships based on secondary sources. On the one hand, late modern families offer greater freedom of life to its members and on the other hand they open up great deal of variations and flexibility while operating as a part of the 'risk society'.*

**Keywords:** sexuality, flexibility, family relations, decline of marriage, friendship, late modernity, risk society.

### ***Introduction***

Sociology is about the study of society and social relationships. Since its origin, it has been concerned with human's inter-relationship with society, and social disintegration. Friendships and family relationships are undergoing tremendous social change under the impact of various factors such as industrialization, urbanization, and modern education. Personal relationships have taken new dimension in late modernity. Therefore, great transformations in partnership, family, family formation, sexuality and intimacy are recognized as important subjects in family studies. With commercialization, and globalization new forms of individual relationship within and outside family are taking place in most of the Western societies. Though the pace of change in society at large and in family varies from one society to other, it has been impacting the friendship and family affairs. Formal and informal relationships are also changing in the context of capitalism. This characterization provides us a new avenue to examine the newly emerging social fact.

This paper explores the dynamics of friendship and family relationships in the context of late modernity. It would also explain the changing pattern of inter-personal relationship in the light of late modern sexuality.

### ***Family in the late modern era***

Many social analysts have observed that the traditional family patterns and values are now substantially changing to keep pace with modernity. The dominant character of this era is the discovery of individualization. Individuals have acquired greater autonomy because individuals have become segregated from families. While enjoying greater autonomy they now take personal decisions to shape their family relationships. In the context of decision making, individuals are being more flexible than before. Thus, one can decide to marry or to cohabit while others can choose to live alone or to divorce the partner. Individuals have a greater right to control the life style he/she leads. Cheal observes that in the Western societies, marriage rates are falling sharply. The general trend is that people get married for the first time late, divorce and cohabit with new partners. They have fewer children and there has been a marked increase in the proportion of people living by themselves or living alone with dependent children (Cheal 2008:34). Therefore, the definition of family should be changed in the context of such complex relationships. We get a similar tone in the study of Finch. She argues that keeping the more extensive volatility of contemporary relationships in mind the family relationships have to be redefined and positively established on a more regular basis as new sexual partnerships are formed, as cohabitation gets reconstituted as legal marriage, as children leave (or do not leave) their parent's home in different ways and at different stages, and as more people experience periods of living alone (Finch 2007:69). There are also many problems in cohabitation and marriage. Marriage is a social and legal bondage of one's life. For persisting strong ties, husband and wife depend on their commitment to the relationship. Besides, raising children is another cause of social integration or surviving of ties among man and women. The relationship in cohabitation is often fragile. Allan points out that 'of course, marriage still carries with it legal obligations and responsibilities that are not attached to the same extent to cohabitation. Yet, in many societies, the growth of cohabitation is resulting in a greater institutionalization of the cohabitation at the same time as marriage itself is becoming deinstitutionalized' (Allan 2008:3). Coleman has found out that in the UK about 60 percent of all first marriages are



preceded by unmarried cohabitation (Coleman cited in Therborn 2000: 197). Basically, revolution in sexuality has emerged in recent time in most of the industrial countries and other countries of the world. Therborn further notes that culturally and legally, there has occurred a secularization of sexuality, liberating it from religious or other aprioristic normative rulings as 'sinful'. Sex now is quite common outside marriage for sheer pleasure, without intentions of procreation (Therborn 2000: 207). But interestingly, the divorce rates in Muslim populations in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore are decreasing. Jones observes that the divorce rates have been increasing in the West, but among the Muslim populations of Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia they have actually been decreasing (Jones 1997:103). The sexual revolution has happened in the Western countries because of the rising tide of urbanization, industrialization, modernization, and female participations in work force. However, the large sections of divorced people later remarry or cohabit with new partners who were also married before. Even, they may have children of their own. As a result, Beck-Gernsheim notes that more and more children grow up with one non-biological parent and these step families appear to be a variant of the bi-cultural family (Beck-Gernsheim 1998:65). Beck-Gernsheim further points out that in such unions the values, rules and routines, mutual expectations and everyday practices- from table manners and pocket money to television viewing and bedtime hours –are negotiated and agreed upon (Beck-Gernsheim 1998:65). Furthermore, decreasing social pressure to maintain the marriage relationship, increasing the importance of individual self-interest, economic freedom of women, are some of the causes that add more flexibility in personal and sexual relationships. Another scholar Allan argues that we are witnessing a strong social endorsement of more flexible and less permanent relationship and even though many people still believe in life-long heterosexual marriage as an ideal, there is now not only more tolerance of alternatives, but also an acceptance that diversity is inevitable given the character of present-day life-style (Allan 1998:698). Besides, marriage between men and women is one kind of understanding where one can develop his or her relation in a sophisticated way. Thus, Beck & Beck-Gernsheim observe: 'In living together a man and a woman build up a universe of shared attitudes, opinions and expectations covering everything from trivial day-to-day matters to the great events in world politics. This develops in verbal or non-verbal dialogue, in shared habits and experiences, in a continuous interplay between one's other half and oneself. The shared image of the world is continuously being negotiated, shifted, replaced, questioned and reaffirmed' (Beck & Beck-Gernskheim 1995:50).

Personal relationship is not only limited in heterosexuality or marriage but it also runs into many other forms of sexuality. The transformations in sexuality are emerging as a new dimension of relationships which is, in turn, demands new way of defining family relationships. Kinsey has observed that a very high proportion of men, as well as a substantial proportion of women, have taken part in homosexual acts at some point in their lives (Kinsey cited in Giddens 1992:13). Another study of Kinsey points out that only about 50 percent of all American men were, in his terms, 'exclusively heterosexual' - that is, had neither participated in homosexual activities, nor felt homosexual desires. Eighteen percent were either exclusively homosexual or persistently bisexual. Among women, 2 percent were wholly homosexual, 13 percent of others had engaged in some form of homosexual activity, while a further 15 percent reported having had homosexual urge without having acted on them (Ibid). Nevertheless, the numbers of gay, lesbian, bisexual are increasing in recent times. It is worthy to note that the selection of sex partner depends much on the men and women concerned. The women, in particular, are getting greater autonomy for satisfying their sexual desire, which is something that was unthinkable a few years back. Giddens has termed this phenomenon 'plastic sexuality', which means diversity of sexual practices among people (Giddens 1992:27).

Kinship ties are also changing day by day in the era of late modernity. Processes like industrialization, urbanization, modernization and the changing family patterns leave their mark on the kinship ties. Besides, greater geographic mobility, often resulting physical separation often loosen kinship ties. With ever increasing individualism in 'organic solidarity' people are becoming more 'rational' and they see relations more in functional terms (Durkheim 1984: 31-40).

Many argue that industrialization and urbanization are impacting the composition of and size of the households. The widely held belief is that the joint family is breaking down and nuclear family is emerging in urban area especially in India. But, Shah observes that 'the urban situation needs to be understood in the light of migration on the one hand and the developmental process of households on the other. It starts with a single individual, mostly a man, moving into a town then he brings his wife and children to stay with him later at an opportune time. This is the main reason why the urban areas include a high percentage of single number households' (Shah 1998:74-75). Shah also points out that 'all immigrants in a town, however, do not remain immigrants forever. Many of them settle down as its permanent residents in course of time. In this process they practice the usual norm of

household formation and thus forming joint households' (Ibid). It is thus possible that the non-Western societies would present alternative models of modernity and social relations to that of the Western patterns. The members of the family and kinship groups can perform diversified roles and activities while the relations go on shaping and reshaping themselves.

