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Dr. Zothanchhingi Khiangte

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Editorial

It is indeed fulfilling to be able to come up with the third issue of our journal *Transcript*. We are grateful to our eminent peer-reviewers who have spared their precious time to review the research articles published in this journal. Our special thanks goes to Prof. Ulo Valk from Tartu University, Estonia, Prof. Mark Bender from Ohio University, USA, Prof. Jyotirmoy Prodhani from NEHU, Shillong, Prof. Desmond Kharmawphlang, NEHU, Shillong, Dr. Dwijen Sharma from NEHU, Tura and to Dr. Rabindranath Sharma from Jharkhand Central University, Jharkhand.

This issue has interesting papers ranging from folkloristic analysis of tales and myths to postmodern analysis of literary texts such as Debojyoti Dan's analytical study of how Catherine in Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* loses her 'logos' in the teleological coordinates of the Victorian age with patriarchy and Christianity at the centre. The study traces how Catherine's writing of her narratives on the margin of the Bible is symbolical of women's writings pushed to the periphery juxtaposed with the male cannon at the centre. Maria Ines Palleiro from University of Buenos Aires explores the narrative matrix of the metaphorical expression of the 'lady ghost' in different versions-its structural, stylistic and thematic features- and the dynamics between history and fiction, local and global, oral and virtual in narrative expressions.

Dipti Visuddhankoon from Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University has a very interesting paper on the different narratological techniques employed by practitioner monks in Northeast Thailand (Isan), such as the use of various figures of speech, versification and rhythm in order to stimulate the mind and retain the attention of the hearers. Papers on cultural studies range from analytical study of creation myths such as Premchandra Singh's paper on the significance of the Meitei ritual song of *Ougri* to Geetanjali Baro's theoretical study on 'transculturation' and 'acculturation' using Paulo Coelho's *The Witch of Portobello* as the text.

We look forward to be one of the leading journals which will provide 'the best' platform for publishing original research works in the field of literature and culture.

Dr. Zothanchingi Khiangte
Editor

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POSITIONING THE POET IN POST MODERNISM

B. K. Samal

The most influential of all postmodernist and post structuralist theories is deconstruction propagated by Jacques Derrida. Derridean deconstruction simply problematises all habits of thought in any discipline by demonstrating how impossible it is to draw a clear-cut line between reality and representation. To Derrida, a text is not a finished corpus of writing some content enclosed in a book or its margins, but a differential network, a fabric of traces referring endlessly to something other than itself, to other differential traces. Thus, it is the intertextuality which is produced through the transformation of one text into another which is the "actual text". In this light, a poem may exist as a sea of signs with multiple referents, as an open ended system. According to Lacan, a 'text' is like a dream; you can never say what it means. For Roland Barthes, another French structuralist, the text is held in language, it exists only as a discourse and it cannot be apprehended as part of a hierarchy or even a simple classification of genres. The text is dilatory and it is plural. Thus, to all the deconstructionists the meaning of the text is not determinable. The meaning of the text decomposes and the text is shown to read against itself through the exposure to what might be called 'the textual subconsciousness'

But the question that arises is that will it be possible to decimate the objectivity of the text. Does not the subjective quality of the text trigger a multivocality of significance? So how can the critic who vibrates the text with an overplus of signification obfuscate the man [the poet] who created that linguistic structure? Poetic creation is known as 'de novo' means making there arise 'what is' from 'what was not'. Hence, postmodernist tendencies with their endless possibilities cannot simply deny the metaphysics of 'presence' which acknowledges the arranger of signs whose arrangement is subverted. Roland Barthes and Michael Foucault, both signalled the evacuation of the traditional conception of the author by announcing the disappearance of the author or even the 'Death of the author'. They denied the validity of the key 'function' or 'role' assigned in western thought to a uniquely individual as the purposive planner and determiner of all form and meanings or as the centre and organising principle of all knowledge. The author or narrator of Text thus becomes itself a purely linguistic product -as Paul de man puts it. The subject-author is granted at most the function of trying to master the incessant freeplay of decentred signifiers. This decentering of the author leaves the reader or the interpreter as the focal figure in the poststructural account of signifying practices. The coherent identity of the

author whose design and intention effectuate the form and meaning is located in space.

It is true that a text never carries any message from the author to the reader since it is each reader's self-replication and has no function other than to reinforce and prolong reader and author identity. But to define a text as an infinite interplay of signs is to assign it no distinct character which in other words can be put as 'the finite levels of meaning' and it is same as having no meaning at all. The poet may hardly be aware of what he is communicating and so the meaning of the text may go beyond the author, but the 'linguistic arrangement' that has created the untraced tracts of meaning can only be called the 'unrealised' of the creative self. The critic can situate himself in a 'prestructural activity' and fitting the 'divine perspectives' into a gradual evolving pattern 'he augments the meaning of his text. He can show one 'specifically stated' that has been ignored in inadequate account of the text. But it is wrong for him to think that he has shown something indeterminate and indiscriminate. The significance generated from the fluid sign system has ambushed the authorial intention and has reduced the writer to 'nothing more than the singularity of his absence' which seems quite impossible to accept. So, authorial meaning has its place with the differing spectrum of readerly introspection to evolve a conflict that contributes to the enhancement of knowledge. The authorial intention constructs the first premise of meaning that sustains itself in its transcendence. The poet in a way lives in the 'unintended'-the hiatus between gesture and statement.

Deconstruction is justified so far as it attributes creativity to critics. But it loses coherence and cogency in debunking the author. Harold Bloom in his 'The anxiety of influence' is expressly anti-poststructural by his insistence on the centrality of the human author in effecting what is distinctive in any literary work and is vehemently opposed to what he calls as dehumanization of literature by deconstruction and other theories of signification. So, post-structuralism with its conceptual framework cannot determine the artistic success or failure of a text. The mere insistence on one's individual response prevents criticism from further improvement beyond the initial stage of thought. This understanding of literature justifies the implied author's peripheralisation of the empirical author as Paul de Man explains in his essay 'Impersonality in the criticism of Maurice Blanchot'. Blanchot speaks about a process of mediation in the act of reading. It is the poet's voice which accounts for this, but he himself stands vanished in his work, and this very annihilation puts him in contrast with the reappearing and disappearing essence of the book with ceaseless oscillation which is the main statement of the work. So, absolute impersonality is deconstructed. When the author writes, the poet composes, he creates not simply an ideal, impersonal man in general, but an implied version of himself. So, implied authorship is irrefutable. The poetic construct has a rhythmic or gestural quality that reveals 'before unapprehended relations'. The personal idiosyncratic quality-the transcoding ability is brought to bear on the text when poetic structure encourages a pursuit of signs. Hence 'graphocentricism' of the text needs a reconsideration of its validity because a text is like a violet by a mossy stone, half hidden from the eye.

Foucault emphasizes the presence of the author as a 'functional principle' and raises the issue of transdiscursivity in 'what is an author'. He stresses authorship beyond the sanctum sanctorum of the text. A reassessment of Newton's text can contribute to the enhancement of the knowledge of gravitation, but it cannot alter gravitation itself.

Modifications have in them authorial figure with remarkable discursivity. So, the author

can be said to exist as a convenient explanatory device, a 'p priori' principle with which we are all able to domesticate a text for our specific purpose. The poet cannot be reduced merely to a manipulator of conventions ; otherwise the reader preoccupied in 'making texts' instead of reading them will lose the intellectual curiosity that furnishes him with the knowledge of something other than himself. Without a centre language is cut off from its human base and poststructuralism with its critical practices, as J. Hill Miller says, does not dismantle the structure of a text, but dismantles itself. He concludes by saying that any literary text when viewed as a ceaseless play of irreconcilable and contradictory meanings is indeterminable and undecidable. Hence all reading is necessarily misreading. Shall we run aimlessly with this big game-hunting of meaning in this distorted array of critical theories trying to find the meaning of meaning or position the poet as the sole creator of his creation and as the enlightened being. The question is left for debate.

IMPACT OF GLOBALISATION ON THE TEXTILE TRADITION OF THE BODOS

Bhagarwan Das

Abstract:

Globalization is a worldwide movement which has touched all the areas of human life including economic, social, commercial, culture, language, politics etc. Although at the advent of globalization, our life becomes comfortable to some extent, but when it comes to our culture, it has a very adverse impact on it. It has destroyed the cultural identities and has made people mechanical. The advancement of technology has replaced the handloom industry thereby motivating people towards it. The Bodo people of Assam is also affected by globalization in every aspect of life. They are now trying to adapt the changes which globalization has brought into their life. It is because they are aware of the fact that if they don't accept these changes, they won't be able to cope up with the present society. The textile industry of Bodos are greatly affected by globalization as it leads major changes to the lifestyle of them. The Bodo textile is very symbolic as it represents the status of the weaver. The Bodos produce textile which represents their beliefs, tradition or culture. The weaver make designs to the dress of everyday or occasional. But this handloom textile industry is now in the grip of so-called modernization or what we may called globalization which becomes a threatening to their cultural heritage of textile industry. The present study is an attempt to examine the impact of globalization on the textile tradition of the Bodo people.

Key words : Globalization, impact, textile, tradition, culture

Introduction :

Globalization is a process of global economic, political and cultural integration. It is the international exchange of views, ideas, knowledge and service arising from the modern advancement in transportation, telecommunication and infrastructure. Globalization has a wide role to play worldwide. With every advancement of human approach, the Globalization started on rooting its footprints at every place. In today's era the various means of telecommunication, social media and most importantly the internet has a big role to play in the spread of Globalization. Our deep rooted traditions and customs have loosened up their hold with the emergence of Globalization. Globalization has turned this world into a small village with a common mainstream culture. This paper is an attempt to assess the impact of Globalization on the textile tradition of

the Bodo people and will also discuss the highly rich skill and creativity of the Bodo people through their textile tradition. The hand woven textile is one of the creative products of them which reveals lots of significance in many of the folk tales. It is highly symbolic which represents the status of the weavers to a great extent. The way they make the textile design reveal to a great deal about their beliefs, culture and also the relationship with the environment. Handloom weaving forms a cultural constituent of the woman of Assam, and of course there is no exception of this with the Bodo tribe. Handloom weaving is a folk art which forms an integral part of the culture and tradition of almost all the ethnic tribes. The Bodo people make their own traditional attire which are quite symbolic to their traditional art and culture.

Review of Literature

In a brilliant review of the international economic relations in the 20th century, Ian Clark (1997) argues how fragmentation of communities and countries are interlinked with Globalization. In their book, *Globalization Unmasked* (2001) James Petrask and Henry Veltmeyer have described Globalization as another form of imperialism and how American multinationals are benefiting through the process of globalization. *Globalization and Local culture: The tribes of North-East India* by Anil Boro has highlighted the impacts of Globalization on different tribes including the Bodo tribe. *Folk literature of Bodos* by Anil Boro has written on Bodo folk literature. *Social and religious institutions of Bodos* by Premalata Devi has highlighted how the Bodos in the Brahmaputra valley of Assam, intermixed with the Assamese people, but still they have preserved their language and traditional socio-religious beliefs and practices. *A study of socio-religious beliefs, practices and ceremonies of the Bodos* by Kameswar Brahma has highlighted about the Bodo tribe. *Women and Globalization* by Sushma Srivastava has highlighted on how globalization has severely impacted women's relationship to food and the production of food.

Objective of the study- this paper is carried out with the following objective

1. To make an acquaintance with the traditional dress of the Bodos.
2. To get the idea of the textile design of the Bodo tribe.
3. To make an assessment of the symbolic significance of motifs and designs used in the textile industries.
4. To study the change in social position and status of women engaged in rural handloom enterprises in the context of Globalization.
5. To study the employment pattern of Bodo women of weaver communities engaged in rural handloom enterprises in the context of globalization of modern textile industry sector.
6. To recommend the effective strategy to strengthen and protect the socio-economic position and status of rural Bodo women in the context of globalization.

Methodology :

The present study has been based mainly on the field study and the conscious observation of the relevant data. During the course of the field study, the people of the respective area have been interviewed. For the collection of the data, necessary equipments including camera, recording

machine etc were used. Regarding the collection of data for the present study, the secondary data is also involved here which involve the available research publications, various reports, journals etc.

Discussion

The womenfolk of the Bodo tribe basically made their clothes. The most impressive characteristics of the Bodo people is that they show a special fondness for the coloured garments and therefore, they are quite acquainted with the art of dyeing and also with those of the materials which are used for preparing the dyes. They generally collect those materials from the leaves or roots of the trees. Here lies the uniqueness of the Bodo people that they make their attire with beautiful style and attractiveness. The traditional attire was always hand-woven which marks the testimony of Bodo women's talent in weaving. The Bodos are rich in their weaving and textile. Textile is the exclusive preserve of the Bodo women who start their training in the craft at a very early age.

Since ancient time, bodos were accustomed with the production of clothes from the thread of Eri and Muga. The Eri cloth is of dub colour and is durable. The Eri silk which is popularly known as "Endi Si" among the Bodos is light and white wooly silk. It is often referred to as the Ahimsa silk as the process does not involve the killing of the silk worm. Therefore, it is precisely used by the monks and those who practiced non violence. The Eri silk comes from the worm *Samia Cynthia ricini* commonly found in northeast India. It is reared, spun and woven by the women folk at home and thus contribute to their family economy. They weave different types of garments like scarve, shawl, dokhna, fali etc. The bodo women wear adept in rearing the Eri worm (Endi Emphou) and Muga worm (Muga latha) and find out the threads from them.

Dresses of the Bodo People:

Traditionally Bodo menfolk, both young and old used to wear "gamcha" woven at home which hangs down to the knees from the loins. Earlier Bodo old man wore wooden foot wear known as "khorom". There was no use of shirt in the past days. They only used a type of wrapper which is called as "jumgra" or "madamni gamcha". This type of wrapper is made of Eri thread. During the winter, the bodo male persons use this kind of wrapper to warm themselves. "Jumgra" is woven at home by the women folk. The manfolk also uses banians, a sort of coat, made of Eri thread. But it is pity that such kind of dresses of the Bodo male persons are now found rare, except those of the villagers of the interior places. Nowadays they put on modern dresses which are easily available in the market.

The dresses of Bodo women are one of the distinguishable feature of Bodo culture. Anyone can identify a Bodo womanfolk seeing the dresses of her. Generally bodo woman wears her "Dokhona" which she ties round her chest just below the armpit that hangs to the toe. The length and breadth of "dokhona" is made in such a way that it can be tied one round at a time in the waist. If it is plain, then it is called "Sala matha" and if ornamented it is called "dokhna thawsi". The latter type of "dokhona" is essential during the marriage ceremony. The bride and the two "boirathis" have to wear it. But nowadays, this ornamented "dokhna" is hardly available. The sala matha is made without 'agor' or 'phool' in Assamese. The "dokhna thawsi" is also used

by the "doudini" a dancing woman in kherai puja or also during the festivals or other ceremonies. Earlier the Bodo women did not wear any other body cover while except a scarf called allowman. But nowadays they wear blouse to cover her upper bosom and adorns with jumgra a small border decorated scarf. They wear various colours of scarf with full of agor to present themselves as beautiful.

A species of various types of ornamented Dokhna which bloom in the art of Bodo women are listed below-

- Phareo Megon (pigeon eye)
- Daorai Mokhreb (designs of the winkle of peacock)
- Daothugod (designs of doves neck)
- Phul Mobla (varieties of bloomed flowers)
- Daosha Mokhreb (winkle of chicken)
- Maoji Agan (footprint of cat)
- Pahar agor (designs of hill scenery)
- Moider agor (designs of elephant footprint)
- Dingkhia mohor (a design representing fern of dhekia)
- Gangu Godo (An agor representing the shape of a kind insect called Gangu)
- Singri Bibar (A design representing the singri flower)
- Boigri Bibar (A design representing the flowers of plum)
- Gongar thaiship (A design representing the fruit of Nui tree)
- Gandoula agor (A design representing the insect gandoula)
- Muphur Apha (A design representing the footprint of bear)
- Agor Gidit (A design representing a diamond shape)
- Daokhi Agor (A design representing the stool of a hen)
- Khusli Denta (A design which represents the spoon)

The orange, yellow and the sky colours are their favourite colours. The Bodo women do spinning with a spindle called takuri and the pit loom is called hi-chan-chali. The Bodo women wear fali, a long piece of cloth to cover the bosom. They weave it in various floral designs and colours and match it with the dokhona. Aronai is also a hand woven muffler with traditional floral design and found in various colours. Generally, it is used to gift the guest as a respect of welcome.