### ***The Social Anatomy of Friendship***

The discussion of friendship is as important as the discussion of family and kinship. Friendship is the way of developing one's inter-personal relations. Like families or family relationships, friendships have also rules, regulations and negotiation. It is also regarded as other oriented and reciprocal rather than self oriented? Sometimes, friendship shapes the social identity of the persons involved. Allan argues that 'friendships are at one and the same time responsive to, and constitutive of, social identity. As sub cultural theory has long recognized, we select our friends and associates from a pool of similar others and through shared involvement cement those similarities further. Thus, mediated through compatibility and lifestyle choices, and intertwining with structural location, friendships and other such ties serve to shape as well as reinforce social identities' (Allan 2001:334). Telfer notes that friendship results from 'shared activities' as well as a 'long term desire'. She further points out that 'friendship can enlarge our knowledge throughout the whole gamut of human experience, by enabling us in some measure to adopt the viewpoint of another person through our sympathetic identification with him. Through friendship we can know what it is like to feel or think or do certain things which we do not feel, think or do ourselves. And our knowledge is not merely knowledge by description, but knowledge by acquaintance, derived from our sympathetic sharing of his experience' (Telfer 1971:240). There are so many other factors that make and shape or break friendship relations. Thus, C.S. Lewis has noted that the outlook which values the collective above the individual necessarily disparages friendship; it is a relation between men at their highest level of individuality. It withdraws men from collective "togetherness" as surely as solitude itself could do; and more dangerously, for it withdraws them by twos and threes. Some forms of democratic sentiment are naturally hostile to it because it is selective and an affair of the few. To say 'these are my friends' implies the others are not (cited in Doughlas 1996:615). Kant, on the other hand, has pointed out that 'friendship is not of heaven but of the earth; the complete moral perfection of heaven must be universal; but friendship is not universal;

it is a peculiar association of specific persons; it is man's refuge in this world from his distrust of his fellows, in which he can reveal his disposition to another and enter into communion with him ... The more civilized man becomes, the broader his outlook and the less room there is for special friendships; civilized man seeks universal pleasures and a universal friendship, unrestricted by special ties' (Ibid). Most importantly, in twentieth century, one can notice a greater flexibility in friendship. Because of the internal and external migration in urban area, the structure of friendship is rapidly changing. Social networks or network theory play an important role for organizing inter-relationship with one another. But, we cannot sure if this is the only way to social formation. Pescosolido & Rubin comment that the network theory is the only way to conceptualize the social life. At the same time, they suggest that the networks add to a multifaceted repertoire of understandings of new social formation (Pescosolido & Rubin 2000:62). New social, familial and friendship structure might be found in this new form of network system. The people of 21<sup>st</sup> century are more flexible to maintain their relationships. On the other hand, it is more fragile than before. Most importantly, the level of tolerance and mutual understanding, in late modernity, among friendships and families are also playing a pivotal role to influence the social network system. The freedoms in the sexual world of women have led to the development of new dimension between sexuality and friendship. 'Since individualization also fosters a longing for the opposite world of intimacy, security and closeness and most people will continue – at least for the foreseeable future – to live within a partnership or family. But such ties are not the same as before, in their scope or in their degree of obligation and permanence. Out of many different strivings, longings, efforts and mistakes, out of successful and often unsuccessful experiments, a wider spectrum of the private is taking shape. As people make choices, negotiating and deciding the everyday details of do-it-yourself relationships, a 'normal chaos' of love, suffering and diversity is growing and developing' (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2002: 99). So, do-it-yourself relationships of today ranging from family to friendship are acquiring rich variations and flexibility.

### *Liquid sexuality in late modern digital era*

Family and friendship relationships are influenced by another factor, namely, the electronic communication. People can diversify their life in many ways en route mass media, e.g., facebook, twitter, cell phone, instant messaging, and email and in the process keep in touch with scattered family members

and friends. Using mass media people develop and maintain personal relationships; they make friends, get into marital ties and even develop intimate physical relationship in course of time. One hand, virtual friendships are emerging, on the other, these friendship ties are getting fragmented. The children who are engaged in social networking site for long hours a day cannot make even good relationships with peers and family members and thereby face the risk for social isolation, depression and anxiety disorder. Furthermore, many children who are addicted to social media show a greater tendency to be alcoholic or smoker to overcome monotony. In the modern era, thus, new forms of family structures are emerging - nuclear family, single parent family, childless family and so on. In these types of families, most of children are vulnerable. Sometimes, parents have less time to take care their sons and daughters. In their lonely world they find social media as a trusted company. They are thus exposed to advertisements of tobacco, alcoholic beverage in social and electronic media and these advertisements ignite their passion for them. A study, done in 1990, shows that 56 per cent of the students in grades 5 to 12 had admitted that alcohol advertisements encourage them to drink. Also, the girls who had watched more hours of TV at ages 13 and 15 drank more wine and spirits at age 18 than those who had watched fewer hours of TV (Ray and Jat 2010: 564). Another interesting development is that most of the children get into sexual relation under the influence social media. For instance, in the US, approximately 47% of high school students have had sexual intercourse and of them 7.4% report having sex before the ages of 13 and 14% have had 4 sexual partners (Ray & Jat 2010: 564). The explosion of media also carries information not only about heterosexuality or child sexuality but also about many other forms of sexuality. One can thus notice a contrast between old and new sexual behaviors. For example, among the women and men over forty, fewer than one in ten had engaged in oral sex during adolescence; for each successive generation, the proportion increases (Giddens 1992: 11). Giddens also states that among the current generation of teenagers, although not universally practiced, oral sex is regarded a normal part of sexual behaviour (Ibid). Thus, modern parents are more conscious about the sexual behaviour of the children right from their childhood. One study shows that parents initiate conversations about sex with daughters more often than with sons and especially when their daughters' progress towards puberty (Gentile et. al. 2012: 474). These sexual events which are exposed by social media affect not only children but also the spouses. For example, one study found that men who take interests in the centerfolds in adult magazines judge women, including their own wives, to be less attractive than did men who

had no interest in the centerfolds (Coyne et. al. 2012: 389). Yet another study has found that men became less satisfied with their sexual relationships after viewing sexually explicit movies (Ibid). Similar result could be found in the women also. Another study brought to light that women reported being less sexually satisfied with their current partners get attracted towards popular romantic media, books and television programs on intimate relations (Ibid). Information technology is also a vital force to influence the diversified patterns of intimacy especially in sexuality in late modernity.

### *In lieu of a conclusion*

In this paper I have dealt with some aspects of changing family and friendship relations. In post-modern time these relations are being exposed to new technological and social forms and new modes of communications and as a result the relations are taking multidimensional and diversified turns. One notable transformation is the late modern intimacy and changing approaches to sexuality which significantly influence family and friendship ties. As a result, one can also notice more flexibility or fluidity in daily lives. Increasing divorce rates, the losing faith in the institution of marriage, the decision of not having children in living relations, lone parenting, rise in numbers of single-person households bear significance in shaping new interpersonal relations (Budgeon 2006:2). The increased focus on sexuality in conjugal and friendship relations indicate the expression of modern self. Most notably, in the era of reflexive modernity, the relationships are going to be reflexive, fluid but at the same time, these relationships are often fragile, temporal and often conflicting. The new relations would leave a destabilizing impact on the traditional norms, values and culture of a society. Industrialization, urbanization and modernization are the key factors of social change or societal development. But, at the same time, these factors lead to the formation of 'risk society'. According to Beck, there is 'relationship conflict' in many phases of life between men and women (Beck 1992:104). Beck (1992) and Giddens (1994) argue that 'the theory of the risk society is further characterized by threats to identity and the risks emerging from the collapse of inherited norms, values, customs and traditions. In contrast to primary, industrial modernity, which was characterized by the safety, security, predictability and permanence of inherited traditions, such as class location, gender roles, marriage, family, lifetime employment and secure retirement, the risk society is characterized by a dislocation, disintegration and disorientation associated with the vicissitudes of detraditionalization'. Beck

further points out that ‘liberation from the rigidity of social rules and inherited traditions can be empowering, but at the same time, can generate isolation, alienation, fragmentation and discontent. Without the safety and security of pre-existing traditions and predetermined social identities, individuals have no choice but to make choices about their self-identity, their relations with others and about how to plan and live their lives. Making choices entails taking a personal risk and for many risk-averse individuals, this results in a perilous condition referred to as risky-freedoms’ (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1995, cited in Ekberg 2007:346). The paper has been based primarily on Western experiences and the insights of the Western scholars; our responsibility therefore would be to look at non-Western societies and draw a comparative view of the East and the West. I have dropped hints that the Indian scholars would contest the views of the Western scholars on changing family and friendship relations while being grounded on Indian reality. One can also test the Western theories in the social and cultural situation that a country like Bangladesh offer.

### References

- Allan, Graham, 1998. ‘Friendship, Sociology and Social Structure’, *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, Vol. 15 (5).
- Allan, Graham, 2008. ‘Flexibility, friendship and family’, *Personal Relationships*, Vol.15
- Allan, Graham, 2001. ‘Personal Relationships in Late Modernity’, *Personal Relationships*, Vol. 8
- Beck, Ulrich & Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, 2002. *‘Individualization: Institutionalized Individualism and its Social and Political Consequences*, London: Sage
- Beck-Gernsheim, Elisabeth, 1998. ‘On the Way to a Post-Familial Family: From a Community of Need to Elective Affinities’, *Theory, Culture and Society*, Vol. 15 (3-4).
- Beck, Ulrich & Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, 1995. *The Normal Chaos of Love*. UK: Polity Press.
- Beck, Ulrich, 1992. *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. London: Sage Publications.

- Budgeon, Shelly, 2006. 'Friendship and Formations of Sociality in Late Modernity: The Challenge of Post Traditional Intimacy', *Sociological Research Online*, Vol. 11 (3).
- Cheal, David, 2008. *Families in Today's World: A comparative approach*. London: Routledge.
- Coyne, S.M. et. al., 2012. 'Gaming in the Game of Love: Effects of Video Games on Conflicts in Couples', *Family Relations*, Vol. 61.
- Durkheim, Emile, 1984. *The Division of Labour in Society*. London: The Macmillan Press Limited.
- Ekberg, Merryn, 2007. 'The Parameters of the Risk Society: A Review and Exploration', *Current Sociology*, Vol. 55 (3).
- Finch, Janet, 2007. 'Displaying Families', *Sociology*, Vol. 41(1).
- Giddens, Anthony, 1992. *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies*. California: Stanford University Press.
- Gentile, D.A. et.al., 2012. 'Do You See What I See? Parents and Child Reports of Parental Monitoring on Media', *Family Relations*, Vol. 61.
- Doughlas, J. D. U. & L. G. J. Charles, 1996. 'Adam Smith on Friendship and Love', *The Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. 49 (3).
- Shah, A.M., 1998. *The Family in India: Critical Essays*. New Delhi: Orient Longman.
- Jones, Gavin, W., 2007. 'Modernizing and Divorce: Contrasting Trends in Southeast Asia and the West', *Population and Development Review*, Vol. 23 (1).
- Pescosolido, Bernice, A. & Beth A. Rubin, 2000. 'The Web of Group Affiliations Revisited: Social Life, Postmodernism and Sociology', *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 65 (1).
- Ray, M. & K. R. Jat, 2010. 'Effect of Electronic Media on Children', *Indian Pediatrics*, Vol. 47.
- Therborn, Goran, 2004. *Between Sex and Power: Family in the World, 1900-2000*. London: Routledge.
- Telfer, Elizabeth, 1971. 'Friendship', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Vol. 71.



## **LGBT Movement in India**

Hena Khatun

Research Scholar, Deptt. of Humanities and Social Sciences  
IIT (ISM) Dhanbad

**Abstract:** *Although sexual diversity was prominent in ancient India, heterosexuality has become the norm of present times. People with different sexual orientation other than heterosexuality are subjected to various forms of violence and are made to live on the margin of society. This paper, which is based on existing literatures and newspaper articles, aims at first to discuss the diverse sexual past of Indian society and how with the advent of colonial rule, heterosexuality became the dominant and only 'accepted' form of sexuality. It also aims at discussing the trajectory of LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender) movement in India and the role of various NGOs and other organization in it. At last there are some suggestions regarding social acceptability of sexual diversity which if comes along with legal safeguards, would create a better society.*

**Keywords:** Sexuality, section 377 (Indian Penal Code-IPC), LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender).

### ***Introduction***

LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) is the initialism generally used to refer to the people with diverse sexual orientation and gender identity. It is problematic to bring all diverse sexualities and gender identities under one umbrella term and therefore many other abbreviations such as I (Intersexes), Q (Queer) are being added day by day to the initialism LGBT. Sexual diversity is the integral part of human history; there have always been people with homosexual (sexual orientation towards same sex), bisexual (sexual orientation towards both same and opposite sex) orientation and diverse gender identity (transgender, cross-dresser etc). In ancient India, there was positive attitude towards diverse sexuality and there is a number of sculptures, scriptures available indicating to its diverse sexual culture. It was home for various sexual diversities, as can be seen in various examples from ancient Indian tradition such as Shiva, one of the three main deities of Hinduism, is presented as half male and half female in one of his popular avatars **Ardhanariswara**, Shikhandi in Mahabharata was a

eunuch or third gender. It is said in the *Vedas* and *Kamasutra* that there are three types of human nature (Prakriti) i.e. **Pums Prakriti** (male nature), **Stri Prakriti** (female nature) and **Tritiya Prakriti** (third nature). There are examples like dual feminine deities in creation myth in **Rig Veda**, lesbian sexual postures in temples of **Khajuraho** and **Konark**, Queerness in Vishnu Sharma's **Panchatantra**, Vatsyana's **Kamasutra** etc. (Dasgupta 2011). However due to some socio-cultural factors hetero-sexuality became the norm of society and people who do not conform to this dominant social norm are subjected to violence, avoidance and humiliation while they are denied of their basic human rights. LGBT movement is a movement to bring equal rights for those people who are subjected to discrimination on the basis of their gender identity and sexual orientation.

### ***Root cause of the movement***

India had a tolerant attitude towards homosexuality and Same-sex love existed in ancient India (Kidwai 2000). Unlike the countries in Europe and North America, where homosexuality was strictly prohibited and homosexuals were subjected to humiliation and exclusion until very recently, the Indian society, on the other hand, was more relaxed with regard to sexual norms and there are numerous examples of same sex activities in ancient India. The only opposition came from the Hindu law book, 'The Laws of Manu' which prescribed sexual activities within the procreative heterosexual context. Homophobia entered into Indian society with the British and when they came to India, the *Laws of Manu* was one of the first texts they had referred. As a result, *Laws of Manu* became the ultimate voice of authority by the British and sex became confined to heterosexual monogamous marriages. This was legitimized in 1860 when the British government brought in Section 377 of Indian Penal Code according to which 'whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman, or animal shall be punished with imprisonment for life, or with imprisonment of either description for term which may extend to ten years and shall also be liable to a fine'. It was rooted in the Judeo-Christian religious morality that abhorred non-procreative sex. Based on this, homosexuality became illegal in India which was also supported by the nineteenth century social reformers and nationalists. In order to impress the British, prominent nationalists left the erotic aspects (because it was looked down upon by the British) of their tradition and homophobia became intertwined with modern nationalism.

Therefore, homophobic and transphobic religious attitude combined with inadequate legal protection against discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity exposed many lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people of all ages to egregious violations of their human rights. They are discriminated against in the labour market, in schools and in hospitals, mistreated and disowned by their own families and singled out for physical attack – beaten, sexually assaulted, tortured and killed.