Impact of Globalization in textile Industry:

Globalization links the people all over the world. It has touched each and every field. Unlike other field, it has also entered into the textile industry. The rapid technological advancement in modern textile industry has laid a high volume of production rather than the handloom industry. The weakening position of handloom sector in the wake of global competition of textile industry, has posed a serious threat to the socio-economic life and livelihood of the

traditional Bodo weaver communities, in general and to the socio-economic status of rural women of these weaver communities in particular, rendering thousands of weavers unemployed and under employed, forcing large-scale migration to other states and closer of several co-operative societies and production centres, which used to provide support the weaving activities in rural areas. Due to the impact of globalization the changes occur in the dress habit of the people of Bodo tribe. Nowadays, the male members of the Bodo tribe prefer dresses of European style to their own traditional dress. These men try to compete with the modern civilization. The looms are of simple construction. The advancement of modern technology has replaced those of handloom industries. The modern textile sector has invested enormous capital in acquiring and installing sophisticated high technology equipment and tools from foreign countries. And as a result, it has built up a high quality of production. Therefore the handloom industry sector has to meet the challenges of competition in the global market. The Bodo women are expert in weaving which is always a female domain. It becomes an integral part of the culture and traditional life of them. At the present time the Bodo male persons uses the common dresses of the general societies like long pant, half pant, shirt, coat, pajama, dhoti etc to cope up themselves with the present society. Likewise the Bodo women also like to wear Mekhela and saree. The impact of globalization has changed their livelihood to a great extent, the weaver communities have been pushed down to the lower strata of the economic ladder. The low level of utilization of traditional handloom is directly attributed to inadequate and irregular supply of raw materials, low demand/sales of the handloom products, higher price charged for yarns and dyes and associated financial problems faced by weavers and co-operative societies as well. Though the impact of Globalization has changed their lifestyle, they still try to maintain their own traditional life.

Suggestions and Recommendations:

- To train the weavers especially the women to upgrade their skill and technology of weaving activities.
- Adequate price reduction and steady availability of yarns and dyes can contribute to enhance better utilization of looms, and to higher earning of the weavers.
- High priority should be given to poor weavers under various ongoing poverty alleviation and income-generating programme.
- Government should launch special publicity drive to promote handloom products.
- Government should encourage export of handloom products by providing needed financial assistance, proper guidance, facility and channel for foreign trade.
- Modernisation and technological up gradation, infrastructural improvement and welfare measures are very important for the development of the bodo weavers.

Conclusion

The indigenous handicrafts of Bodos were confined to household industries. In earlier days most of the cloth required for the family were made in their family itself. But with the changing time, the entire scene has been changed to a greater extent. The homemade products are now in a state of extinction as the mill products are replacing them. People are greatly tempted by those of the mill products which are always available in the market. Globalization

has changed the entire environment, and so as the tastes of the people. The young generation does not prefer to wear the western dresses rather than traditional homemade dresses.

Thus, it can be concluded that the Bodo tribe is one of the important tribe of Assam with rich cultural heritage. It is found that the weaving is a part of the Bodo women's life. Though at present, time has changed everything, it still survives among them and now it has facilitated the source of income for many families.

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COLONIAL MODERNITY AND DAIBA CHANDRA TALUKDAR'S EXPLORATIONS IN THE NOVEL *APURNA*

Madhuleema Chaliha

Daibachandra Talukdar's (1901-1967) *Apurna* was written in 1923. The novel begins with a distinct echo of Anandaram Dhekial Phukan's (1829-1859) famous visionary expressions about a need for a developed, progressed Assam. Phukan had envisioned a future for Assam in which he had dreamt of many things that he had been witness to in Calcutta during his long stay there as a student and otherwise. Fighting for a justified cause of using the Assamese language in the courts and the educational institutions in Assam, Phukan also had prepared texts to be used by the students in Assamese. In 'Englandar Bibaran' Anandaram Dhekial Phukan had given his visionary dream of Assam,

"and then you will see, Assam will shed its jungle foliage to become a garden, edifices will rise in place of huts, small boats will give way to steamers, and the whole place will prosper... O merciful God of Creation! Bestow good sense upon the people of Assam so that they make their country civilized, wise and religious, give them knowledge to perceive the want and hardship that shackle them, and with your extraordinary powers make them, and with your extraordinary powers make them civilized... when Assam will turn from a foliage into a garden, big steam boats will ply in place of small canoes, mansions of brick will replace bamboo huts, and in villages thousands of schools will come up, alongwith assemblies for learned discussions, hospitals and sanctuaries for the poor...usher that time soon, o supreme Father and Lord!' (129).

A replication of this can be heard in the utterance of Kartik in Daibachandra Talukdar's *Apurna*,

From beautiful, pleasant Assam, thousands of youths are going out to different corners of the world to earn varied knowledge and then returning home. Thousands of youth with plough and spade are bringing down trees and forests, making Assam more magnificent than heaven. In whichever direction you turn your eyes to, you will see the Assam of jungle and thickets giving way to rolling paddy

fields and expanses resplendent with fruits and flowers... I saw the library of Assam, the abode of learning. All around it there were figures of past and present ,eminent poets and thinkers like Milton, Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Goethe, Byron, Keats, Kalidasa, Bhababhuti, Firdausi, Omar Khayam, Sankar, Madhab, Socrates, Luther and Burke. They were all seated together as if to prove that Assam, queen of Nature, was the place of choice for poets! ...I saw Mother Assam seated amidst these sages, thinkers and poets of the Orient and the Occident. Smiling gently, she lifted her lovely veena, striking a delightful note of harmony between the East and the West. Oh, elder brother, how exquisite was that tune, how sweet, what infinite power it had to inspire the soul! Enraptured by that melodious strain, the youths of Assam seemed to cry out for newer ideologies to follow. (Das,57)

These two writings have a gap of about eighty years between them. Anandaram's dream was the guiding light for all who tried to tread in the path towards modernity. From the expressions of this great visionary of Assam to the pages of the novel written much later, the common feature seems to be that sense of optimism and wonder at the growth and influx of a 'newness' that had enveloped the land. In Talukdar, however, there is the stress upon reformation that needed to be locally tempered to suit the needs of the land , in Phukan, in the preceding century , it was a solemn expectation on his part, a prayer, for his people, to usher in a blissful future of whose promise he tried to read in the coming of the British with whom he shared a relation of 'equality'. (Barua, Gunabhiram , Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukanar Jivan Caritra, Asam Prakasan Parisad: Guwahati, 2007. pp.13, 38) In his prayer, Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan asks for 'goodsense' for the Assamese so that they become 'civilised' — 'xobhyo'. That itself is a reflection of the touch of 'modernity' that he had inherited from the outside world. Rabindra Nath Tagore in 'Crisis in Civilisation', mentioned that 'sabhyata' itself is formed from the term 'civilisation'. Prior to the coming of the British, apparently, there was no need for being conscious of its 'lack' in the Indians .What we had, as described in Manu, was sada-char (proper conduct). (Tagore, Crisis in Civilisation,13). This was adopted by Gandhi as ku-dharo and su-dharo as had been there in Gujarati.

"How does Gandhi understand civilization if not as a people and their practices? Perhaps a look at the original Gujarati text will untangle this seeming puzzle. In the 1909 Gujarati text, Gandhi uses the terms 'sudh?ro' (good practices/improvement) and 'kudh?ro' (bad practices/deterioration) to refer to what he later translates as Indian civilization and Western/modern civilization, respectively." (Ashar,255)

This can be read as a reflection of what the 'white man's burden' had introduced, in however sophisticated and 'modern' a way in this context it may be, the concept of 'civilising' the colonised people. The negative impact of it was yet to be manifested as other contemporary writings like Bolinarayan Bora's Mau, mentioned above, show us. In the context of Apurna, we explore

Kartik and Premadhar's many long conversations in the span of the plot that constitutes the novel. The strong sense of imitating the West is present, along with an idea of nation building at work, showing the fractious modernities. So the long conversations in Talukdar reveal mostly the dilemmas that the land of Assam was facing at the rise of nationalistic passions and also the warmth that had been a factor for jubilation for the Assamese lot at the resultant fruits that they were enjoying of whatever colonial modernity had to offer. The dream of a better, stronger Assam is what the novel begins with. An assimilation of the East and the West is expressed as the desired path. Even then the nuanced and categorically localised version of that assimilation is to be noticed in the aspirations expressed by the protagonist Kartik in the novel. Kartik is a brilliant young man pursuing his studies in the city along with his first cousin, Premadhar. They both are under the strong influence of a feeling of emergent nationalism that they wish to be a part of. Between them takes place the discussion about nationalism as an Indian one and also that of an Assamese one. This question of Assamese identity had been a precarious one since India's independence and even before—going back to 1826 when Assam came under the British without ever having been under the Mughal Empire as such. However Talukdar exposes the growth of this debate in the novel with a decision provided through the expressions of Kartik who convinces his brother Premadhar that "Assamese nationalism will be a contributory factor of Indian nationalism" and that the "Assamese should contribute to the cause of nationalism through their own Assamese identity." (Das, 94-95. Free Translation.)

His brother accepts this and we see him after that as more of a contributor towards nationalism actively. Prior to that Premadhar was described by the novelist more in the context of his existence as a student partaking of the benefits of a modern education, reading Shakespeare and reveling at its greatness and even trying to understand vis-à-vis his beloved Purnima in the light of Shakespeare's depiction of love in his characters. So we find in them these assimilative features as well as the strong individualistic urge to be the forerunner of a new form of achievement through the best that the west had to offer and yet be one's own self. Kartik goes to England but comes back, much to the surprise of all, as a khadi clad nationalist. In the beginning of the novel Kartik is shown to be reveling at the beauty of the pastoral lives led by the characters like Champa from the nearby Karbi village. To this the novelist, introduces the gaze of the outsider in a malevolent way — as that of the rapists who commit violence in the 'peaceful land'. The violence was inflicted by the 'outsiders' who had entered the peaceful land of pastoral beauty. They were Mymensini infiltrators who, again, represent the negativities of the times of change. Contextually, when Kartik seeks for a 'bixalyakarani' or a panacea to all evils, the expectation is that of a Western spectre to do justice to the ailing land. But the 1920s when the novel was written was very different from the 1840s when Anandaram Phukan had his vision. So to follow that, some modification were in order. That is what we find in Kartik and Premadhar's nuanced acceptance of colonial modernity in its various guises. Unlike in Anandaram's days, the English could no more be considered as most benevolent, the 'deliverers' from woes. From Gunabhiram Barua's biography of Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, we can surmise that Anandaram as a 'native' official of the government had elicited mixed reactions from the general masses. Some had even derided the fact that the 'sanctity' of the British was tempered by the native Assamese Anandaram joining their haloed clique as one of 'them'. Gauri Viswanathan had

mentioned about the many phases and guises of the British colonisers in putting forth their agenda of British culture through education and the potent excuse of 'civilising' mission. Very less is available of Anandaram's direct interchanges with the British —apart from his famous articulations on contemporary issues of important correspondence with the British higher officials— like when elaborating on the true characteristics of the Assamese language to Moffatt Mills, when the language was undesirably withdrawn from any official use in Assam (1837). In his 'Few Remarks on the Assamese Language', AnandramDhekialPhukan had deliberated directly with the British about native issues. This can be considered as an, however anachronistic, instance of the 'empire writing back', as Phukan's great influence in his road to higher education were two Britons who had influenced and urged him sufficiently to venture forth to Calcutta for his education. (Barua,). On being offered the high position of an government official under the British, Anandaram's benefactors Mr. Jenkins and Mr. Methei did not stop from reminding the former of their own influence and advice that had benefitted Anandaram in securing a deserving post within the government. Mr. Jenkins according to Gunabhiram, was replied with a positive note in agreement of what was reminded of by the former on having been well advised by him in time to go to Calcutta and thus to come back fit for a government post under the British. During Anandaram and his nephew Gunabhiram Barua, his biographer's, time, it can be seen, it was not improper or anti 'nationalistic' to consider the British as benefactors, as has already been pointed out here. So did Anandaram Dhekial Phukan. (Barua). Anandaram Dhekial Phukan's major writings are evidence of the fact that he lived in Assam as an official of the British government who possessed the overwhelming zeal and zest to bring in a pervasively reformatory change for a newer and better Assam. Through the use of Assamese language, through influences by his writing in Arunodoi, Anandaram broached his views which seemed to have possessed his whole being during the short twenty nine years that he lived to successfully, bring about the beginning of a truly new Assam. To write in the first newspaper published in the British initiative— or the American Baptist Missionaries, in this instance— was a time when the British as the 'other' was not well defined in a political sense of the 'enemy'.

Having said this, Daibachandra Talukdar's adaptation of Anandaram's famous expression in the character of Kartik does act as a replication of that dream which showed the Assamese people the path towards emancipation and modernity. This again is significant to the assessment of the passage of eighty years towards a similar goal of being modern. Renowned scholar, critic, Ranjit Kumar Dev Goswami states Phukan's deliberations with the British as the very embodiment of a sense of modernity, pointing out that to have had pointed out critically, about characteristic features of the language in 'Few Remarks About the Assamese Language' to the British is indicative of the complexities of the modern attitude itself.

Reflection of that culture to which they belong. Therefore, a proper analysis of symbolic expressions in Galo proverbs can build up the structure of Galo culture. It is this cultural signification that the present paper looks to. By scrutinizing three popular proverbs, the paper tries to establish the cultural identity of the Galo.

In order to establish that proverbial sayings unconsciously signify cultural symbols, the classification of proverbs has been kept aside as the focus of the paper does not need any classification. Instead, the symbolic analysis of three proverbs is placed to prove the point. The

analysis is done on the basis that the Galo proverbs in their very act of symbolic conveyance, become instruments of defamiliarizing the language. And to be defamiliarized, the proverbs use symbols that are culture-specific and are typical of Galo tribe. The symbols in question may have different uses in different cultural contexts, but the signification referred here is in Galo context. The symbols in these proverbs signify aspects that are specific to the Galo worldview.

Proverbs as Cultural symbols

The analysis of the given three proverbs display two levels of meanings— the denotative or the manifest meaning at the first level, and the connotative or the latent meaning, at the second level. At the denotative level, a proverb carries only its literal meaning. But at the connotative level, it transcends its formal feature of being just words and refers to a meaning that is distant but expressive. It is expressive because it speaks of some other features that carry greater relevance, greater effect, and greater importance. In asserting these greater values, the proverb use symbols that convey greater relevance. When these symbols are brought to scrutiny, the Galo worldview is amply magnified and the proverbial symbols become objects of Galo cultural identity. As instances, the analysis of the following three Galo proverbs is placed.¹

Both in Anandaram Dhekial Phukan's words and in Talukdar's echo of it in Apurna, the very common allusion to the British as more healthy and being concerned about their wellbeing is mentioned. This has been urged of the people by Phukan in more than one place and Talukdar too makes ample use of this view about stronger physical and mental condition of the British being an advantageous factor for them. Health and physical factors and the relation with modernity has been an issue since long discussed. Reference can be made of Rajnarayan Basu's mention of the differences found in the issue of health in the time he wrote about it in 1873 and before that when he compared to that (Basu, Rajnarayan, Sekalaar E kal). About Rajnarayan Basu's criticism of the western way of being modern, by letting western way of living effect our health through changed timing for eating as well as changed eating practices, which resulted in weaker health. Rajnaryan Basu is a 'modern' Indian who compared and found it difficult to follow western practices regarding health and physical conditioning. Partha Chatterjee, in *Our Modernity* mentions

"There is nothing laughable about his main project, which is to prove that there cannot be just one modernity irrespective of geography , time, environment or social conditions. The forms of modernity will have to vary between different countries depending upon specific circumstances and social practices. We could infact stretch Rajnarayan's comments a bit further to assert that true modernity consists in determining the particular forms of modernity that are suitable in particular circumstances ; to identify or invent the specific technologies of modernity that are appropriate for our purposes... if there is any universally acceptable definition of modernity, it s this : that by teaching us to employ the methods of reason, universal modernity enables us to identify the forms of our own particular modernity".