### *Historicity of the movement*

The discrimination against people with diverse sexual orientation and gender identity has its roots in the lack of scientific understanding of sexuality. Sexuality was primarily understood in terms of religion and there were various myths associated with it. Before 19th century, there was little or no formal study of homosexuality and the early efforts to understand the range of human sexual behaviour came from European doctors and scientists, including Sigmund Freud and Magnus Hirschfield. Two books on human sexuality, namely, *Sexual Behaviour in Human Male* (1948) and *Sexual Behaviour in Human Female* (1953) by Dr. Alfred Kinsey opened up the path to a scientific understanding of human sexuality. For the first time Kinsey report brings forth the notion that human sexuality is not static but dynamic. After World War II, some attempts were made to create advocacy groups supporting gay and lesbian relationships in the United States. The primary organization acknowledging gay men as an oppressed cultural minority was the Mattachine Society, founded in 1950 by Harry Hay and Chuck Rowland. Other important homophile organizations on the West Coast included One, Inc., founded in 1952, and the first lesbian support network Daughters of Bilitis was founded in 1955 by Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin. In 1965, the civil rights movement won new legislation outlawing racial discrimination, and the first gay rights demonstrations took place in Philadelphia and Washington, DC, led by long-time activists Frank Kameny and Barbara Gittings. The turning point for gay liberation came on June 28, 1969, when patrons of the popular Stonewall Inn in New York's Greenwich Village fought back against ongoing police raids of their neighbourhood bar. Stonewall is still considered a watershed moment of gay pride and has been commemorated since 1970s with 'pride marches' held every June across the United States. All these events had great impact on sexual rights movements in other countries as well.

In India, the LGBT movement is still quite young, it has taken its first step only in 1990s. However, the movement did not start overnight and it was the result of several visible and invisible developments taking place over the years at the global and national level. In 1988 two women, Leela Namdeo and Urmila Srivastava from a rural background in Madhya Pradesh decided to get married at a temple which was quite a bold step taken by them back at that time. The role of 'AIDS Bhedbhav Virodhi Andolan' (AIDS-Anti-Discrimination Movement) popularly known as ABVA is very important in the gay rights protest in India. In 1991 ABVA came up with a report titled *Less Than Gay: A Citizens' Report on the Status of Homosexuality in India*, which was the first document to publicly demand queer rights in India. There were many developments, both at the micro and macro levels, which facilitated LGBT rights movements in India. Prince Manvendra Singh Gohil from Gujarat regal family openly announced that he is gay which inspired other common people to 'come out' and openly talk about their sexual orientation. Famous personalities like Amartya Sen, Vikram Seth demanded repeal of section 377 of IPC. Various gay pride parades were organized throughout the country and in 1999; the first gay pride parade took place in Kolkata and subsequently it spread across the country. In December 2001, an NGO fighting for gay rights, Naz Foundation, filed PIL seeking legalization of gay sex among consenting adults which was dismissed by the Delhi High Court in 2004. Since then a number of petitions were filed by the gay rights activists but every time they were dismissed on the ground that gay sex is 'immoral' and a reflection of a perverse mind and its decriminalization would lead to moral degradation of society. In 2008 gay 'pride parades' held in five Indian cities i.e. Bangalore, Delhi, Indore, Kolkata and Pondicherry. These pride parades got huge support from common people, media, celebrities etc. One LGBT magazine *Pink Pages* and one gay magazine *Bombay Dost* were published in 2009. In Madurai first LGBT Queer Rainbow festival was held in 2012 with demand to eradicate social discrimination faced by LGBT community and at the same time Kolkata Rainbow Pride festival was held in Kolkata. After the struggle of many years on July 9, 2009 Delhi High Court struck down Section 377 of IPC, decriminalizing homosexuality, which was a victory in the history of struggle against criminalization of homosexuality. But this did not last long as the Indian Home Ministry opposed decriminalization of homosexuality, calling it 'immoral' and in December 2013, the Supreme Court of India reversed the Delhi High Court decision. Therefore, at present, homosexuality is a criminal offence in India.

***Organization, leadership and the goals of the movements***

Various NGOs play an important role in spreading awareness about violence against LGBT community. The Naz Foundation (India) Trust, Humsafar Trust, and Udaan Trust are some of the organizations that are active in spreading social awareness. Naz Foundation was established in 1994 and it acted as the petitioner in the Delhi High Court case that found Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code unconstitutional. These NGOs do not confine their activities to the national level but they organize many programmes for LGBT rights awareness in collaboration with many international organizations. Humsafar trust organized Project Bolo-an Indian LGBT Oral history project which was funded by United Nations Development Programme. The main purpose of these NGOs was to enlighten people about homosexuality and also encourage people with diverse sexuality to fight for their rights and also to deconstruct the notion that homosexuality is 'unnatural' by organizing various seminars and discussions on the issue.

Major goals of LGBT Movement are:

- 1) To decriminalize section 377 of Indian Penal Code
- 2) To make people aware about homosexuality and dismantle the misconceptions about it
- 3) To seek people's attention towards LGBT issue and make them sensitive towards it
- 4) To protect individuals from homophobic and transphobic violence
- 5) To prevent torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment
- 6) To prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity
- 7) To safeguard the freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly of all LGBT people and their supporters
- 8) To make LGBT people aware of their rights and encourage them to fight to achieve them.

### *Impact of the Movement*

The LGBT movement, although young in India, has brought about some important changes in the life of LGBT community, particularly in the life of transgender people. In 1994, transgender community was given the 'right to vote' and on November 12, 2009, election authorities granted independent identity to transgender community in the voter list. Before this declaration, members of this group had to mention themselves as male or female in the electoral rolls but after this declaration they can now tick 'O' meaning 'others'. On April 15, 2014, the supreme court of India has given a landmark judgment about recognition of transgender or Hijra as a third gender following which a transgender woman was appointed the mayor of Raigarh, Chhattisgarh on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2015, the first of its kind in India. West Bengal for the first time appointed its first transgender principal in college and recently many movies are being made both nationally and internationally based on homosexual themes. As a result, more and more people are now expressing their feelings publicly; they are gaining confidence voice their problems in the public. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 2016, the Supreme Court of India agreed to re-examine section 377 of Indian Penal Code while accepting a petition. A five-judge Constitution Bench is hearing the petition. Furthermore, on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2018, the Supreme Court has decided to reconsider its decision of 2013, which criminalized the gay sex.

### *Conclusion*

Despite having a rich tradition of sexual diversity, heterosexuality became the norm in Indian society particularly since the inception of colonial rule. As a result, people with sexual orientation other than heterosexuality began to be considered as 'criminals' and were subjected to various forms of violence and discrimination. Due to inadequate constitutional safeguards these people could not seek for legal support and suffered both at the hand of law and society at large; they confine themselves in the closet. However, there are some positive developments taking place as various NGOs and other organizations are playing important role in propagating awareness about the issue and making people sensitive towards LGBT community. This had a positive impact as some LGBT people have decided to break the glass ceiling and come out of the closet to work with these NGOs in order to establish their rights. A long history of fights for equal rights among LGBT people has brought about some important changes but there is long way to go. Although some legal steps have been taken to protect the rights

of transgender people the condition of homosexuals is still worse in this country. Presently homosexuality is a crime under section 377 of IPC, and the State and the society at large attach social stigma to it. This makes the life of homosexual people very miserable and leaves no room other than confining themselves to the margin of the society.

### ***Recommendations***

Here come a few recommendations, which, if implemented, would create a society where everyone will be treated equally irrespective of caste, class, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation etc.

- The government has the power to repeal laws criminalizing homosexuality. Under the pressure of a small section of society which considers homosexuality as sin, the government is not taking any strong step to provide legal safeguards for the LGBT people. Therefore, we are still bearing with a law which is more than 150 years old and the paradox is that the State that had proposed the bill reversed its stand in the fear of public backlash. So, rather than only discussing the issues from time to time, the government should take a very strong step to decriminalize Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).
- Apart from legal safeguard, the most important thing is social acceptance of the LGBT people. Peoples' attitude towards LGBT community should change, without which even legal safeguards cannot function effectively.
- There is also need to bring some changes in the process we socialize our children. From the beginning the concept of binary sex i.e. male and female is imprinted in our mind. Children are taught in the same line through various agents of socialization, such as school, family, media, therefore they do not get an opportunity to have an alternative, scientific view about varied gender identity and sexual diversity. So, there is a need to bring important changes in the socialization process and along with parents, teachers should play an important part in educating young minds about sexuality in a healthy manner.
- Another important step can be taken by the medical science. Rather than focusing only on reproduction with regard to human sexuality, it should also focus on other and varied facets of human sexuality. This would help in overthrowing the notion of homosexuality being a



‘disease’ and also will help in preventing various barbaric medical practices for ‘curing’ homosexual.