Chatterjee, Partha

We find similar mentions in Asish Nandy about the West floating the idea of effeminate, unhealthy Indian males to make the people enervated and lose confidence in themselves. Rajnarayan Basu's discourse is about the opposite : that people began losing their health in times of the British ,trying to adapt to new habits in lifestyle. The Kartik of the first part of the novel *Apurna*, is a person much in awe of the good habits of the British that make them healthier than the Indians. He also laments, like Rajnarayan Basu, about it being a recent phenomenon in Indians, though Talukdar does not say that imbibing western habits have made it so. "Listen Bhadia, our people are gradually becoming unhealthy, they donot have energy in their body , no strength, they can not laugh heartily, can not compete with others. They do not enjoy, nor do they cultivate the habit of physical exercise, they do not use better things that are used in European societies. Without good flow of healthy blood in the body, can the body be fit?" (Das, Jogesh, pg 61) Kartik mentions about his feat of crossing the Brahmaputra , more as part of swimming as an exercise to benefit him with good health. This also reminds one of the earlier 'renaissance' in Assam when Sri Sankardev (1449-1569) is said to have crossed the Brahmaputra during the monsoons, which is usually cited as a proof of the physical prowess of the saint reformer, and thus also about the physical wellbeing of the Assamese of his times. This discourse about of a declining health has been one way of giving in to Western version of accepting 'ourselves' as weak, the effete image of Indians as put to good use by the British, even in the context of Mahatma Gandhi, it was thus projected. AsishNandy refers to the concept of 'ardhanarisvara' in Indian thought in the context of the wrong reference to the Indian male as effete. He elaborates that as a quality that arises from non-violence that enables men to have access to 'protective maternity, and by implication to the god like state of 'ardhanarisvara' , a god half-man, half-woman. Again, he connects this attribute to that of the 'satyagrahi', whose passivity is a strength. (pp 54,110, *The Intimate Enemy*)

Kartik, enriched with modern education, is presented as the brilliant young man who is accomplished with the best that was available of modern west in education in Assam and abroad. However, the writer takes him through the trajectory of an alterity in this modernity. While leaving India for England (bilat), he thinks of all that was dear to him, "All the while his mind was filled with thoughts of his 'golden' Assam. He remembered Champa, remembered Hema's beautiful countenance, about professor's generosity, and he also remembered his active, patriotic Premadhar. All at once he thought of the simple minded Miris and Mishings, the peasant folk of his village who reside in their hutments, and about Assam's beautiful pastoral scenes, but most of all, relentlessly, he thought about the forming of a new Assamese platform." (Das, 120). This makes it amply clear that Kartik seeks a different sort of 'newness' (nobyoo) than what was already there. A mutation of the original to suit the Assamese reality was what Kartik seeks after. This points to the colonial subject's chosen path towards emancipation through a desire to mold existing situations to his or her own convenience and thus fulfill the quest for 'selfhood'. So, though well accomplished through the western system of education that was available, Kartik realized that there was still some 'panacea', '(bixalyakarani)' needed for the ailments that persisted in the land of Assam. This panacea or the instrument /weapon to detoxicate /save the country

¹ RanjitDevGoswami hasstated that in his book *Prabandha* 1973-2015.

from (or the state as an extension for the country, here) is an indigenous Assamese one of the tenets of Vaisnavism, the teachings of Sankardeva and Madhabdeva in Assam, which had ushered in a renaissance in the 15th century. The names of Sankardeva and Madhabdeva were there in the first part of the novel along with those of the great minds of the world who were mentioned in the sense of an invocation to seek knowledge and wisdom from, to find fulfillment as independent selves. Talukdar adds these Assamese names to the list of names of the world's leading scholars, litterateurs and great minds, because he believed their path to be one of the paths of modernity, specifically, for Assam. The undercurrent for the quest for an alternate modernity is evident again when Premadhar states that breeding silkworm to get material for clothing signifies more than what the act itself stands for and materially produces. Premadhar says to Hemalata, "Hema, it's not enough to breed silkworms, learn to comprehend what is inherently there, as this is also about life, literature, novel, and poetry, if you can look at it that way"(...) Thus the path towards independence is towards the greater one of a free and mature mind of aesthetic and cultural freedom to, it implies.

The anticlimax of finally finding Kartik on his return from England not in any western attire but in khadi is again a subversion of the discourse of western modernity. Instead of continuing to be a 'mimic man', he became an independent subject, reflecting an alternate modernity in its own habitation in him.

There is a continuous movement towards acceptance and resistance of what the newness had to offer. Kartik's appearance in khadi and his avowal and commitment towards the cause of freedom of his country is connected to the issue of his accomplishments in modern education. This mutation of the white man's programme/agenda towards civilizing the colonised in this case is further brought in connection with more of indigenous attributes by Daiba Chandra Talukdar. Kartik mentions about a panacea for the ills of the society, but going back against common expectation, he comes back with no such remedy from the west. He comes back home to Assam to revoke the treasures that are there in Assamese Vaisnavism. For Kartik that is where the elixir of life is. This mutation and subversion of an available modernity is indicative of the strong latent resistance to the ways of the West. It was the time of Gandhi's call to all Indians to participate in the National Movement, so also Kartik shortened his stay in England and came back without pursuing higher studies after completing bar-at-law, in spite of being given the opportunity to do so by his benefactor, the Professor. Even Kartik's cousin brother Premadhar who studied in Gauhati is shown as one who was committed to this quest for freedom by turning his engagement to the breeding of silkworms, taking the task to almost a spiritual realm. It is a replication of what the country at large was going through. Somewhere at the beginning of the novel, Kartik and Premadhar had a conversation in which they had vouched to take part in the National Movement by representing Assam in her unique indigenous way. This uniqueness is identified with the theme of rearing of silkworms, "Hema, what can be better way of worship now in Assam apart from the weaving loom and the ploughing tool of the farmer?... Assam will rise to its state of plenitude with the worship or offering that we make with true feelings in this way" (Das, 126), keeping alive the egalitarian spirit as preached by pure Vaisnavism, "the ideals of Vaisnavism, that which has always been here with us!... To make the Assamese a true nation, there has to be a revival of Vaisnava ideals in Assam" (Das, 133) and by going back to a healthier

state where, in Kartik's mind, a pristine state of pastoral calm had reigned over the rural parts of Assam which had signified an eternal state of beatitude where the plains and the hills people lived happily and no outsider (e.g. the Mymensingia men who abducted Champa, and by extension, the British) had its dominating gaze over that beauty. "Kartik was then thinking of the past in when beautiful Assamese women with smiling faces, strength in their body...dutifully engaged themselves in their many chores without any fear of being dependent...they merged with nature to be one with its energy-giving power, to become the mothers of real, fearless, heroes..." (Das, 90). We see here the overlapping of national and regional ways towards the goal of national freedom. The west represented overtly by education in 'bilat', and other influences back home, is left undone by the localised attempts at re carving an identity of regionalism. It is a paradox that the dream of Anandaram Dhekial Phukan and its replication in Talukdar's novel through Kartik was inspired by 'bilat' and 'ingland' in both contexts. But the same was furthered in a very different trajectory created by the fervor of nationalism against that dominance by the west. In this context, Ranajit Guha had mentioned,

"whatever is indigenus in that culture is mostly borrowed from the past, whatever is foreign is mostly contemporary. The element of the past, though moribund, is not defunct; the contemporary element, so vigorous in its native metropolitan soil, finds it difficult to strike roots as a graft and remains shallow and restricted in its penetration of the new site. The originality of Indian politics of the period lies precisely in such paradoxes, which pervade the entire spectrum of power relations." (Guha, Ranajit, *Dominance Without Hegemony*, pg. 62, OUP, 1998, Delhi).

From politics to the general idea of modernity this can be extended. Reflection of this is contained in the dynamics of regional ideas vis-à-vis national in Apurna. The colonial subject of the Assamese youth Kartik is representative of that fractious modernity which existed as a part of the bigger picture. The way Daiba Chandra Talukdar lets Kartik deal with it, shows the subject's 'self' evolve in his own path with a view towards emancipation from the situation—towards his idea of the unique Assamese 'nabya' as different from the western education laden, motor-car filled modernity of the spirit of the age, that the text makes an exploration of. "Professor, Hema, and her mother were travelling by motor car...Indian civilization was being overwhelmed by the western." (Das, 88) Kartik, in fact, utters that this path towards freedom as shown by western modernity is 'unnatural'. "let's break this new form of civilization, this façade of a fake Assamese civilization in the form of the new needs dismantling! Unnatural imitation! O, it's lovely to think like this". (Das, 90). The followers of the modernity of West are following an 'unnatural' thing. To 'naturalise', here, can be understood as 'to make indigenus'.

There is no strong criticism of the West but rather an expression by Kartik that he could not find place among the British, in England, so he came back as a 'soha' or peasant, as he was. A kind of rejection is hinted by the author of Kartik by the West in the way he would have liked to be accepted, but that did not turn him to a 'mimic man' as has already been discussed. Kartik had praised the British on many counts before his overt change towards a stress upon revoking the historical past. This can be found in the contemporaries like Lakhminath Bezbaroa, who invoked the past glories of Assam by singing,

"May the drums beat, the conch shell sound, and the Mridanga beat,
Assam is on its path towards achievement, let us say, 'jai aai Asom' /
...Sankaragave us the true religion/Lachit gave us strength, Jaimati
with her virtues made Assam proud..." (Bezbaroa Lakhminath, Jonaki)

This is once again an example of going back to the 'originals' in the time of facing a situation that rises to a crisis in becoming hybrid. Unlike in earlier literature like Kaniyar Kirtan (1866), by Hemchandra Barua (1835-1896), in Apurna (1931) Vaisnavism is projected purely as a unifying factor. Barua on the other hand, at an earlier time, had written extensively on the evils of the time like corrupted Vaisnava 'mahanta's and other aspects of Vaisnavism. The 'mahanta's were found in a disadvantageous position with the emergence of newer issues at the wake of colonial modernity that reduced their earlier position to some extent. Till the need for a unification through socio-cultural agencies like religion and politics became urgent with the growth of a nationalistic discourse, room for general satire regarding the receding values in some religious hubs resulting from shifts in power within the traditional educational and religious strongholds, gave ample scope for satire in literatures that chose to depict it. With a change in time in the later period, the positive aspects of Vaisnavism regarding its characteristic of being a pervasive message of peace and egalitarianism, gained footage. This also is a total overturning of the colonial discourse of the 'civilising mission' of the colonisers .

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THE ARCHITECTURE OF 'C' IN THE GAP OF THE TEXT : AN ANALYSIS OF CATHERINE'S 'LOGOS' IN *WUTHERING HEIGHTS*

Debojyoti Dan

It was a Testament, in lean type, and smelling dreadfully musty : a fly-leaf bore the inscription- Catherine Earnshaw, her book,' and a date some quarter of a century back...scarcely one chapter had escaped, a pen-and-ink commentary- at least the appearance of one- covering every morsel of blank that the printer had left. Some were detached sentences; other parts took the form of a regular diary, scrawled in an unformed, childish hand. (*Wuthering Heights*, 49)

I have always wondered why Catherine wrote her narratives in the margins of Bible and why Emily Brontë called it her diary. Again very interestingly Emily Brontë wrote Catherine, using the letter 'C', as the pronunciation of Catherine, phonetically is with 'K' and it was not out of fashion to write 'Catherine' as 'Katherine', so why did Emily Brontë, use 'C'. Exploring those two questions led me to come up with this title of my paper, and as I am not an expert in Victorian literature, I would like to look at this Victorian text from the post modern view point. So the first part of my paper deals with Catherine's logos at the margins of Bible.

Bible interestingly is the archetypal canonical text and when Catherine starts scribbling her narratives at its margin we are at once brought face to face with how the male cannon has put women writing in the margins; how the religion of Christianity which has its center in patriarchy has marginalized, ostracized and even demonized women intellectuals and how Catherine the narrator has lost her 'logos' in the teleological coordinates of the Victorian age. Catherine's narrative seeks to probe into her traumatic memories and rediscover her 'self' in the writing as she says in one of her entries:

'An awful Sunday,' commenced the paragraph beneath. 'I wish my father were back again. Hindley is a detestable substitute - his conduct to Heathcliff is atrocious - H. and I are going to rebel- we took our initiatory step this evening'. (49)

In *The Aetiology of Hysteria*, F. A. Whitlock, describes the site of memory as a 'region' where the analyst wanders around in 'an expanse of ruins, with remains of walls, fragments of columns, and tablets with half-effaced and unreadable inscriptions' (4), where he must seek to 'uncover what is buried' (4). The latent limitlessness of memory and the impossibility of deciphering and comprehending it through language is what relates it with the experience of trauma. The traumatic experience, which lies beyond the grasp of language is increasingly being dealt with in narratives which negotiate the memory of the experience in order to re-write the

personal history. Catherine's diary is where she negotiates her memory and re-writes the trauma of her personal history. The Narrative (or recite or discourse) of Catherine's diary begins and ends a year without the certainty of dates, whereas the story of Heathcliff and the Earnshaws spans the period 1757-1802. Thus cartography of Catherine's diary defies the Kronos timing, and enters into Kairos structure of timelessness.

So we move from:

'Hindley hurried up from his paradise on the hearth, and seizing one of us by the collar, and the other by the arm, hurled both into the back-kitchen; where, Joseph asseverated, "owd Nick would fetch us as sure as we were living": and, so comforted, we each sought a separate nook to await his advent. I reached this book, and a pot of ink from a shelf, and pushed the house-door ajar to give me light, and I have got the time on with writing for twenty minutes; but my companion is impatient, and proposes that we should appropriate the dairywoman's cloak, and have a scamper on the moors, under its shelter. A pleasant suggestion - and then, if the surly old man come in, he may believe his prophecy verified - we cannot be damper, or colder, in the rain than we are here.' (50)

to,

'How little did I dream that Hindley would ever make me cry so!' she wrote. 'My head aches, till I cannot keep it on the pillow; and still I can't give over. Poor Heathcliff! Hindley calls him a vagabond, and won't let him sit with us, nor eat with us anymore; and, he says, he and I must not play together, and threatens to turn him out of the house if we break his orders. He has been blaming our father (how dared he?) for treating H. too liberally; and swears he will reduce him to his right place - ' (51)

without actually knowing how much time has elapsed in the middle.

Through her entries we are put in extended 'Analepsis' (a flash-back or time-shift backward), from the temporal plane of Lockwood's narrative. Catherine's text with neither linear nor very sequential is often 'half-effaced'. Her narrative creates gaps and layers in temporal sequence; Mikhail Bakhtin identifies this quality of existence outside the sequenced time as the 'literary chronotope'. Bakhtin introduces this view of temporal and spatial relationships in narrative. According to Bakhtin

In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. The intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope. (The Dialogic Imagination, 119.)

Thus, Bakhtin points out, the epistemological origins for such a conception of narrative time and space can be traced back to both the philosophy of Emmanuel Kant and Albert Einstein's relativity theory.

But whereas in both Lockwood and Nelly's narrative we find an epistemological disjunction between listeners and speakers, we do not find that in Catherine's narrative. Thus Catherine's narrative follows the 'artistic chronotope'. Macovski observes:

While Nelly directs her tale to Lockwood, the most crucial scenes of the novel centre

around those dialogues in which she herself must play the listener to Heathcliff's and Catherine's revelatory confessions (Stoneman, 104).

The phenomenology of Catherine's narrative charts ontological parameters without teleological closure.

Catherine's narrative is also the kind of 'She-Text' as opposed to the 'text' which is under male hegemony and which Hélène Cixous felt oppressive to women's creative impulses, as she writes:

The texts... share the trace of a wound. They were caused by a blow, they are the transfiguration of a spilling of blood, be it real or translated into a haemorrhage of the soul... and forever prints his message of indignation in the flesh of my memory. (Preface : On Stigmatexts, x)

Patriarchal interpretations and interpolations of women in their text has been such a trauma, and so, while reading Catherine's narrative we are put inside such a 'She-Text', which delimits the ontology and tries to resolve the 'haemorrhage of the soul'. Catherine's 'She-Text' is not a woman's body as the text, but rather woman-text as the body of representation. In her diary Catherine is able to do what Cixous has said, 'Woman must put herself into the text-as into the world and into history-by her own movement'. ('The Laugh of the Medusa', 2) So even if she belongs to the margins of Earnshaw family, she uses the canonical text [Bible] and finds its margins to be the appropriate place to scribble her 'Self'. Also as a narrator, she assumes her position in margins of the novel as the center stage is taken by Lockwood and Nelly Dean. But what Catherine does, which Lockwood and Nelly Dean cannot, is to put herself into the text and 'into history-by her own movement'.

The co-optation of Catherine's narrative calls for probing into the boundaries of her entity and hence calls for consideration in the analysis of the relationship between what is inside her narrative, and what is outside. Inside her narrative we find a code of opposition, between her feelings for Heathcliff. On one hand she says 'I am Heathcliff' (Wuthering Heights, 108), establishing a semiotic relation with Heathcliff, on the other hand she says, 'It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now' (108). Thus, we are never on solid ground, when looking through her narrative, not because she is an unreliable narrator like Nelly (who is an 'interpolated' narrator and can also be considered as 'fallible'), but she is edos-centric and not telos-centric. Again, Catherine is also not like Lockwood, who becomes the 'frame' narrator; rather Catherine's narrative is mode of the co-optation of alterity. Her 'She Text' grants us 'jouissance', which can be located beyond the symbolic. In Derrida's terminology Catherine's desire supersedes the alternatives of presence and absence and this is reflected when Catherine says:

It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now; so he shall never know how I love him; and that, not because he's handsome, Nelly, but because he's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same, and [Edgar's] is as different as a moonbeam from lightning, or frost from fire. (108)

Just as Catherine's speech delimits ontology, her narrative too transcends the dynamics of her desire. Therefore, we can never frame her narrative with the archetypal code of structure and her 'logos' lack the centralism. The notion of structure, even in structuralist theory has always presupposed a centre of meaning of sorts. Derrida terms this desire for a centre as 'logocentrism'

in his seminal work *Of Grammatology* (1966). 'Logos' is a Greek term for 'word', which carries the greatest possible concentration of presence. Terry Eagleton explains this in 'Literary Theory: An Introduction' (1996),

Western Philosophy.... has also been in a broader sense, 'logocentric', committed to a belief in some ultimate 'word', presence, essence, truth or reality which will act as the foundation for all our thought, language and experience. It has yearned for the sign which will give meaning to all others, - 'the transcendental signifier' - and for the anchoring, unquestioning meaning to which all our signs can be seen to point (the transcendental signified'). (*Postcolonial Witnessing*, 134)

Thus, when Derrida writes:

Henceforth, it was necessary to begin thinking that there was no center, that the center could not be thought in the form of a present-being, that the center had no natural site, that it was not a fixed locus but a function, a sort of non locus in which an infinite number of sign-substitutions came into play ('Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences', 279); he delimits ontology, therefore questioning the imprisonment of the essence of the things inside the structure of reason. In Catherine's narrative, we can similarly see the ontological plane is not inside the teleological center. And as her narrative is 'non locus', so is her desire. Catherine and her diary endangers the Victorian code of structured femininity and the archetype of heteronormative patriarchy, which confines desire. So, very naturally her choice is restricted to remain at margins or lose her logos completely. Being in the peripheral position of the canonical text, she knows her 'logos' is not 'ding an sich' (thing-in-itself), but she refuses to be resting simply as a 'signifier'. So, we cannot say her narrative is the romance-quest for subversive, leading to magical production of alterity, but is the dislocation of traumatic experience in memory.

Catherine's narrative at the margins of the Bible is not only a designation of her social alterity, but also representation her an infantile 'jouissance', which is beyond the pleasure principal. Jacques Lacan takes Freud's theory of 'pleasure principal' and forges his idea of 'jouissance'. According to him:

The opposition between jouissance... and pleasure also involves a revised understanding of the latter term. Pleasure now signifies on the one hand the sensation of pleasure and on the other hand the pleasure principle. The pleasure principle is one of the 'two principles of mental functioning' which Freud discusses in his metapsychological writings (the other being the reality principle). It is the innate tendency of the subject to govern his actions on the basis of avoiding pain and obtaining pleasure. Now, it should be clear that whereas pleasure in the former sense is synonymous with the earlier meaning of jouissance, pleasure in the latter sense is actually opposed to the later meaning of jouissance. (Jacques Lacan, 7).

While reading Catherine's narrative, we can see that the ego feels pain (in the form of anxiety, symptoms, and the like). In her writings, to use Adrian Johnston's terminology, we see that the homeostatic balance sheet of the pleasure principle is thrown into disorder by an insistent enjoyment that pays no heed of the speculative gains or losses of a diluted, sublimated pleasure, or a principle that routinely 'sells out' enjoyment in its ongoing bargaining with its reality-level complement. An example can be seen when the entry to her diary reads:

On Sunday evenings we used to be permitted to play, if we did not make much noise; now a mere titter is sufficient to send us into corners.

"You forget you have a master here," says the tyrant. "I'll demolish the first who puts me out of temper! I insist on perfect sobriety and silence. (Wuthering Heights, 49)

And therefore, we can see that her 'She text' uses a kind of logos that remains at the architectural gap of Emily Brontë's text.

Now, I would like to move to the second part of my paper, which deals with the architecture of 'C'. Phonetical discrepancy engineered here with the letter 'C', while writing Catherine is of great value to me. The letter 'C' has similar pronunciation as 'see' and this brings me to the discourse of visuality, where woman [here Catherine] is 'seen' and appropriated in phallogocentric Victorian society, framed by masculine gaze. The connection between this phenomena and the active gaze can be understood through a discussion of Jacques Lacan's psychoanalysis. For Lacan, the act of gazing is not just reflexive, but a social activity. In 'Gaze in the Expanded Field', Norman Bryson, in speaking of the Lacanian gaze, says:

Between the retina and the world is inserted a screen of signs, a screen consisting of all the multiple discourses on vision built into the social arena. (Vision and Visuality, 92)

So Catherine with 'C', instead of 'K', is neither a glitch nor an authorial whim, it suggests, how she is seen by other characters and framed in the narratives of Nelly and Lockwood. Between the retina of Nelly and the Victorian society, Catherine exists as a 'sign' that constitutes the story of Wuthering Heights. Lockwood, becomes more of an interpreter of Nelly's retinal vision, rather than the gazer, but his phallogocentrism restrains him from 'seeing' Catherine as she was. Lacan, Bryson notes, considers this 'screen of signs' derived from society in the form of a 'shadow':

...a network that comes to us from the outside: mobile tesserae of signification, a mosaic that moves. This network is greater than its individual agents or operators. When I learn to speak, I am inserted into systems of discourse that were there before I was, and will remain after I am gone. Similarly when I learn to see socially, that is, when I begin to articulate my retinal experience with the codes of recognition that come to me from my social milieu(s), I am inserted into systems of visual discourse that saw the world before I did, and will go on seeing after I see no longer. (92)

Nelly is 'inserted into systems of discourse' in here and thereby she begins to 'articulate' her 'retinal experience' with the Victorian 'codes of recognition'. Identity of Catherine as an individual dissolves through the narrations of both Nelly and Lockwood and 'the Catherine' we get is after a rigorous session of editing and rephrasing her narrative. Catherine's narrative becomes nothing more than 'mobile tesserae of signification, a mosaic that moves.' True Catherine and her 'She-Text' gets lost and dies as she is interpreted by Nelly's and Lockwood's gaze. For Nelly, Catherine's identity is paradoxical, for instance when Nelly says:

...she put all of us past our patience fifty times and oftener in a day: from the hour she came downstairs till the hour she went to bed, we had not a minute's security that she wouldn't be in mischief. Her spirits were always at high-water mark, her tongue always going-singing, laughing, and plaguing everybody who would not do the same. A wild, wicked slip she was-but she had the bonniest eye, the sweetest smile, and lightest foot in the parish: and, after all, I believe she meant no harm; for when once she made you cry in good earnest, it seldom happened

that she would not keep you company, and oblige you to be quiet that you might comfort her. (Wuthering Heights, 69)

But we are never sure about her, as it can be proved that Nelly is fallible in her judgment. Real Catherine's identity dissolves or even gets diluted, through various narratives of the novel. Thus, for Lacan, '[t]he screen casts a shadow of death.' The spacio-temporal shifts and the subjective narration of both Nelly Dean and Lockwood not only renders the structure of the narrative 'layered', but it also 'casts a shadow of death' to Catherine and her narrative. Both Nelly Dean and Lockwood take up the position of the homodiegetic narrators (narrators who are also the characters of the story, as opposed to Catherine, the autodiegetic narrator, the narrator who is the protagonist of the novel), but their gaze reduces Catherine's text into shadow and Catherine's identity as translucent space, contrasting the Victorian archetype of womanhood.

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ISAN MAHACHAT SUNG-SERMON (THET LAEH): SOME REFLECTIONS ON ITS NARRATOLOGICAL ASPECTS

Dipti Visuddhangkoon

Abstract

The sermon text can be regarded as a literary text comprising unique thematic content, meticulously selected diction and distinct compositional form. The core essence of the Vessantara Jataka, known as Mahachat Sermon, and as used in the laeh or sung-sermon form, lies in revealing the selfless character of the bodhisattva—the epitome of compassion, charity and self-sacrifice. This sermon is deployed by practitioner monks as a tool for stimulating the mind of lay devotees to listen to the story with devotional attentiveness and then apply its moral values in day to day life. In order to delineate the story well and render the narration effective, practitioner monks in Northeast Thailand (Isan) have played a major role in devising different techniques, such as the use of various figures of speech, versification, rhythm, and last but not the least, different narratological techniques. In this paper we focus particularly on the narratological aspects of the Isan Mahachat Sung-sermon. A representation in art, literature or any other discipline is narrative when its theme unfolds as a chain of episodic events, revolving around a core action which progresses both spatially and temporally. In Isan, monks who have a high range voice train themselves to delineate the entire story of the Vessantara Jataka (in 13 sections) in a unique recital style infused with distinct rhythms. The episodic narration of the story is done in such a way that enables the reader or listener to discover the whole from its parts and vice versa. As performer-narrators, sung-sermon practitioner monks follow the story along each of the thirteen sections known as kantha that totals to one thousand verses or katha expanding over time and space. From our close textual and thematic analysis of the text Phimpha Laeh Mahachat 13 Kantha (Samnuan Isan) composed by the well-known sung-sermon practitioner monk, Ven. Phrakhru Sutasarapimol (Phramaha Phimpha Dhammadino) it has been found that nine distinctive narratological strategies viz., interiorisation, cyclicalisation, serialization, elasticisation of time, spatialisation, fantasisation, stylization, improvisation, and contextualization are used in the rendition of the entire story. All these strategic devices are restored to by most sung-sermon practitioner monks in order to render vitality, veridicality, conceptual clarity both to the content of the story as well as the actual act of narrativity. In this paper we examine each of these devices by citing examples from the original text in English translations. There is no doubt that

all the narratological strategies that are used have a reinforcing effect on the narration of the story. Providing emphasis, freshness of expression, vividness and conceptual clarity, the use of narratological strategies has rendered great vitality to the story and has positively affected the proliferation, preservation and continuation of the vibrant tradition of the Mahachat sung-sermon in Isan as a whole.

Introduction

The sermon text can be regarded as a literary text that comprises of distinct compositional form, meticulously selected diction and unique thematic content. The core essence of the Vessantara Jataka¹, known as Mahachat Sermon and used in the *laeh*² or sung sermon form, lies in revealing the selfless character of the bodhisattva- the epitome of compassion, charity and self-sacrifice. This sermon is deployed by practitioner monks as a tool for stimulating the mind of lay devotees to listen to the story with devotional attentiveness and then apply its moral values in day to day life. In order to delineate the story well and render the narration effective, practitioner monks have played a major role in devising different techniques, such as the use of various figures of speech³, versification, rhythm, and last but not the least, the art of narrativity. In this paper we focus particularly on narrativity.

A representation in art, literature or any other discipline is narrative when its theme unfolds as a chain of episodic events, revolving around a core action which progresses both spatially and temporally. In the Mahachat sermon, the core action is Prince Vessantara, the Bodhisattva's perfection of the meritorious act of charity or *dana* which began with his generous act of donating the rain-giving white elephant to the drought-stricken denizens of the city of Kalinga, an act that outraged his own subjects and resulted in his banishment from the kingdom by his father, King Sanjaya. His exile expedited the next phase of generous acts that unrolled initially with whole-hearted donation of all his earthly and palatial belongings to suppliants from every stratum of society and eventually culminated with the giving away of his two little beloved children to the glutton Brahmin Chuchok and his wife to the deity Indra, disguised as a human.

This particular Jataka tale which represents the penultimate birth of the Buddha as the

¹ Of the 547 Buddhist stories (Jatakas) illustrating the previous lives of the Buddha, the Vessantara Jataka known as Mahachat in Thai (meaning Great Birth) is the most popular in Thailand and has long since been delineated in both poetry and pictorial arts.

² *Thet Laeh* is a form of applied sermon in which some sort of rhythm is used during actual delivering of the sermon and so in English we have named it 'sung-sermon' in order to distinguish it from other sermons that are delivered in a plain manner without infusion of any rhythm. *Thet Laeh* or sung-sermon can be classified into two categories - *Thet Mahachat* and Story-based sermon. The delivery of *Thet Mahachat* is restricted to the fourth lunar month, whereas, other story-based sung sermons can be delivered at any time throughout the year. Details of the origin of *Thet Laeh* can be found in the research monograph "A critical study of the Buddhist Sung-sermon from Isan" by the present writer.

³ Figures of speech both of the tropes type i.e. related to general meaning of words such as simile, metaphor, hyperbole, paradox, proverb, didactic interpolation, irony, symbol, imagery, foreshadowing, satire, and pathos and schemes type i.e. related to form or shape such as alliteration, assonance, internal rhyme, and onomatopoeia are profusely used in the Mahachat Sermon text. See "An Analysis of figures of speech in the Isan Mahachat Sermon" by Dipti Mahanta in the conference volume of LSCAC, Mahasarakham University, 2010.