### **References**

- Dasgupta, K Rohit, 2011. ‘Queer Sexuality: A Cultural Narrative of India’s Historical Archive’, published by *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, Vol.3, No.4.
- Vanita, Ruth and Saleem Kidwai (eds), 2000. *Same Sex Love in India- Readings from Literatures and History*. US: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gupta, Alok, 2006. ‘Section 377 and the Dignity of Indian Homosexuals’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, November 18, 2006.
- Fernandez, Bina (ed), 1999. *Humjinsi- A resource book on Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Rights in India*. Indian Centre for Human Rights and Law.
- Sheikh, Danish, 2013. ‘The Road to Decriminalization: Litigating India’s Anti-Sodomy Law’, *Yale Human Rights and Development Journal*.
- Govindarajan, Padmapriya, 2016. ‘Beyond Section 377: Where Does India’s LGBT Movement Stand?’, *The Diplomat*, retrieved from <https://thediplomat.com/2016/07/beyond-section-377-where-does-indias-lgbt-movement-stand/> accessed on 4 July 2016.
- Mukherjee, Susmita, 2016, July 4) ‘A Timeline of India’s LGBTQ Movement and Struggle against Section 377’ published in *India times*, retrieved from [www.indiatimes.com/news/india/lgbtq-a-timeline-of-india-s-lgbtq-movement-and-struggle-against-section-377-255429.html](http://www.indiatimes.com/news/india/lgbtq-a-timeline-of-india-s-lgbtq-movement-and-struggle-against-section-377-255429.html), accessed on 4 July 2016.
- Saxena, Shambhavi, 2016. ‘9 Moments That Shaped the Queer Movement in India’, *Youth Ki Awaaz*, retrieved from: [www.youthkiawaaz.com/2016/11/lgbtq-rights-movement-in-india](http://www.youthkiawaaz.com/2016/11/lgbtq-rights-movement-in-india), accessed on 24 November 2016.
- Basu, Indrani, 2004. ‘The Evolution of India’s LGBT Movement, In Pictures’, *Huffpost* retrieved from [http://www.huffingtonpost.in/2014/12/11/lgbt-movement-india\\_n\\_6307500.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.in/2014/12/11/lgbt-movement-india_n_6307500.html), 14 May 2004.



## **Redefining the need for Caffeine: The role of new age Cafés in Everyday Life**

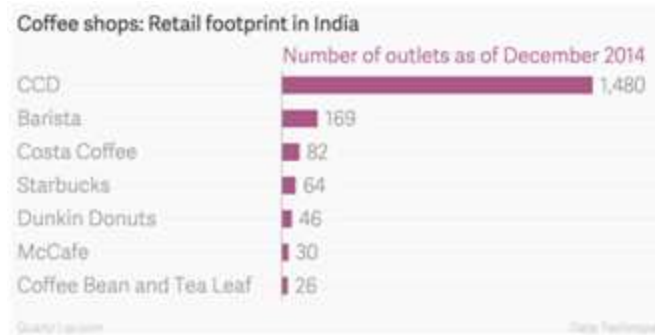
Palit Kahini

**Abstract:** *New age Cafés like the CCD has entered our lives as India began its journey in 'coffee culture', with its first outlet at Brigade Road, Bengaluru on July 11, 1996. The present research attempts to explore the role of these cafes in our everyday lives. The findings indicate that these Café hangouts have unknowingly beginning to take a major part in our lives, it is increasingly taking us to a place where the universe devoid of such hangouts is unthinkable, irrational and sad.*

**Keywords:** hangouts, café, coffee culture, public sphere.

### ***Introduction***

The everydayness of hanging out over coffee has started to impact multiple facets of our life, beginning with the concept of 'a coffee hangout' perceived as a cool affair. Consumption of coffee has travelled beyond the simple enjoyment of caffeine. CCD has literally built an empire through the social aspect of sitting down and discussing different things over coffee. Cafés like these has introduced an exotic element in the mix- a flavour for everyone, a style for every lifestyle. These places are increasingly becoming places for people to hangout, many also use them as a third place - not quite home and not quite work, but with elements of both. Make your purchase and the seat is yours - if you can find one. What you do with it and how long you sit there is pretty much your own business (theatlantic.com). The booming café market in India has attracted quite a competition from retail coffee chains, with CCD having the most number of café outlets (qz.com).



### ***Methodology***

The study was conducted by means of qualitative in-depth interviews with 10 respondents. In the New Alipore outlet of CCD, in-depth conversations with the respondents were conducted to understand their views and outlook regarding spending time in the café, their increasing popularity in urban life, and their role in our everyday lives. The picture inside the Café remained fairly similar throughout the week, with a slight difference in the nature of the crowd between weekdays and Sundays. Inside the glass room of the well-lit and stylish café, the world seemed to be different. The colour of the light created a cozy warmth about the room.

### ***The Café as the ‘Third Place’***

I observed a middle-aged gentleman for two consecutive Sunday mornings who came by the Café, sat by the corner sofa, and read a book. He seemed to enjoy his large cup of coffee with the book, as he spent more than two hours, ordering other snacks along with his coffee. He seemed like someone who would not be extremely annoyed by my curiosity, and I approached to break his lone peace.

Turned out he was a business person, and religiously visited the Café every Sunday morning if he was in the city. He offered to buy me a cup of espresso, and we talked.

This is my idea of a holiday. I come down here, have my breakfast, read a book and relax. From the busy schedule of the week, this always worked as a nice refuge. I could of course spend the morning at home, but it is never the same. This is almost as comfortable as

the home and better since it carries no weight of the household chores. I can read my book, or stare blankly outside, no one to tell me otherwise. For the last couple of years, I come down here whenever I have time to myself, and for a few hours I could be myself, and leave the world on the other side.

I felt his words, and decided to leave him to his peace, as he seemed enjoying that lonesome refuge quite a bit.

### *The Café as the ‘Safe Space’*

I met a married couple who visited the Café with their seven-year-old son. Their impression of the place was that it was a safe and comfortable space to have a bite and rest your legs when you are out in the city.

CCD is a place we know. We know what kind of food is offered, we know the ambience. Anywhere we go, CCDs are more or less the same. It is a safe place to visit with your family, and with the lot of chocolate cakes and drinks, my son loves it here.

I also met a bunch of college students on an evening in the Café, who certainly made everyone aware of their presence with their giggles. According to one of them, hangouts in Cafés like CCD have become an important part of their everyday life. They exclaimed heartily how much they liked to spend time there.

Here we can talk and laugh our hearts out, without even a frown from the co customers. People who come here are never in a brooding mood, and that’s special about this place. We spend hours at a time, never getting bored. Along with a comfortable sitting area, and delicious food, it has got a clean restroom too, which makes it ideal for a hangout place. It has indeed become a part of our lives, so that most of our photos uploaded in social media were clicked in CCDs.

I met and observed a few other people who visited the Café, and at the end of my fieldwork realized one thing for sure- people enjoyed spending time in CCD. It is fast becoming your likely spot to hangout in the city. Boyfriends met with girlfriends in CCD because it provided them a safe place to sit and talk, literally without breaking a sweat. People stretched their legs in CCD with a cup of coffee, on their way to places. Many people specifically chose CCD to hangout, to enjoy each other’s company.