Bodhisattva, before being finally born as Gotama Buddha, is extremely popular in Thailand. In Isan, or Northeast Thailand monks who have a high range voice train themselves to delineate the entire story (in 13 sections) in a unique recital style infused with distinct rhythms. As performer-narrators, sung-sermon practitioner monks follow the story along each of the thirteen sections known as *kaan* that totals to one thousand verses or *kaatha* (*Gāthā*) expanding over time and space. The Composition of Vessantara Jātaka as appeared in The Mahachat is as follows -

Kaan	Romanized Title	Translation	Number of verses
1	<i>Thotsaphorn</i>	Ten Blessings	19
2	<i>Himaphaan</i>	Himalayan Forest	134
3	<i>Thaanaakan</i>	Charity/Donations	209
4	<i>Vannaphravet</i>	Entrance into the forest	57
5	<i>Chuchok</i>	Chuchok, the Brahmin	79
6	<i>Julaphon</i>	Sparse Forest	35
7	<i>Mahaaphorn</i>	Thick Forest	80
8	<i>Kumaan</i>	The Royal Children	101
9	<i>Matsi</i>	Masti, Vessantorn's wife	90
10	<i>Sakkabap</i>	Indra's Words	43
11	<i>Mahaaraat</i>	The Great King	69
12	<i>Chaukrasat</i>	The Six Royals	36
13	<i>Nakhonakan</i>	Return to the Kingdom	48
		Total number of verses	1,000

The episodic narration of the story is done in such a way that enables the reader or listener to discover the whole from its parts and vice versa. In this paper we discuss in brief the main distinctive features of sung-sermon narratology that comprises of the following strategies⁴:

1. Interiorisation
2. Cyclicalisation
3. Serialisation
4. Elasticisation of time
5. Spatialisation
6. Fantasisation
7. Stylisation
8. Improvisation
9. Contextualization

The nine categories can be grouped into three classes - formal method, content rendition

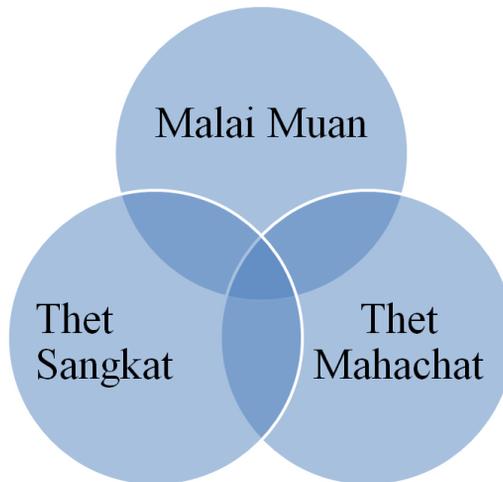
⁴ For a discussion of some of these categories in relation to Indian Narratology see K. Ayyappa Paniker's Indian Narratology (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Pvt. Lt., 2003).

and creative infusion. Interiorization, cyclicalization and serialization falls under the rubric of formal method; elasticization of time and spatialization lie in the group of content rendition and fantasization, stylization, improvisation, and contextualization fall into the category of creative infusion. All these devices are restored to by most sung-sermon practitioner monks in order to render vitality, verdicality, conceptual clarity both to the content of the story as well as the actual act of narrativity. What follows is a brief discussion of each of these categories.

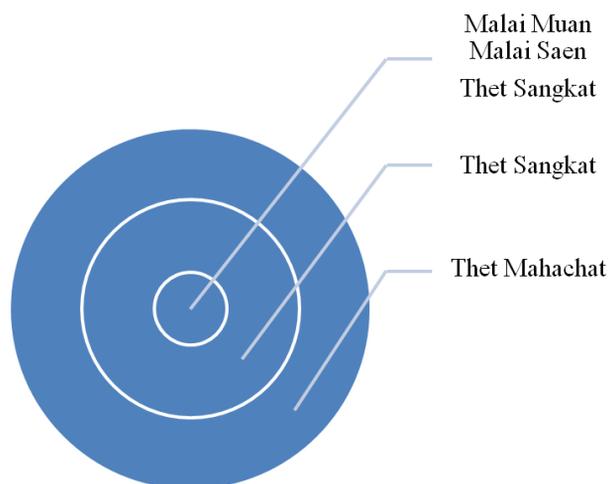
Interiorization

In narratology, interiorization is a special technique or process by which a dialectical relationship between different strands of narration is affected between the surface features of a text and its internal essence.⁵ During an actual sung-sermon session practitioner monks, both explicitly and implicitly, draw the listeners' attention to the fact that within the story of Vessantara is the incipient story of the Buddha as an enlightened being, and within that is the story of Buddhahood in every person, and so on and so forth, an apparently endless process of interiorization. The moral lessons that are to be learnt and internalized from the story get reinforced through this process of interiorization. It also sets the trajectory on a logical footing as to the benefits to be derived from the attentive apprehension of the story.

The entire Thet Mahachat ceremony in Isan comprises of the actual narration of three sermons - Thet Malai Muan - Malai Saen, Thet Sangkat, and Thet Mahachat. The interconnection of the three sermons brings to light the significance of the narratological aspect of interiorization- the element of story within a story. The interconnection can be well understood when diagrammatically represented with three concentric circles or kaleidoscopic representation of one circle within the other.



⁵ Ibid. p.12



Malai Muan - Malai Saen sermon is delivered on the first day i.e. the Mahachat Congregation Day (Wan Ruam). This particular sermon depicts the story of the arahant monk, Phra Malai, who having sojourned into the two realms of heaven and hell arrives in the terrestrial world to narrate his experience to the commoner. As the legend goes, during his visit to the celestial abode of deities Phra Malai met the future Buddha, Phra Ariya Mettaiya, who gave him the divine message that any devotee intended upon listening to all the 13 sections of the Thet Mahachat on a single day will accumulate great merits that would lead to prospective birth during the time of the future Buddha. Phra Malai brings this celestial message of Ariya Mettaiya to the worldly realm and through the narration of the extraordinary encounter between the future Buddha and Phra Malai, practitioner monks strategically insert the element of faith in the act of listening.

While it is very clear that through the juxtaposition of the sermon of Malai Muan-Malai Saen, practitioner monks prepare the ground for instilling faith in the listeners, the delivery of the Thet Sangkat on the following day i.e. the Mahachat Sermon Delivery Day (Wan Thet Mahachat) helps reinforce the historical reference point of this faith. Through the Thet Sangkat, which is the narration of the biography of the historical Buddha, practitioner monks prepare the ground for logical connection and validation of their sermonizing the story of the Bodhisattva Vessantara in the present era. Phra Malai's message sets the context for the future, Thet Sangkat sets the contextual co-relation to the past and finally through the Mahachat sermon listeners are inspired to direct their focus on the present moment by taking the glorious example of the Bodhisattva into day to day life through the actual act-of-doing i.e. practicing dana.

Apparently there is a logical connection in the three sermonic stages and the narratological aspect is strongly grounded on the dialectical relationship between the act of sermonizing and the actual act of comprehending the embedded meaning/message by the lay devotees. If we expunge the Thet Sungkat, the narration of Thet Mahachat loses its historicity in its entire phenomenal dimension - the fact that realization of Buddhahood and the origination of Buddhism in general and the Mahachat sermon in particular came into origin through a historical figure,

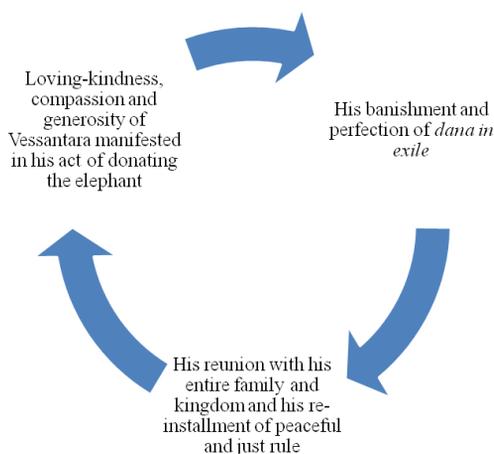
Gotama Buddha. But mere acceptance of historicity of the fact in itself is not enough; cultivation of faith is equally important and indeed indispensable to reach one's goal of attaining buddhahood or supreme perfection. Thus the message of Phra Malai has come to bear an inevitable contextual as well as inter-textual relationship to the Mahachat sermon as a whole. The arahant monk acts as an intermediary between the Enlightened founder in his future form⁶ and countless of his yet to be enlightened devotees in the earthly realm. Phra Malai's intermediary role in the context of the story/narration in a way also highlights the role of practitioner monks seated on elevated preaching chairs and narrating the sermon in the present day context. Just as Phra Malai is significant in communicating the heavenly message to both monks and lay devotees, practitioner monks play the intermediary role of taking the same message to the commoner. The Arahant monk's role justifies the spiritual leadership role of practitioner monks. Had it not been the case, then lay devotees could have easily replaced practitioner monks in narrating the Vessantara Jataka. But this switching of role has never taken place in the entire history of narration of the Mahachat Sermon.

Having instilled faith in the historicity of the whole phenomenon there emerges the realization that prospective future birth during the time of Ariya Mettaiya is a worthy goal that is achievable through the perfection of generosity. Thus there is an organic connection between and amongst the three sermons linked in this way - faith ? historicity ? practice. But this linking does not strictly follow a linear pattern. In the context of internalization there may be variations among individuals. While the ceremony gets kicked off with the narration of the Malai Muan-Malai Saen followed by Thet Sangkat and finally the Mahachat sermon the process of understanding may follow one's own paradigmatic scheme. While there is no instance of Malai Muan-Malai Saen being preceded by the narration of Thet Sangkat, the latter in its second position in sequential order (the reference to the historical Buddha) acts as an adhesive element between faith and call for generosity (a form of moral duty). In other words, the interconnectivity of the three sermons always remains intact and the ultimate emphasis is on gradual progression from faith-building to the acceptance of historicity and finally to the actual involvement in the process of acquiring perfection in merit-making through acts of generosity. That is why, the time devoted to the narration of Thet Mahachat (the story of Vessantara) is the longest among the three sermons although sequentially it comes at the end.

⁶ The historical Buddha is a figure from the past, so there is never any indication that Phra Malai had ever met the Buddha. In fact, such an assumption would be contradictory to the doctrinal teachings on nibbana. The historical Buddha already freed himself from the cycle of birth and death by entering the state of nibbana and even if Phra Malai would have ever wished to meet the Buddha, he would never have had the chance. Suppose he had met, it would be denying the nibbanic achievement of the historical Buddha. But meeting the future Buddha in his celestial abode and bringing the timeless message to the earthly realm, albeit appears too mystical/mythical for skeptics, bears no doctrinal conflict; rather it adds logical progression and sets the tune for the entire setting of the Mahachat Sermon. Drawing inspiration from the life of the historical Buddha one looks forward in time to the future Buddha with great hope. But this hope is not utopian, on the other hand, it is rooted in the present life action - attentive listening to the 13 sections of Mahachat in a single sitting. Whether a lay devotee would succeed in taking a human form during the future Buddha's time is something that cannot be justifiably verified, but the immediate relevance of Phra Malai's message is that it points towards the present moment of perfecting generosity and so the hope that the message generates in the hearts of lay Buddhists is an action-oriented reasonable hope. In short, this hope captures the entire message of Buddhist pragmatism - living and focusing in the present moment.

Cyclicalisation

Cyclicalisation is a regular feature of the Mahachat sermon. Whether cyclical narration is primarily an aspect of Buddhist belief or philosophical outlook on life and existence,⁷ for the sung-sermon narrators it has become a handy device for stringing together the one thousand verses of the 13 episodic sections in a particular narrative formula with a fluid notion of forward and backward movement. The placement of the single story of the life of the Bodhisattva in a chain of episodes starting from his giving away of the auspicious elephant, his banishment, his renunciant life and perfection of *dana* while dwelling in the forest, the royal reunion and his final return to the kingdom to rule in peace and with justice cyclically represents the virtuous action of charity and generosity and the resultant benefit that one can accrue for oneself and the community as a whole. The point at which the virtuous action begins extends temporally to merge again at the same meritorious point just like in a cyclical order. In actual rendition of the story, practitioner monks never sidestep this cyclical order of narration. Not only in the Thet Mahachat, cyclicalisation as a regular feature also bound the Thet Sangkat and the Malai Muan - Malai Saen. The cyclical order of the entire story/event in the life of Vessantara and the practitioner monks' roundabout narration of it focuses the kammic truth of a wholesome action leading to wholesome results. In the context of the story, although good and generous act of Vessantara initially triggered sorrow and lamentation, it eventually ended up in both individual and communal welfare. The story upholds the timeless Buddhist belief that energy inherent in a wholesome kammic action cannot get destroyed and annihilated even under the effect of unwholesome external events and actions of others. For instance, the complaints of the citizens led to Vessantara's banishment, but this negative event opened up the entire path for great future achievements. Similarly, the presence of the negative elements of endless greed in Chuchok did not ruin Vessantara's family but expedited the process of family reunion and reconciliation of a would-be regent and his once faulted subjects.



⁷ The Theory of Dependent Origination or Paticcasamupada cyclically denotes the process of birth, decay and death with its origin in ignorance (avijja).

Serialisation

Serialisation implies the structural format of the Mahachat sermon in 13 sections which lay preference for an apparently series of episodes on an equal par to a unified, single-strand, streamlined course of events, centring around the Bodhisattva's life and whatever happened to him on his way to fulfillment of the perfection of dana. Although on a single sitting the entire story in all its 13 sections is narrated, there is room for enough episodic looseness that allows for variation in tone and style. There are episodes like the Masti section, Chuchok and Nakhon sections that are generally highlighted contributing to the depiction of the internal richness of human experience adumbrated in this long narrative. The apparent looseness results from the serial nature of the work, which makes certain parts of it collapsible as and when needed, and provides an openness to the text. Although no new item or episode can be added or inserted, just as any old item or episode cannot be removed or eliminated totally, there is great adaptability due to the feature of serialization in narrativity.

The Masti section is usually highlighted due to the element of pathos in it and since most lay listeners of the Mahachat Sermon are usually female devotees, practitioner monks elongate the narration to whatever extent possible. Sung-sermon practitioner monks exploit pathos to a considerably great degree especially in rendering the scene in which Masti tirelessly seeks after her two beloved children - Kanha and Chali. Designed to evoke the feelings of tenderness, pity and sympathetic sorrow from the audience, the scene that depicts pathetic universal situation of a mother's sorrowful longing for her lost children are meticulously rendered -

Masti so tired	and hapless
Sad and distressed	she cried hopelessly
When the evening set in	darkness loomed all over
The three animals disappeared	making the way for her to go
In her hurry she tripped	on a stone and tumbled
In her mind she thought	of only her two children
They had waited	for her for so long
She walked just thinking of them	sometimes in hurrying steps
When the sun set	she arrived home
"Two little gems	mother has come where are you"
She wondered about her children	where they could be
Every evening she goes to fetch them	from their playing ground
Right and left	in every direction she looked
Which ever way she turned	nothing but emptiness
Tired and lonely	the heart throbbing
When she reached the fence	she left her fruit basket there
Then looked around	but it was all empty and quiet
"Do not be kidding at me	don't hide from me, dear children"
She tried to seek	and call them
Walking to and fro	she sought for them everywhere
Sad and depressed	not even a shadow could be traced
Could the children be kidding	away from her in hiding? ²⁸

Elasticisation of time

Within the conceptual framework of the narrative there exist fluidity or elasticisation of time. Narrative time in Mahachat sung-sermon is more psychological in character than logical. Narration, by definition, implies selection, elaboration, condensation, and this process is manifested in the treatment of time. For example, although sung-sermon practitioner monks cover the entire story in one sitting, they do not always focus on each section of the story equally, some sections are simply presented in a condensed form whereas some sections especially the ones through which didactic interpolations can be reflected directly are elongated. For instance, in the first section which opens up the story of the future Bodhisattva, sung-sermon monks emphasize elaborately on the theme of accumulation of merits through charitable acts of generosity. Similarly, in the section on Chuchok, they elaborate another moral theme - the folly of uncontrolled greed by vividly depicting Chuchok's indulgence in a celebratory orgy that resulted in a self-humiliating death. Since the narrative consists of a sequence of events, duration of time is certainly of significance, but not perhaps its actual placement. Didactic interpolations interspersed throughout the Mahachat sermon text direct the listeners to universal truths with an emphasis on realization of these truths and practicing along the moral path. Sung-sermon practitioner monks would devote enough time in the course of delivering the sermon to clarify and repetitiously stress them so as to inspire and encourage the laity to put into real practice in life. The repeated words and phrases in the original Isan version are maintained in our translation below.

All listeners, brethren dear
 Consider deeply about charity
 Did you gain mental benefits from them
 Have your meritorious acts made you happy
 Observe it see it
 Your mind becomes delightful
 Whenever you donate
 Meritorious action is reckoned thus
 Accumulate merit gradually
 When you die this shall be your asset
 Everyone has to die
 All beings in the vast world
 But when you transmigrate
 Everything would depend on your action
 Whoever has done good deeds
 When dead these actions will lead to heaven
 Whoever has done evil deeds
 Fall into hell
 All virtuous people
 Accumulate morality and generosity

father and mother reflect upon this
 all generous deeds you have done
 I welcome you to introspect it
 smile and happy always
 when you donate and distribute
 beget felicity through and through
 it is a great benefit
 welcome you to continue the effort
 little by little it will increase
 gain great merits
 nobody can live forever
 none can escape from death
 to another realm
 good and bad all depends on your action solely
 has goodness accumulated
 ascend to heaven and reside there
 these actions will let you
 full of suffering and lamentation
 men and women engage in generous action
 the reward you gain is certain

⁸ Phrakhrū Sutasarapimol, *Phimpha Laeh Mahāchat 13 Kantha Isaan version* พิมพ์พหุแห่งสมุหราชบัณฑิต ๑๓ กัณฑ์

Accrue good deeds there would be no suffering	the world will extol in your praise
Welcome you all do good	people will admire you
Deviate from all evil actions	it will reduce your value
Make you devoid of value in yourself	only good and evil exist in this world
All other animals	like herds of cattle
And herds	of elephants
All decay and decompose	but their skin tusks bones
Still have some value	can be sold and bought
When people die all's over	just cremate the body
Nothing remains	that could be sold or bought
Like the poetry that has taught	Thai poet has ever composed
I leave this to you all laity	for you to consider and reflect upon -
"Bull, oxen, buffalo, elephant	that are old and unworthy of any work
Their tusks, horns	still bear importance and value in body
But when humans die	the whole body is valueless
Only good and evil actions persist	to adorn the world."
The entire human populace	when dead and decomposed
Goodness and evil still exist	permanent in essence
Offer this message to each of you	read and investigate this poetic truth ⁹

Spatialisation

In the Isan Mahachat narrative, spatiality plays an overriding role to temporality, since the narrative formula of opening the tale is more specific about place, leaving the exact time imprecise. This is quite obvious in the conventional opening of the Mahachat sermon, which opens up with the depiction of the scene of Phusati, the celestial consort of Indra and the would-be mother of the Bodhisattva, descending from her heavenly abode to the worldly realm of mortals upon receiving the ten divine blessings. Spatialisation that makes for a freer handling of the time factor helps bring coherence to the narration of the entire story. Progress in the course of narration of events along a rigid straight line is not demanded because of a less rigid notion of time. The scene becomes more crucial in the unfolding of the plot than time. While the space factor gets added importance, the temporal dimension is often underplayed. The downgrading of the time factor is in keeping with the features of narratology like interiorisation and cyclicalisation.

Fantasisation

Fantasisation is a privileged enterprise in the Isan Mahachat narrative. The plasticity of the imagination has encouraged the dominance of fantasy in the Isan narrative mould. Fantasy is a way of rendering even the unpleasant reality of the outside world in a colorful way with a touch of humor so that the listeners do not develop repugnance to the situation or the human agent embodying unpleasantness. This is obvious in the case of the glutton Chuchok whose character reveals obsession with greed and avarice and its accompanying miseries. The process of

⁹ Phrakhru Sutasarapimol, Phimpfa Laeh Mahachat 13 Kantha Isaan version Sec. I. lines 80-118, pp. 8-10.

fantasisation helps trigger the imagination of the listeners so that they can literally step into the story and enjoy it without any feeling of boredom or anxiety. Fantasy becomes an interface that the listener's imagination shares with that of the practitioner monk. The grammar of communication of the highlighted sections of the story is heavily weighted in favor of fancy and fantasy. All things impossible in the everyday rational world of so-called reality are made possible: for example rain-giving elephant, the intervention of supramundane power including celestial beings such as angels and deities.

Fantasisation is given a free play in the actual narration of the vivid scenes that depict the nightmare that Masti experienced on the night before the day she lost her beloved children and her physical and mental fatigue when she tirelessly looked for her missing children. The practitioner monk-author invokes sensory details to draw the listeners' attention. The art of fantasisation help listeners visualize what is being described and drawn them more deeply into a story.

Seven months ago	in the pavilion happily resided the queen
That night was the beginning	the ominous dream presaging
Sleepless and fidgeted	worried until fatigued
As the dawn crept in	so eerie a dream she dreamt
What was it	she knew no way to solve it
Dreamt of a man	who brandished a sword strong and sharp
Wearing the red China rose	on his ears, his sinewy muscles all raised
So dreadfully terrific was it all	as if the sinful evil nearing
She begged for her life	but cared he not the least
Severed her two hands off instead	with blood splattering all over ¹⁰
Feeble in body and hungry	as though got a cramp and swooned
She looked around the rows of trees	with a heart so weak and fragile
Walked to the deep	wide wild jungle
Stepped towards the fruits	the place where she ever sojourned
Erstwhile laden with ripen fruits	verdure and prolific
All disappeared	gone was everything from there
Feeble in body and hungry	as though got a cramp and swooned
She looked around the rows of trees	with a heart so weak and fragile
Walked to the deep	wide wild jungle
Stepped towards the fruits	the place where she ever sojourned
Erstwhile laden with ripen fruits	verdure and prolific
All disappeared	gone was everything from there
Holding basket and spade	sought yet another tree
Hoping to secure	but turned utterly hopeless when she saw it
Nothing eatable	all decay and rotten
So pitiful a plight of Queen Masti	a broken heart and a pensive mood ¹¹
Great amount of satirical fantasisation accompanies the scene that depicts Chuchok's gluttony	

¹⁰ Phrakhru Sutasarapimol, Phimpha Laeh Mah?chat 13 Kantha Isaan version Sec.VIII. lines6-16, p. 68.

¹¹ Ibid. Sec. VIII. lines 57-66, p. 71.

when he relished his last meal.

... Have to feed old

the nasty old man

He is acting happily

with a belly protruding

He is looking back and turning around; he saw many things to eat then laughing happily. The naked old man hurries to take many pieces of fish into his mouth, then he takes a piece of bacon and then chicken into his mouth, he is really relishing and he continues to devour the fruits such as monkey apple, coconut and continues to drink up the soup from seven pots after that the dessert and then drinking water. When he finished he went to sleep on his bed but he could not move his belly and was at unease nearly dead, crying and moaning with suffering as if had been ill for years.¹²

Stylisation

Stylisation represents the creativity of the practitioner monks in actual narrativization of the Mahachat sermon. The many different rhythms that have evolved over time represent stylistic features that are unique of the Isan Mahachat sermon. The most common style of rhythm used in the delivery of sung-sermon is "Thamnong-nai-phuk-nai-mud", literally translated into English as "tying-wrapping rhythm". It is the principal rhythm used by monks while chanting from manuscripts. It has the compositional characteristic of Rai, a traditional form of Isan verse. It is probable that this original rhythm has branched off with subtle variations at different localities throughout the northeastern region. Today, a practitioner monk may master any one of the following three styles or all three depending on the locale, individual choice, ability and training. i) Thamnong Lomphad Phrao a rhythm that resembles the drifting of coconut palm fronds in the breeze. It is a slow kind of rhythm requiring alternate strong and weak or mild voice modulation similar to the effect of wind on coconut palm fronds. This rhythm is typical of Ubonrathani province. ii) Thamnong Chang Thiem Mae a rhythm that resembles the movement of the elephant calf along the side of its mother. In this rhythm, the voice is alternately pressed and released but without complete release; sung at alternately high and low pitch but without producing the sound "eei-eei". This rhythm is typical of Khonkaen and Chaiyaphum. iii) Thamnong Kaa Taen Kon a rhythm that resembles the movement of a crow along lumps of clay. In this rhythm the voice is rendered as slow and fast alternately similar to a crow's to and fro jumping, flying off, and landing movement around lumps of mud in the paddy field. This rhythm is typical of Roi-et province. Since it originated in Suwanaphum district, this rhythm is also known as Suwanaphum rhythm.

Improvisation

Improvisation is a liberating factor that plays a major role in the Mahachat sermon narration. In the process of improvisation, common everyday spoken words and phrases that are reinforcing because of their frequency of usage are brought into play with ease and flexibility to render immediacy and familiarity to the content. All narrations follow certain pre-established codes, raising certain kinds of expectations in the reader, spectator or listener, conditioning him to move on expected lines. The narrator cultivates the special skills required for satisfying those

¹²Phrakhrū Sutasarapimol, Phimpha Laeh Mahachat 13 Kantha Isaan version Sec.VIII. lines 6-16, p.94

very expectations, otherwise he will be found wanting. There is extraordinary improvisation in the Masti section to arouse pathos in the listeners in regards to a dire situation as when a mother loses her beloved children. Through improvisation practitioner monks also highlight such other issues as gender conflict, feminine emotionality, insecurity and subjugation - issues to which most female listeners can easily respond. Improvisation is thus used as another creative means supportive of content rendition that enables the monks to go beyond the limitations imposed by the code of stylization. It helps to provide elements of newness as well as contextualisation. From our analysis we have found that improvisation is greatly manifested through the element of verbal irony.

Verbal irony is when the narrator or a character says the opposite of what he actually means. Verbal irony helps accent the true feeling for/against the situation. For example, Vessantdorn trusted and loved his wife Masti and so deliberately avoided disclosing the bitter truth of giving away the children as slaves to the greedy Brahmin. He feared that since she was already tired in the evening from the day's routine task of collecting fruits from the forest for her children, the sad news would mentally devastate her and so on her face he blamed and bitterly cursed her as being intentionally late in returning to the hermitage that evening. The readers/listeners are already informed in the course of narration of Matsi's plight in the forest - of how three ferocious animals obstructed her way and her struggle and longing to be back home to feed her hungry children. Through the use of verbal irony (as expressed in the acerbic words of the Bodhisattva) sung-sermon practitioner monks depict Matsi's pathetic situation in resemblance to the life of an ordinary woman faced with irrational and humiliating rebuff and spousal reprimand while trying to fulfil the role of a dutiful wife and mother. Since it is easy to react and respond to familiar situations, most female listeners can instantly internalize the suffering of Masti as a mother, a wife and a woman at the hands of patriarchy, confronting feminine subjugation and victimization within the institution of marriage. Consequently, there arises the feeling of great sympathy for her in the hearts of the listeners.

People say that women	have many an artfulness to lure and deceit	
They do and	utter many wiles	
If we know what they are up to	showers of praises be gotten	
Today you did venture	to the forest	
Sought no friend	to accompany	
Who will agree with you	when you are in the forest?	
You have forgotten your children	and involved in promiscuous acts	
If I were the king	as before	
I would have slit your throat	to cause you die	
But now have come to build up	merits and practice meditation	
So I do forgive you	it's the first time for you to deviate	
Next time do not cry	do not pretend	
You pretend to shed tears bringing forth saliva in your mouth		as doth the ancient word presaged
You refer to the kids	who else but you yourself do know	
I know not about them	don't you ever ask me	

You are shameless	full of pretention and wiles
That's the feminine desultory way	sinuous wiles at various levels
You related to many	least sincere with any
You have played a deceitful game	flirting and deceiving many
Don't tell a lie that you are ill	and ask for chicken soup
No pain no sickness	who can help you
If I seek you another spouse	anew
Your sickness will dissipate	you will ask for no medicine ¹⁴

The two features of stylization and improvisation are closely interlocked. Practitioner monks have closely entwined the twin features of stylisation and improvisation. Stylisation is discipline, but total stylization without any improvisation can be very stifling, unoriginal and most uncreative. Similarly, improvisation is freedom, but total improvisation devoid of any solid foundation on stylisation might be chaotic and unproductive. The sung-sermon practitioner monks seem to maintain an even balance between these two opposing pulls. Any stylised version of Vessantara Jataka presents the essential details of the entire story in all thirteen sections; whereas, the extensions of meanings and the interpolation of didactic messages are evidence of improvisation during actual rendition of the story as when delivered in the form of sung-sermon. Without the practitioner monks' wise application of the twin function of both stylisation and improvisation, the story of Vessantara Jataka would have lost its original appeal and would never have been so widely known among lay devotees.

Contextualisation

The actual historical context of the Vessantara tale was ancient India. Practitioner monks through their creative narration of the story have merged this insurmountable spatial and temporal gap and thus have played an important role in contextualising the entire tale within the context of the socio-religious cultural setup of Isan society. While narrating the story they continually contextualise it by drawing the listeners' attention to the element of interiorization. Besides interiorization, practitioner monks have rendered contextualisation possible through elasticisation of time within the narrative frame. As mentioned beforehand narrative time in sung-sermon is more psychological in character than logical or historical. Through focal selection, elaboration and condensation of particular sections of the entire story the temporal distance is tactfully merged between the event when it is believed to have actually occurred (in the penultimate life of the Buddha) and the present moment when the event is being internalized by the listeners while the story is being narrated by practitioner monks. In other words, through the use of figurative language composer monks collapse historical moments and suggest affinities between the fictional present and the historical past.

Thus it can be concluded that in order to delineate the story effectively, sung-sermon practitioner monks have devised many different techniques of narratology that have positively affected the proliferation, preservation and continuation of the tradition of this oral narrative form. These techniques have also helped to infuse great enjoyment, merry-making, spiritualism,

¹⁴Op. cit. Sec. IX. lines 57-79, pp. 82-83.

subliminal bliss and solace to the process of listening to the sermon. It is almost obligatory for monks who take up the task of delivering the sung-sermon to prepare themselves very well about such things like - when and how to modulate their voice, when to interject new but relevant ideas, and how to make the session interesting with an occasional touch of humour to sustain the listeners' attention. The delivery of the sermon is based on a listener-centered approach and so careful attention is paid to the listeners. As for instance, if a majority of the listeners are women, the monks would prefer to improvise and prolong the part of the story dealing with the female protagonist, Matsi to bring forth the ideals of feminine self-sacrifice, wifely obligation, motherly caring and concern. As a whole, this rhythmic sermon is a great form of oral narration that demands not just mechanical skill - a naturally good voice - but also creativity, spontaneity, psychological prowess, imagination, improvisation skills, rigorous practice and last but not the least, mindfulness so as not to deviate from the path of proper use of rhythm and abstinence from over-indulgence in voice modulation technique. It can be concluded that the application of all the narratological categories outlined here have a cumulative effect on the successful delivery of the sermon.

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THE ESSENCE OF DEMOCRATIC RULE INKA DORBAR(OPEN PARLIAMENT) OF THE ETHNIC KHASI

Dr. Natalie Jo-Anne Diengdoh

The Khasi also known as U Hynñiew trep are an ancient tribe who dwell in the remote corner of North East India, in the state of Meghalaya which was formed on 21st January 1972. Residents of the state who belong to the same origin and tribe known as Hynñiew Trep (seven huts) include the Khyntiam also known as Nongphlang, Pnar or Synteng, Bhoi, War, Maram, Lynggam and Dyko.

Irrespective of their geographical locations U Hynñiew Trep are governed by their respective Dorbar. Ka Dorbar is an open-door village council, practiced till the present day, wherein every citizen has a part to play in the deliberations and proceedings. The formation of the council is in many ways, a real democratic political forum of the people where matters are discussed and solved in the open.

The constituents of a Dorbar may differ depending on the particular situations of the area but broadly speaking, it is usually a gathering of elders, villageheads, local officials and heads of clans.

The prominent types of Dorbar are:

1. Ka Dorbar Hima Pyllun- It is the most important Dorbar comprising of the whole Syiemship (area under a Syiem). It is also termed as the grand Syiemship gathering.
2. Ka Dorbar Ki Shnong or Dorbarkikyntoit (a Dorbar of villages)- A Dorbar of villages comprises of a representative body of village delegates and officials.