### *Where else?*

I met a girl in her mid-twenties who expressed that she had wanted to visit CCD earlier. Many of her friends regularly met in CCD, but they didn't invite her. She was a little less affluent than her friends, and they suspected that she would not be able to pay her bill. She regretted that she had been missing out. Her friends posted pictures taken together in CCD in social media, and she felt excluded. As her concluding remark, she told me-

For someone who cannot afford CCD standards, and especially since people all around us constantly visiting CCD and talking about it and posting in social media, it is creating a kind of pressure. Nowadays it is also becoming harder to find friends who would hang out in cheaper places.

### *Discussion and results*

My experience of fieldwork revealed that these Café hangouts have unknowingly begun to take a major part in our lives, it is increasingly taking us to a place where the universe devoid of such hangouts is unthinkable, irrational and sad. The fact that such hangouts cost a few extra bucks is hardly confining it to a particular economic class. The 'sign value' (Baudrillard, 1981) attached to the priced cappuccino, or latte in the refined environment of these Cafés has successfully made it into a desirable item, sometimes even at the level of it becoming a 'necessity'. It has a defined contrast with the supposed mundanity of the old coffee places in India, and has redefined the concept of hangouts for people, making a clear hierarchical division among friendships.

Hangouts in Cafés like the CCD had a notable difference with the concept of 'public sphere' as explained by Habermas (1962). The public sphere being an area where individuals could come together and identify societal problems and through that discussion influence political action has been rendered obsolete in new age coffee places like the CCD. CCD provided a place where one could forget about their problems, let alone discuss it.

In an informal discussion with a group of CCD customers, I also discovered that consumer habits like hangouts in cafés like CCD has been silently determining the friendships one maintained. Over time, active friendships came to fall distant if someone did not participate in such hangouts. CCD hangouts reinforced bonds of friendship, as consumer habits like these

offered a certain commonality of lifestyle, and redefined grounds for friendship. Those who couldn't participate got left out of the social media posts, and memorable moments preserved in 'selfie's together. Media posts advertised active friendships to the world, and the left-out ones slowly slipped into passivity.

Thus, caffeine or not, in the neo-liberal economy, Cafés like CCD played a noteworthy role, influencing our taste and choices in everyday lives.

### ***Limitations and future research***

The study had a number of limitations. Firstly, the study was conducted in only one outlet of CCD over the course of a week. This could have introduced bias or left out a broader spectrum of the role of these Cafes in our lives. Secondly, the sample size was small, so that age and sex variables could not be taken into account during analyses. Future research should include these variables to have a broader understanding of the role of these cafes in present times.

### ***References***

Baudrillard, 1981. *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*  
St. Louis, Mo: Telos press Ltd.

Habermas, 1962. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*,  
The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2012/06/the-social-dynamics-of-coffee-shops/258443/>

<https://mastersofmedia.hum.uva.nl/blog/2012/10/19/coffee-just-an-energy-boost-or-a-social-atmosphere/>

<https://qz.com/377135/the-massive-gap-between-cafe-coffee-day-and-other-coffee-shops-in-india-charted/>

**Research Note**

**Partying at Nightclubs in Kolkata: A Search for  
'Nirvana' in Everyday Life**

Piyali Dutta Banik

India Today 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2017 reports:

Woman molested in front of husband in posh Park Street Night Club: The young couple say they went to M-Bar on Park Street on Saturday night to meet another couple who were their friends. When they sat in the reserved area to meet their friends, the perpetrator, whom they identified as the son of a prominent Kolkata businessman came and assaulted them. It was after the intervention of the club owners and bouncers that the couple could manage to escape.<sup>1</sup>

A reporter writes:

There are teenagers with pocketful of money looking for fun. There are middle aged travelling sales person looking for one-night stand. Then there are married businessmen who leave their wives behind and look for easy prey. There are poor housewives who are on the look out to make money from these predators. Also, there are college and office girls who bring their revealing dress in a bag and go for a quick changeover in the evening and go inside these discos. Yes, Park Street does all that in the night on hourly basis.<sup>2</sup>

The above two incidences have been cited with reference to probing deep into the inside story of partying at nightclubs. Kolkata's nightlife has witnessed a massive spurt from 2000 onwards. Popular nightclubs like Tantra, Roxy, Underground, The Myx, M Bar Kitchen have huge footfalls where the crowd enters the salvation zone with loud music and grooving to their favourite numbers. People shimmy round in glimmer putting on their party shoes with 'Abhi toh party shuru huyi hai!!!' (The party has just

begun). Such scenes are very common and it seems that everyone there is just trying to find their innate enjoyment within the crowd.

But one wonders what could be the source of 'enjoyment'? I have preferred to term the experience as 'nirvana' which literally means liberation or 'mukti' from the repeating cycle of birth, life and death. Here the term 'nirvana' has been deliberately used to refer to the liberation from the daily chores of life, which begins from the morning, continues within the busy schedules and probably would not give a chance to the individual for relief. Club and pub crawlers find it an easy option to release their everyday stresses within the colourful and soaring ambience out there.

Kolkata has a long history of accommodating people of various tastes- from club goers to music lovers. The average Kolkattans are not much unaware about the club culture. But what is striking is the dramatic change of tastes whereby people increasingly flock to the new age nightclubs whereas colonial and vintage clubs like Tollygunge Club, Calcutta Club, Calcutta Cricket and Football Club, Royal Calcutta Golf club bear a nostalgic and vintage flavour with selected crowds. Today's nightclubs' social character is marked by loud music, wild consumption of alcohol. Added to the fact, different generations are amazed by the colourful and glossy projections of party life in Page 3 of various city newspapers- be it the English or the vernaculars and are often curious about the inside story of night life.

An obvious question that comes to mind is what are the probable ways through which people search for 'nirvana' within nightlife? The answer might lie in the fact that they provide an excellent and fascinating avenue to individuals of different genders with 'a promise of wonderful experience on every visit. For women, nightclubs are a great place to dance with your friends and meet guys. The prospect of meeting attractive women is primarily what drives men to night clubs, and the atmosphere and experience cultivated by a nightclub is designed with these factors in mind.'<sup>3</sup>

In the second place, the concept of active nightlife is taking a new turn, whereby the urban youth of both sexes, step up with peppy music, unfurling themselves in the company of their 'friends'. The increased stress level is giving way to an active social life that an individual craves for after a weeklong mundane routine. 'The night-clubs became a delightful respite after a hectic week...Now the clubs are the soul and space of many workaholics' comments Priya, an IT company employee. 'Without party, nightclubs, I will go crazy if I cannot vent out the stresses of 12-15 hours of

work', confesses Aditi, a housewife. On being asked the reasons for partying she replied, 'You know the status and the toil of a housewife in our society is always unrecognized. At least meeting up some of your friends here and letting yourself free up here provides some kind of peace at the end of the day and a relief from unfixed working hours (laughs loud) for your family members who ends up without acknowledging your labour.' Abhirup, a legal adviser in an MNC says, 'I love dancing, and this is a fantastic place to unwind... I cannot manage for attending aerobic classes, yoga classes, or gyms from my busy schedules. This is a perfect place for keeping yourself merry while shredding off some calories, or at least your day's anxiety.' Put simply, it is fun that are driving the Kolkatans for more music, dance and colours of nightlife. It is the perfect place which lets one with a sensorial experience of forgetfulness about who he/she is supposed to be and the things he/she is supposed to do.

Adding to the fact is the argument that partying at nightclubs provides a great opportunity for socialising. Put from the view of symbolic interactionism, it explains how people attach meanings during the course of interaction based upon their 'idiosyncratic or subjective understanding' which may not necessarily reflect the interpretation of that particular interaction process by another person. Very common practices associated with the process include buying a drink, requesting for a dance, sharing drink tables, etc. Even introvert people might find nightclub as a perfect destination point for initiating conversations with a stranger, which otherwise would not have been possible.<sup>4</sup>

Nightclubs are also 'little powerhouses of status validation'. People now increasingly see clubbing as an important lifestyle statement. When the social networking sites gets flooded with 'likes' on posting a party picture, it somewhat brings about a feeling of elevated status or accomplishment within the individual. This altered attitude goes well with the increasing power for expenditure. With the shrinking size of the family, 'the disposable incomes have multiplied, changing the middle-class notions about entertainment.' This stands at par with Bourdieu's notion according to whom society is not only stratified by wealth but also by status. Nightclubs present itself as an arena for display of one's social class, social circles, wealth, taste in terms of fashion, food and art which ultimately plays a key role in the creation of a symbol for display of one's status.