Three to four days prior to a Dorbar (village council), a Sangot (crier) goes round the village announcing the date, day and time of the session- a practice now replaced by a person using a loudspeaker to make the announcement. Irrespective of the forms of communication, the essence of the announcement is to draw inhabitants of the village to an open discussion, with an agenda intended to derive results as an outcome of the council. It may be noted that the announcement bears specific information (day and date) to ensure good attendance.

Ka jingpynbnashnongkumba la saiñdur u mynbarim:

Hooikiw...! ... Hooikiw...! ... Hoi kiw

Koshnongko thaw

Ha ka sngi saitjaiñ kuna
 Khang Shnong
 katarik
 Kandon ka Dorbar
 Ha ka por...
 La kyrpad ia phi ban ia mihpaidbahshakane ka Dorbar
 Hooikiw...! ... Hooikiw...! ... Hoi kiw

Translation of the announcement as it was traditionally made:

Hooikiw...! ... Hooikiw...! ... Hoi kiw
 Residents of the village
 On Saturday the...
 The Dorbar will convene at.....
 Your presence is requested at the Dorbar
 Hooikiw...! ... Hooikiw...! ... Hoi kiw

In the past, on the appointed day, residents of the village were forbidden to step out of their homes to attend to daily chores like fetching water, marketing, collecting firewood or work. The modern council however, accepts a representative per family and absentees are daiñ kuna (fined). On the day of the Dorbar, a Khang Shnong (closing of the village to outsiders) is observed, so that everybody can attend the session. The concept of daiñ kuna and khangshnong exhibits the gravity and stringiness of Ka Dorbar to the Khasi Society. Mention must be made that proceedings at the Dorbar are scheduled and conducted by the elected Rangbah Shnong (headman) and executive members comprising of both male and female representatives. The body formed on the bases of voting is voluntary service in aid of improved living condition of Ki Para Nongshong Shnong (inhabitants of the Village)

At the Dorbar or democratic open-air parliament, discussions are held pertaining to administrative and legislative business, the role of public opinion, the proper safeguards on the rights and liberties of the various groups, shaping of the civic consciousness of the individual, criminal disputes, better living conditions, water supply, village activities to harness youth involvement, promotion of peace and harmony and value addition in trade and commerce and many more issues are also openly voiced on a common platform.

At the council, interactive oral communication takes place which ranges between exchange of knowledge and experiences, advice and commands and FAQs (frequently asked questions) are openly discussed. By and large, voting is usually carried out by the raising of hands and the counting of heads or raised hands amounts to the counting of votes.

Ka Akor Dorbar (etiquette of the Dorbar) is strictly maintained by the Rangbah Shnong and other village executives to prevent defamation and scandals. Since days bygone, the Khasi Dorbar has been governed by Normative rules of ka nia ka jutang (the spoken word, the covenant) and tenets prescribed in Ka Niam Khasi (Khasi Religion) such as Kamai ia ka Hok (earn righteousness), Ka tip briew tip Blei (Know man know God), ieitalade bad burom ia kiwei (love

oneself and respect others)."Ka Beiñ Dorbar or treating the court of the Dorbar with contempt is a warranted evil. Conspiracies inside the circle of the Dorbar are unlawful. Strong rules are imposed to punish a point of contempt. Contemptuous fellows are turned out; they are regarded as scoundrels to public safety and become debarred forever from joining and sitting in its session, their right of citizenship is forfeited and effective steps are adopted to make them outcasts from society. Strong pledges of good conduct are solicited from the attendants before proceeding with deliberations, and no one can leave the Dorbar at sitting without the permission from the chair. The Khasi Dorbar is considered a divine agency; nay it is called Ka Dorbar Ki Blei, the Dorbar of Gods."

KaDorbar has direct effect on livelihood, right from the grassroots level, who is the actual voters of representatives of the state. Maintenance of the decorum of the state can only be achieved through the stringent Dorbar and Village Defense Party (VDP) that are capable of harnessing peace and harmony within their (grassroots level) picket fences. The enchanting beauty of the Scotland of the East has potential to transform the state into a rich windfall of economic benefits. The ability of the Dorbar and respective Village Defense Parties (VDP) to tap available natural resources intertwined with modern methods of packaging are key elements of doorstep development from the grassroots level. Hence, special provision may be provided with respect to the sentiments of the ethnic race that survives on folk life ranging from belief system, social norms, religion, customary law and procedure, administration and so on. As an example, we may consider Nagaland and Mizoram which are remote and ethnic yet well connected in terms of transportation by rail, road and air, literate, culturally driven despite mass conversion and are extremely united.

TRANSCULTURATION IN PAULO COELHO'S THE WITCH OF PORTOBELLO

Gitanjali Baro

Globalization has led to the diffusion of ideas, values and cultures all over the world through the media like internet and popular culture. It has also increased interconnectedness among different populations and cultures leading to cultural globalization. And thus, cultural hybridity has become an important concept in postcolonial studies. Hybridity is presented by Marwan M. Kraidy as the 'cultural logic' of globalization. To him, the intermingling of people and media from different cultures is a communication-based phenomenon known as hybridity. Cultural hybridity includes various enticing theoretical components like multiculturalism, creolisation, cross-culturalism and transculturation. Transculturation, coined by 20th century Cuban sociologist and ethnologist Fernando Ortiz is described as the phenomenon of cultural transformation which is marked by the invasion of new cultural elements and the loss or modification of existing ones. In simple terms, transculturation describes changes brought about in one culture by the introduction of elements from another. The concept of transculturation is not merely about acculturation or deculturation; it covers more than transition from one culture to another on the part of an individual or a group. It includes the encounter between or among cultures in which each one acquires or adapts elements of the others or in which new cultural elements are created. Wolfgang Welsch in *Transculturality- the Puzzling Form of Cultures Today* argues that modern society is transcultural and heterogeneous, not intercultural-often two cultures clashing-or multicultural-diverse cultures sharing a place in society but still identifying themselves as distinct, despite attempts at mutual understanding. He further connotes that transculturality is a consequence of the inner differentiation and complexity of modern cultures that rely on external networking; the interconnecting and entangling of multiple cultures with each other that remove their distinctions and boundaries. Even if cultures insist they are unique as an ideological expression, the praxis of existing cultures in a single nation produces constant cross-cultural and sub-cultural assimilations into new forms on macro (cultural) and micro (individual) levels; and the result is that individuals all have "multiple attachments and identities" or "crosscutting identities" and allegiances to different cultures (sic) (Codell 2). Transculturation is a complex term that embraces time, space, place, culture, nation and globalization (sic) (Codell 2). This paper attempts to analyse the perception of transculturation in Paulo Coelho's *The Witch of Portobello*. *The Witch of Portobello* is a masterpiece by Paulo Coelho and it consists of the notion of transculturation which is highlighted through the central character, Athena and

some other minor characters as well.

The *Witch of Portobello* is a novel by Brazilian writer Paulo Coelho published in 2007. The novel revolves around the life of the protagonist Sherine Khalil who renames herself Athena, and who is ultimately known as "the witch of Portobello". In the very beginning of the novel, the author makes it clear through the words of the character Heron Ryan that the novel is not a biography and therefore it does not include prejudiced views on the main protagonist. It contains transcriptions of other characters' points of view on the main protagonist. The transcriptions are framed as a set of interviews which include the points of view of the people who knew her well, viz. Heron Ryan, a journalist and Athena's lover; Andrea McCain, an actress who was her disciple and had a love-hate relationship with her; Deidre O' Neill a.k.a. as Edda, her doctor, mentor and a protector; Lella Tainat, numerologist who did not know her personally; Samira R. Khalil, her foster mother; Lukas Jessen Petersen, her ex-husband; Father Gianialo Fontana, a priest who was once her only friend; Pavel Podtielski, her landlord; Peter Sherney, manager of a bank where she worked as a clerk; Natil Alaihi, a Bedouin; Vosho Bushalo, a gypsy restaurant owner who takes her to her biological mother; Liliana, seamstress and Antoine Locdous, a historian from France. The interviews form the short chapters of the novel, and the respondents of the interviews become the narrators. From the descriptions given by these characters, Athena's background, her transcultural life which transformed her notions of self, passion, sacrifice, love, take on life and the later events ultimately leading to Athena's death are revealed.

The central character Sherine Khalil and some of the minor characters are author's way to breach the shackles of boundaries and essentialist conception of culture. In the novel, Sherine Khalil aka Athena was born in Romania to a Romani gypsy woman without wedlock. She was abandoned by her mother and then was adopted by a rich Lebanese couple from Beirut. From the transcription of Samira R. Khalil who is Athena's foster mother it is apparent that she is against the essentialist concept of culture and therefore she went all the way from Beirut to Romania to adopt a child. When she had finally decided to adopt Athena she was warned that the child had gypsy genes. Despite that Samira adopted Athena and loved her more than anything in this world. To quote Samira:

"I retorted that culture isn't something that's transmitted through the genes. The child, who was barely three months old, would be our daughter, brought up according to our customs." (Coelho 21)

Thus, Sherine was born as a Romani gypsy in Romania and was brought up as a Lebanese in Beirut. She was named as Sherine Khalil by her foster parents. And despite being in Lebanon she achieved education from American school and learnt French and grew up as a Maronite Christian. Later Sherine adopted Athena as her nickname which is the name of the Greek Goddess of wisdom, intelligence and war. She and her parents migrated to London as refugees and eventually settled in the Lebanese community scattered there. Lukas, her ex-husband indicates that Athena fought with a fellow student in the University in London cafeteria because the later had assumed Athena to be an English (because of her white skin, straight hair, eyes that were sometimes green, sometimes grey) and had jibed about the Middle East, by then it seems Athena already knew that she was adopted. For Welsh, "transculturality is a consequence of the inner differentiation and complexity of modern cultures" that rely on "external networking," the interconnecting and entangling of multiple cultures with each other that remove their distinctions

and boundaries. In the novel, the central character Athena was brought up in Beirut and thus interconnected with the culture of Middle East even though is a European by birth. Athena left education and married her ex-husband Lukas at the age of nineteen; and divorced him after their son Viorel's birth. When Lukas asked her to give a thought before taking a radical step to leave university, she quoted Robert Frost:

"Two roads diverged in a wood, and I-
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference." (Coelho 35)

She decided to follow the path shown by an English poet. Athena was a dare devil and believed that no men could protect her and she gained such boldness from the cultural beliefs of Ancient Greece. To quote Athena:

"From Ancient Greece on, the people who returned from battle were either dead on their shields or stronger, despite or because of their scars. It's better that way: I've lived on a battlefield since I was born, but I'm still alive and I don't need anyone to protect me." (Coelho 33)

From a very early age she had a strong religious vocation; she spent all her time in church and learnt all the gospels by heart. She started to have visions of saints and angels. However as confirmed by Father Fontana, Athena left the Church, after it forbade her from receiving sacrament as she was a divorcee even though she had faith on it since her childhood. Athena said in a heart-broken voice:

"A curse on this place! A curse on all those who never listened to the words of Christ and who have transformed his message into a stone building. For Christ said: "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Well I'm heavy laden, and they won't let me come to Him". Today I've learned that the Church has changed those words to read: "Come unto me all ye who follow our rules, and let the heavy laden go hang!" (Coelho 55)

She swore never to set foot in a Church ever again. Athena dared to choose to respect the words on which the religious institution was based rather than the institution. And this indicates Athena's rebel against the essentialist conception of culture.

Pavel Podtielski, the owner of Athena's apartment mentions that he and Athena were both immigrants from a war and had arrived in England when they were still children. He affirms that both of them knew that despite the change, their traditions would continue to exist in exile amalgamating with traditions of a place foreign to them. He would never go back to live in Czestochowa which is in Poland and Athena and her family would never return to Beirut. To quote Podtielski:

"—communities join together again, language and religion remain alive, and in a place that will always be foreign to them, people tend to look after each other. Traditions continue, but the desire to go back gradually disappears." (Coelho 58)

Podtielski told Athena that, immediately after the end of the Second World War, his family had managed to escape from the Communist regime that was taking over Poland, and decided to move to England. He took books along with him which formed part of his education. Inside a

nineteenth-century edition of Thomas Malthus, he found two pages of notes written by his grandfather, who had died in a concentration camp. The pages contained a description of his journey to Siberia during the Communist revolution. There, in the remote village of Diedov, his grandfather fell in love with a Russian actress who was part of a sect, who believed that they had found the remedy for all ills through a particular kind of dance, because the dance brought the dancer into contact with the light from the Vertex. It became a tradition for them.

In London, Athena learnt the tradition of trance dancing from Podtielski. The tradition of trance dancing is seen originated in Siberia and then it is adopted by a Polish man and finally embraced by a Lebanese who is a Romani by birth. In the Middle East, she met a Bedouin named Natil Alaihi. From him, she learnt that calligraphy is the search for perfect meaning of each word through writing. A single letter requires us to distil in it all the energy it contains, as if were carving out its meaning. They contain the soul of the man making the lines to spread them throughout the world. The art of calligraphy is all about objectivity, patience, respect, elegance and mastering the blank spaces. She learnt the art of calligraphy from a Muslim man. She gained Vertex through trance dancing and calligraphy.

She returns to Romania and there she realized that there are blank spaces in everyone's life, one needs to understand these blank spaces to make one's soul composed and calm and that these blank spaces give meaning to a life just as they give meaning to sentences and music. And back in London, Athena preached and rejuvenated people around her through the beauty and wisdom of these knowledges.

Finally, she became a controversial spiritual leader in London. She went to the state of ecstasy while trance dancing and spoke to others as the spirit of omniscient goddess, Hagia Sofia. She was a woman of twenty-second century living in the twenty-first, and making no secret of the fact either. Athena had chosen the Portobello Road in London as her worship meeting point for her followers which was disrupted by a Protestant protest and which ultimately led her to achieve the title, "the witch of Portobello". She went to teach people something she didn't know, that's when she was bringing the soul to the surface, and speaking what the eternity is, the manifestation of what the people call 'the Great Mother', the Goddess of Creation. She was bringing to the surface, the immensely rich world we carry in our souls, without realizing that people are not yet ready to accept their own powers. Thus, towards the end of the novel it is seen that Athena ultimately embraced the cultural changes induced by the introduction of elements of a foreign culture and formed a new kind of tradition which was also accepted by the people from various communities, creeds and sects living in London. Welsch's modern notion of transculturation combines global and local, universal and particular, and interaction and exchange without any consideration of imbalances of power. Athena, the protagonist in the novel highlights this Welsch's notion of transculturation.

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"THE LADY GHOST IN INTERNET: FICTION AND BELIEVES IN VIRTUAL' FOLK NARRATIVE"

In memoriam Dr Ezequiel Alembi, who enjoyed very much his visit to La Boca district of Buenos Aires city.

María Inés Palleiro

The lady ghost: metaphors and rhetoric of believing

"The lady y ghost" is a metaphoric expression of supernatural contacts with the dead in different living cultures. This vanishing figure has inspired hundreds of narratives spread all over the world, organized in a narrative matrix. I consider the matrix as a narrative pattern, which combines thematic, structural and stylistic features, filled up in each folk narrator's memory. This matrix can be identified by means of intertextual comparison of different versions (Palleiro 2004). In this paper, I will deal with virtual expressions of this narrative matrix.