Modern day Kolkatans, while living within the city, are busy in pursuing fast lives, making money within short span of time, chasing after rising graph of career, realising aims and dreams and thus are easily falling prey



to doses of stresses and strains in everyday life. For them, party or nightclubs are actually gateways for relaxation. They find enjoyment, companionship, even peace in a place surrounded by loud music. But does that bring out the entire picture into the forefront or is something left behind at the background? Drawing back references towards first two quotations, it seems that there is much left behind which is the cornerstone of the present paper.

Besides frivolous spending on alcohol, smoking, unhealthy food, it has been observed that health impact account much more than the economic expenditure. For example, though it is presumed the habit of drinking helps one in temporary relief from distress, but the fact is that people can sense much more distress, guilty, shame and a sense of being left out the next day after their hangover. Many of them experience a bad mood or a feeling of hollowness. This is often referred to 'post-party depression'.

Depression has been alarmingly on the rise; around 350 million people suffer from depression across the globe.<sup>5</sup> Dysthymia refers to persistent depressive order which is a continuous long term (chronic form) of depression. Many party goers have been found to be experiencing dysthymia and they resort to drinking in nightclubs and hanging round in parties as 'a route to escape'. But they admit that they end up with more aggression, emotional breakdowns or weeping for hours at the end. Even after returning back home, they suffer from feeling of extreme loneliness, desertion and next day self criticising for previous night's behaviour, invoking a new chapter of self hatred and criticism. This phenomenon can be termed as 'propensity for destructive escapism'.

Millennials in Kolkata are found in a state of confusion when in an effort towards escaping from everyday stresses and strains, they prefer to indulge themselves in partying but end up with increased feeling of loneliness, irritation, frustration, loneliness. Many of such individuals in search for companions attend these places but feel devastated when falling prey to fraud individuals or cheaters. Incidences are not very uncommon where we find females are too often victimised and are emotionally deceived or molested or being stalked or victimised in flesh trade rackets. Even male counterparts are dragged towards drug addiction, alcoholism, or often targeted to false concocted situations and are blackmailed thereafter. Since, many a times, youngsters visit nightclubs and party with people without informing their parents or families, landing up in a world of troubles over there make them feel absolutely broken. They feel they are left with no one with whom they can share their sorrows and problems as they feel being absolutely deserted.

Factors like the breakdown of joint families, gradual extinction of 'para culture' where people of more or less same age formed groups and engaged themselves in 'adda' (informal friendly conversation) after returning back from workplace on almost countless topics or the absolute fetish for 'posting' pictures on walls of social networking sites as evidences of elevated status, altogether combine to make the present-day Kolkata's millennials feel all alone. Added to this, the promising projections of colourful life on *Page 3* of city newspapers about the 'world of nirvana' in nightclubs omit the fact that the negative impacts can outweigh positive impacts in the long run. These factors culminate together to coerce the individuals psychologically while dragging them towards the hypnotic 'world of nirvana'. They might be enjoying the momentary happiness, fun and entertainment but one cannot ignore the fact that depression gradually and systematically engulfs them. Ultimately, I ponder over two unresolved questions- can the *nirvanic* world of nightclubs be termed as 'temporary band-aids' providing momentary relief to Kolkata's partygoers and nightclubbers from everyday stresses and strains, and if so, how long can it sustain its present efficacy? Or are we going to see that the party going people will be giving up the habit of partying just as the millennials in USA and UK are now increasingly abandoning nightclubs due to different reasons. Perhaps the possible conclusions can be reached at in near future through further insights and researches.

### ***Notes and References***

<sup>1</sup> Kundu, Indrajit. 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 2017. *Indiatoday.in.Kolkata*

indiatoday.intodayin/story/woman-assaulted-at-nightclub-at-park-street-in-kolkata/1/919536.html

<sup>2</sup>Mabaker, *The Other Side of Midnight Park Street Calcutta*

creative.sulekha.com/the-other-side-of-midnight-park-street-calcutta\_554003\_blog

<sup>3</sup>*The Psychology of a Nightclub*

<http://jordandetmers.com/2014/06/25/the-psychology-of-a-nightclub>

<sup>4</sup> Nebo, Ambrues M. *Sociological Perspectives on Nightlife/ Nightclubs*

<sup>5</sup>10<sup>th</sup> October, 2012. *Depression: 'A Global Crisis'*. World Federation for Mental Health

[www.who.int/mentalhealth/management/depression/  
wfah\\_paper\\_depression\\_wmhd\\_2012.pdf](http://www.who.int/mentalhealth/management/depression/wfah_paper_depression_wmhd_2012.pdf)

**Volume 5**

**ISSN : 2348-6538**

**March 2018**

**UGC Approved**

## ***SOCIAL TRENDS***

*Journal of the Department of Sociology of North Bengal University*



ENLIGHTENMENT TO PERFECTION

**University of North Bengal**

Accredited by NAAC with Grade A

# SOCIAL TRENDS

*Journal of the Department of Sociology of North Bengal University*

---

**Volume 5**

**31 March 2018**

---

## CONTENTS

### **Editor's Note**

### **Articles**

- Social Relationships Through Feminist Lens 1  
*Jhuma Chakraborty*
- Inscribing the Self by the Cultural Others: Kailashbashi Debi and Saradasundari Debi 15  
*Maroona Murmu*
- Rethinking Kosli Identity: Language, Literature and Culture of Western Odisha 37  
*Tila Kumar*
- Of Objective Claims and Located Accounts: An Ideological Plea to Rethink Knowledge in Assisted Reproductive Technologies from a Feminist Standpoint 64  
*Pinaki Roy*
- Gendered Bengali: Expectations and Challenges, in Ashapura Devi's 'Chhayasurya' and Partha Pratim Chowdhury's *Chhaya Surya* [Chhayasurya], and Sharadindu Bandyopadhyay's *Dadar Kirti* and Tarun Majumdar's *Dadar Kirti* 91  
*Anirban Ray*
- Relatedless, Integration and Reality: An Exploration in Counsellor's Chamber 114  
*Arpita De*
- Marxism, Bengal National Revolutionaries and Comintern 137  
*Bikash Ranjan Deb*
- Strength of Social Ties in Local Labour Market of Kolkata 175  
*Jayeeta Deshmukh*

Life of the Middleclass Aged in the Light of Changing Family  
Relations: A Study in Kolkata 187  
*Sinjini Roy*

Reflexive Society and Relationships: The Changing Patterns of Family  
and Friendship in Late Modernity 207  
*Maidul Islam*  
*Rozyna Begum*

LGBT Movement in India 217  
*Hena Khatun*

Redefining the need for Caffeine: The role of new age Cafés in  
Everyday Life 225  
*Palit Kahini*

**Research Note**

Partying at Nightclubs in Kolkata: A Search for 'Nirvana' in Everyday  
Life 230  
*Piyali Dutta Banik*

### ***Editor's Note***

I am indeed happy to see that the 5<sup>th</sup> volume of *Social Trends in published on time*. From the last volume, *Social Trends* is one of the journals that have been approved by the University Grants Commission (UGC) and I am happy that it has survived the periodic cuts by the UGC. For this volume we had received about 17 articles and we had to reject four of them based on reviewers' reports. As in the previous volumes we have mostly the young scholars who have contributed papers in this volume. As editor I read all the articles carefully and enjoyed doing editorial corrections and arranging them in an order. I apologise for the errors that will still be there.

Some of the articles in this volume have been selected out of the ones presented in the Research Committee (RC) on *Sociology of Everyday Life* as a part of the 43<sup>rd</sup> All India Sociological Conference held in Lucknow University on 9-12 November 2017, and some other articles have been selected out of the ones presented in a national seminar on *Nuances of Social Relations*, organized on 2-3 March 2018 at Sikkim University by the Department of Sociology, Sikkim University, in collaboration with the RC of the Indian Sociological Society on *Sociology of Everyday Life*. It is gratifying to note that the young scholars who present papers in seminars and conferences work on their papers to make them publishable. The papers by Tila Kumar of Delhi University and Maudual Islam and Rozyna Begum of Chittagong University were not presented in the seminar/conference we had organized but I am happy that these scholars of reputed institutions have taken interest in *Social Trends*.

The interdisciplinary character of the *Social Trends* has been retained. The contributors to this volume represent literature, philosophy, psychology, history, economics and sociology. We are committed to promote and preserve dialogue and closer interaction among the scholars of different yet related disciplines because this is the only way to transcend the rigid boundary of a particular social science discipline.

Some of the members of the Advisory Committee took interest in some of the articles published in the last volume and gave their comments. This prompted a dialogue between the author and the senior sociologists of the Advisory Committee. This is indeed a healthy development which will

definitely promote debates on methodological, social and political issues in the public sphere.

I take the opportunity to thank all the contributors, the members of the Advisory Committee and my fellow colleagues on the Editorial Board without whose help the present volume would not have seen the light of the day. I would also thank the employees of the North Bengal University Press for printing the present volume with utmost care.

Sanjay K. Roy  
Department of Sociology  
North Bengal University  
31 March 2018



Volume 5

ISSN: 2348-6538  
March 2018  
UGC Approved

SOCIAL TRENDS

# ***SOCIAL TRENDS***

*Journal of the Department of Sociology of North Bengal University*

Volume 5

ISSN: 2348-6538



ENLIGHTENMENT TO PERFECTION

**University of North Bengal**

Accredited by NAAC with Grade A

## ***SOCIAL TRENDS***

*Journal of the Department of Sociology of North Bengal University*

Volume 5, 31 March 2018

ISSN: 2348-6538

### ***Editor***

Sanjay K. Roy

### ***Associate Editors***

Saswati Biswas, Swatahsiddha Sarkar

### ***Advisory Committee***

Ajit K. Danda (Jhargram), Partha Nath Mukherjee (New Delhi),  
Abhijit Mitra (Kolkata), Prasanta Ray (Kolkata), Virginius Xaxa (New  
Delhi), Abhijit Dasgupta (Delhi), Madhu Nagla (Rohtak), Rajatsubhra  
Mukhopadhyay (Siliguri)

*Social Trends* is an interdisciplinary UGC approved refereed journal, published annually by the Department of Sociology, North Bengal University. All rights reserved. No part of the articles, excepting brief quotations in scholarly works, can be published/ reproduced, without the written permission of the editor.

Communications regarding the journal should be directed to Prof. Sanjay K. Roy, Editor, *Social Trends*, Department of Sociology, North Bengal University, Dist. Darjeeling, West Bengal, Pin 734013, Ph.9434875610; Email: sanroynb@rediffmail.com

## ***Note to the contributors***

**Social Trends** invites unpublished, original research-based articles (not exceeding 10,000 words) on contemporary issues of social relevance, brief notes on on-going research and book reviews (not exceeding 2000 words) on recently published books. Only soft copies of the articles/book reviews/research notes should be sent to the editor by email: sanroynb@rediffmail.com

For the sake of confidentiality authors are requested not to mention their name(s) in the main body of the text and not to leave a hint in the text that could disclose the identity of the author(s) [viz., sentence like 'For details vide my work/ article' must be avoided]. The first page of the article/ paper should contain only the title of the paper, an abstract (within 100 words) and a few keywords (not more than 10). A separate sheet containing the author's details (address for communication) and a declaration that the article/paper has not been published elsewhere and that it is not under consideration for publication elsewhere should be attached.

### **Citation/ referencing style**

Authors are requested to avoid footnotes as far as possible and, instead, use end notes; follow the author-date method of citation (Breman, 2013: 23); in case of two authors use (Sen and Roy, 2013) and in case of many authors use (Sen et al., 2012); use British spelling such as globalisation (not globalization), labour (not labor), and so on.

The manuscripts of the papers would be sent to expert reviewers, hiding the identity of the author. The *Editorial Board* reserves the right to accept or reject the paper, based on comments of the reviewer, or may ask the author for modification. The editorial board also reserves the right to edit manuscripts to standardize language and spelling, and to ensure conciseness, clarity and stylistic consistency.

### **Reference style**

**Book:** Breman, Jan, 2013. *At Work in the Informal Economy of India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

**Article in edited book:** Joseph, C., 1978. 'Workers' Participation in Industry: A Comparative Study and Critique', in E. A. Ramaswamy (ed.), *Industrial Relations in India: A Sociological Perspective*. New Delhi: Macmillan: 108-41.

**Article in journal:** Hirway, I., 1995. 'Safety Net of Renewal Fund', *The Indian Journal of Labour Economics*, Vol. 38, No. 2: 185-2000.

**Conference Proceedings:** Schnase, J.L., & E. L. Cunnius (Eds.), 1995. Proceedings from CSCL '95: The First International Conference on Computer Support for Collaborative Learning. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

**Article from the Web:** Bernstein, M., 2002. 10 tips on writing the living Web. A List Apart: For People Who Make Websites, 149. Stable URL: <http://www.alistapart.com/articles/writeliving> (accessed on September 22, 2011)

**Newspaper Article:** Schultz, S., 2005. 'Calls made to strengthen state energy policies'. *The Country Today*, December 28: 1A, 2A.

### ***Contributors***

1. Anirban Ray, Assistant Professor, Department of English, Presidency University, Kolkata; Email: anirban.eng@presiuniv.ac.in
2. Arpita De, Psychologist at Hindustan Health Point Hospital & PhD scholar in the Department of Psychology, Calcutta University; Email: epitome.arpita@gmail.com
3. Bikash Ranjan Deb, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Surya Sen Mahavidyalaya, Siliguri; Email: debbakash@gmail.com
4. Hena Khatun, Research Scholar, Deptt. Of Humanities and Social Sciences IIT (ISM), Dhanbad. Email: henakhatun.pu@gmail.com
5. Jayeeta Deshmukh, Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Presidency University, Kolkata-700073, India. Email: jayeeta.econ@presiuniv.ac.in
6. Jhuma Chakraborti, Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy, Jadavpur University; Email: jhuma.philosophy@gmail.com
7. Kahini Palit, Student, Jadavpur University, Kolkata; Email: kahini.friend@gmail.com
8. Maroona Murmu, Associate Professor, Department of History, Jadavpur University, Kolkata; Email: maroonam@gmail.com
9. Md. Maidul Islam, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Chittagong, Chittagong-4331, Bangladesh; Email: maidul.soc@cu.ac.bd
10. Pinaki Roy, Assistant Professor of Sociology, Government General Degree College, Mangalkote, Purba Bardhaman; Email: pinaki.roy88@gmail.com
11. Piyali Dutta Banik, M. Phil. Student, Department of Sociology, Jadavpur University; Email id: piyali.duttabanik@yahoo.com
12. Rozyna Begum, Guest Lecturer, Department of Sociology, Chittagong College, Chawk Bazar, Chittagong, Bangladesh; Email: rosynarosy@gmail.com
13. Sinjini Roy, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam Govt. College, Newtown, Rajarhat, Kolkata-700156. Email: roy.sinjini@gmail.com
14. Tila Kumar, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi, Delhi – 7; E-mail: tilasocio@yahoo.com

**Published by:** *The Registrar,*  
University of North Bengal,  
Dist. Darjeeling, W.B. - 734013  
**Printed by:** *The University Press,*  
University of North Bengal