From 1985 to 1999, I collected nearly 20 oral versions regarding "The lady ghost". I began this research collecting and analyzing oral versions in rural contexts, in the Argentinean province of La Rioja. I extended then such research to the urban contexts of Buenos Aires city, and to European contexts such as England and Estonia. I also considered written and mediatic recreations such as the one of Maria Rosa Lojo (Palleiro 2004). In all these versions, I studied the dynamics between history and fiction, in narrative expressions regarding the untimely death of young lively women which actually did exist both in Argentinean and Estonian history (Palleiro in press). By means of intertextual comparison of these versions, I reconstructed the sequential structure of this matrix, which has some common thematic features with Thompson motif E 322.3.3.1, "The vanishing hitchhiker". The sequences I identified are: 1) the meeting of a man and a young lady in a ballroom (or on a road, or in a pub) where they dance, have a drink and talk, 2) the separation near a graveyard, 3) the man's quest for the young lady, 4) the encounter of her grave and 5) the recognition of the young lady as a dead creature, by means of some identification signs (a dress, coat or even a pair of shoes with a wine or coffee stain). Along with these thematic and structural similarities, the versions share as well some stylistic features, such as the enumerative accumulation of details which serve as recognition signs (such as the stained dress) and the metaphoric identification of the young lady with Death personified. Another stylistic feature is the antithetical dynamics between life and death, in which the erotic force of love, identified with a tender encounter with a young lady in ballroom, turns out to be an encounter with Death in the loneliness of a graveyard. Such matrix, filled up in the collective memory of a social group in a diachronic process, is transformed in each new discourse according to the personal style of each narrator. In this way, folk narrators recreate narrative patterns with their

own style, in different contexts and performances (Bauman 2004). The folk narrative message, as an expression of the differential identity of a social group, can be considered as an archive of collective memory. I deem 'archive' in its etymological meaning of *arkh *, as a principle of memory organisation (Derrida 1997).

In this paper, I deal with Argentinean and Italian virtual versions of this matrix, in order to study the transmission of folk narratives in different contexts and channels of discourse. My aim is to highlight the impact of the world-wide web in new modalities of transmitting these legends, connected with the dynamics between local and global identities.

Folk narratives in Internet: from oral versions to virtual channels

Internet transforms the way of transmitting folk narrative in contemporary society. The global world-wide web is a virtual channel that opens national boundaries and thus creates a transnational space, available to be visited by the whole planet. Each user, however, belongs to an ethnic group, and each group can use this world-wide web to express its differential identity (Bauman 1972). The receivers belong as well to the most different countries and thus interpret this narrative message according to their own cultural competences.

The world-wide web provides technological resources in order to create an attractive message and to guarantee a good reception in the global channel. That is how local legends such as "The lady ghost" are transformed into written messages which circulate in the web. Oral versions can also be recorded in virtual sites such as YouTube. Besides, in this virtual channel, the receivers can establish the most unexpected connections. In order to study such flexible connections, I will focus my attention in oral and virtual versions regarding Argentinean and Italian lady ghosts. In all these versions, I will analyse the discursive strategies regarding "rhetoric of believing" used by the narrators to convince the audience, and to express the differential identity of local groups in the global web.

The lady ghost: different names and different itineraries

The lady ghost takes the names of local historic young ladies who actually did exist. Some of her names are the ones of Argentinean young ladies such as Rufina Cambaceres, who died the day after her nineteenth birthday. Other Argentinean lady ghost is Felicitas Guerrero, who has been murdered the day before her wedding engagement, and whose ghost appears once a year in the tower of an ancient Argentinean church, constructed by her parents in honor of her memory. A third Argentinean lady ghost is Clementine, whose tragic death took place in the residence of Maria Luisa Auvert Arnaud, who actually did exist in Buenos Aires city at the beginning of the XXth century. Another name of The Lady Ghost is Frederike von Grottes, the Estonian "Lilac lady", an aristocratic young woman of German origin. Frederike also died tragically as a result of an unrequited love in an ancient building, which is nowadays the Tartu Literary Museum, just in the same period in which Rufina's death took place in Buenos Aires city. The lady ghost receives also the name of Beatrice di Canossa, the elder sister of the countess

¹For a specific study of a hypertextual genetic approach to folk narrative discourse, see Palleiro (2004).

²A cognitive approach to narrativity studies the mechanisms of information processing, related to active, semi-active and inactive states of consciousness, whose traces can be found in the narrative text (Chafe op. cit.)

Matilde di Canossa, who also tragically died the same day of her wedding, in the Middle Ages. The lady ghost is also associated with the place where she has died, such as Recoleta graveyard or The Palace of the Tower in Buenos Aires city, as well as the Livorno Castle in Italy, or the Tartu Literary Museum of Estonia. She is also recognized by the color of her dress, such as "The lilac lady" or "Lady in white".

Names, colors, places and identification signs are changing details of this narrative matrix. Mukarovsky (1977) points out that such apparently irrelevant changing "details" are the "basic semantic units in folk art". Additions, displacements, suppression and substitution of details can be considered as main discursive strategies that favour the contextual transformations of folk narrative matrices (Palleiro 2004). Such constructive process is similar to the connective structure of a hypertext, in which details serve as bifurcation links of alternative itineraries. Assman (1997) also considers the connective structure of memory as a flexible linkage. In fact, alternative itineraries of folk narrative matrices are similar to the disseminative process of remembering. Such details act as mnemonic tracks, which provoke a total or fragmentary activation of matrices filed up in the mind of the narrators. Narratives constitute verbal world models with a spatial and time orientation, social contextualisation and sequences of events (Chafe 1990). These matrices contain information regarding the configuration of such models, stored in each narrator's memory in state of latency. When recreating them in concrete situations, narrators activate them with a personal style.

In his studies about psychodynamics of orality, Ong (1987) characterizes oral structures as cumulative, superfluous - "irrelevant", in Mukarovsky's terms -, "empathic", "situational", "agonistic", somatic or corporal, and in a balanced tension between past and present. Such characterization serves the author to analyze the impact of the "technology of writing" that, in the same way as Internet, creates transformations in "the rhythmical and narrative knowledge of the oral culture" (Havelock 1995). This tension can be seen when comparing oral and virtual versions of different narratives, such as "The lady ghost". Her different names are frequently associated with aristocratic or wealthy families. Such high social condition transforms them in paradigmatic characters, which can be considered as social symbols of the differential identity of social groups. That is how the lady ghost walks along different spaces, with alternative narrative itineraries. These narratives explore the boundaries of historic experience with the cognitive modality of believing. I deem belief as a modal expression of the certainty, whose truth depends on a subjective or intersubjective agreement (Greimas & Courtès 1982, Palleiro et al. 2008).

Rhetoric of believing and out of ordinary narratives

Aristotle characterizes rhetoric as the art of persuasion, as a counterpart of dialectics, based on logic syllogism and cause-consequence connections. He points out that the aim of rhetoric is not to reason but to convince, appealing to beliefs. From this standpoint, I analyse in these narratives the relevance of beliefs, whose true value depends not on reasoning, but in a collective agreement. As Ducrot and Todorov (1983) state, rhetoric deals with anomalies. Such anomalies refer both to the deflection of a zero degree of verbal expression and to a rupture of an epistemic paradigm. I consider as well the argumentative use of the metaphors, in its double condition of figures of language and cognitive devices which condensate multiple

meanings in one significant, as "the lady ghost. Such metaphors constitute anomalous expressions, which serve as resources of persuasion not only in literary speech but also in daily life (Lakoff and Johnson 1987). These tales regarding the lady ghost constitute narrative manifestations of such anomalies, which go beyond the borders of an epistemic knowledge, towards the ontological dimension of the belief.

In these versions, the narrative form acts as a principle oriented to organize experience in a sequential way (Bruner 2003). I analyse in such version the dynamics between the illusion of reality and the poetics of history. I consider as well Todorov's distinction between categories of "marvelous", "strange" and "fantastic" tales. Marvelous tales belong to the dominion of fiction, while strange ones remain within the limits of real experience. Fantastic tales, instead, belong to a dark "vanishing" zone. The lady ghost is a symbol of this evanescent category, between life and death, fiction and history, knowledge and belief.

"Lady in white": histories from the Recoleta graveyard in Buenos Aires city

The narrative matrix of the haunting lady recreates the tragic death of Rufina Cambacéres. History and fiction are mixed up in this narrative, whose protagonist is this young lady who actually did exist in the late XIXth. century. Rufina was the young daughter of the famous Argentinean writer Eugene Cambaceres, who died in 1902. It is said that she was buried alive because of a cathalepsy attack. Other versions refer that she died of a heart attack when she heard that her fiancée was also her mother's lover. The historic fact is that she passed away very young, at the age of nineteen, and she was buried in the luxurious Recoleta graveyard, in Buenos Aires city. The lovely statue placed in front of her tomb, made by the German sculptor Richard Aigner, represents a young lady in the attitude of opening the door, "as if she were about to go out... in the Recoleta cemetery, where she was buried alive... and her haunting presence can be seen from time to time" (Sandra Gómez, young student, aged 21, 1996). In this way, an urban legend was constructed around her. It is said as well that this lady ghost has been seen dancing at night in the pubs of Recoleta district, and returning "home" to the graveyard before the first lights of the day. Others assure that they "have felt and even seen her haunting presence rushing in the intersection between Vicente López and Azcuénaga streets, "as if she were in a hurry to enter the graveyard (Palleiro 2004). In a previous research, I have already analysed many of these oral versions. In this new presentation, I revisit one of them, narrated by the young student Santiago Bonacina, aged 24, collected in Buenos Aires in 1996. This narrator changes the name of "Rufina" into "Clementine Cambacères". In a metanarrative clause, he classifies his version as "a legend" told by the graveyard guardians, connected to the statue of the young woman "in attitude of opening the door. "Such statue of Rufina actually does exist in Recoleta cemetery. Thus, the folk narrative pattern of "the haunting lady" is mixed up with historic events. The substitution of contextual details made by the narrator is an index of a folklorization process of Rufina's history. Such substitution of her name into "Clementine" generates an association with another folkloric character of an English ballad, a young girl who also died in a tragic accident when she was almost a child. "Clementine" is also the name of another Argentinean lady ghost I will deal with in this presentation. Other Argentinean "lady ghost" is "Felicita Guerrero", who was actually murdered in the same day of her marriage engagement. Elida Lois, a university

professor, who heard Rufina's legend, affirmed that "the real name of Rufina was Felicitas Cambacères". Such mixture of different names regarding "real" lady ghosts of Buenos Aires city reveals the folklorisation process of their biographies, transformed into emblematic tales regarding the supernatural appearance of haunting girls in haunted houses or haunted graveyards. This oral version regarding Rufina is an aithiological legend, which gives a causal explanation for a funeral monument.

In these versions regarding the lady ghost, history and fiction are mixed up in a poetic reconstruction. Such narratives deal with historic local tragedies that recreate folk patterns which express traumatic conflicts with the living, such as untimely deaths.

Rufina's history in mediatic and virtual channels

The "history" of the Lady ghost can also be found in the global space of Internet. Such virtual space acts as a mediatic channel whose technological resources contribute to spread different local versions of folk narrative matrices all over the world. The web combines oral and writing technologies, as well as iconic codes, mixed up in multisemiotic messages that circulate everywhere. Immediacy is one of the most important distinctive features of this virtual channel.

In this section, I will analyse a video that can be seen in You Tube. This video corresponds to a TV program, which includes another video which circulates in Internet, dealing with the appearance of a lady ghost in urban contexts. Such videos focus the attention in the legend of "The white lady" as a local expression of a global legend, whose versions can be heard "in most of all "big cities all around the world".

The main discursive strategy is the dialogue, articulated as a turn-taking conversation, around the pair question-answer (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974). The main topic of this dialogue is the "legend of Lady in white". Such "legend" is located in time and space, in the Recoleta graveyard of Buenos Aires city, at the beginning of the XXth. Century. Like the oral version by Santiago Bonacina, this virtual version is also connected with the untimely death of Rufina Cambacères. The virtual message is presented as an argumentative discourse in which the speakers tend to convince the audience about the credibility of these "histories" regarding "Lady in white". Such discourse mixes up science and fiction, history and belief. That is why the journalists invite a parapsychologist, who gives a para-scientific explanation about this ghostly appearance, beyond the boundaries of scientific discourse. The speakers are three: two journalists, a man and a woman, called Alexis and Monica, who present the TV show, and the parapsychologist, who answers all their questions in order to give a parascientific explanation of the strange event, located in the historic space of Recoleta graveyard, and in the symbolic space of belief.

The speaker Alexis contextualizes this legend within a narrative series of "Fantastic and terrific histories ... which circulate from one to the other person and from one to another

³ The English ballad refers the tragic death of Clementine, the young daughter of a miner, who fell down into the water while she was feeding up ducks. At present, I am working in a presentation for the 41st. International Ballad Conference, intitled "Clementine: wandering itineraries of a traditional English ballad in Argentinean contexts" In this presentation, I compare the English ballad with this oral version.

⁴ For an initial approach to the circulations of folk narrative matrices in Internet, see PALLEIRO, (2004), pp. 191 and 336. For an interesting analysis about virtual narratives in the world wide web, see DELFINO KRAFT, "Vínculos virtuales de protección y prodigio: las cadenas de la suerte en Internet" in Palleiro (2008).

generation... located in different places ..." Such "history" is presented as a singular example of a general series. This virtual version recreates the universal motif of "The vanishing hitchhiker" in the contemporary world, from a gender perspective. That is how the lady ghost is presented like a sexy woman that "uses to meet lonely men who walk down the desert streets by night, and she can have even a sexual encounter with them". The speaker also mentions "TV actors like Arthur Garcia Buhr" as eyewitnesses who attest the verisimilitude of such encounter. Such mention of eyewitnesses is an argumentative topic, typical of legendary discourse. He alludes as well to the plural voice of different "generations" and, in this way, his own discourse is thus replaced by the polyphonic authority of "a world of other's voices" (Bauman 2004). In this dialogic discourse, the journalist Monicar presents the aforesaid video, with visual images and musical effects, as

... a video made... during a trip in an unknown place ... in the middle of an urban road, where a ghostly woman with a white dress asks the driver to stop his car...just there, in a place where, long ago, it has been an accident in which, as it is afterwards known, the strange woman has died...

This video is a multisemiotic message, in which the visual images of the white ghost are combined with a mysterious music and other sounds such as shouts and the noise of the brakes of a car. All these virtual resources emphasize the illusion of reality.

Such video of a strange accident of an unknown woman, located in any time and in a nowhere place, acts as a frame to the history of a well known young lady, in a specific time and place: the one of Rufina Cambacères, buried alive in Recoleta graveyard of Buenos Aires city. Such tension between local and global is one of the basic discursive strategies of this virtual speech. That is how the speaker mentions the "real case" of "Lady in white", located in the "myticalspace of Recoleta cemetery". This mythical discourse is related to an original time, associated with the beginning of a civilisation (Palleiro 2004). In this ab origine frame, the speaker locates this "history" of the white lady in an intermediate zone between life and death, such as the graveyard, and in an intermediate zone between fiction and history: the one of belief (Palleiro 2008).

The speaker Alexis introduces the parapsychologist by mentioning his name and his surname, "Michael Ojeda", and he presents him as an "expert". In this way, he reinforces the authority of his speech. Ojeda uses a "parascientific" lexicon, oriented to explain this anomalous event. He thus refers to the faculty of souls "to acquire solid consistency", when seen by people with "differential characteristics" associated with an extrasensorial sensibility. Such explanation explores the edges of science and fiction, in the evanescent zone of "rhetoric of believing" (Palleiro et al 2008). He includes some words related with Sociology and Psychology, such as the reference to the "social" and the "collective memory of Buenos Aires citizens. Alexis uses the reported speech in order to keep a modal distance regarding Ojeda's affirmations. By means of such modal distance, Ojeda's discourse is presented as a possible, instead of a real event:

...with his paranormal powers, he [Ojeda] affirms, he had already had a full contact with these "souls in pain" who, at the eyes of certain persons with differential faculties and paranormal powers, acquire a solid consistency.

Ojeda assures, in an emphatic way, that "The white lady" "does exist", and he insists in locating the ghostly appearances in space and time:

Michael Ojeda- The white lady does exist...[She] is located in the collective memory of Buenos Aires citizens since the beginning of the XXth. Century...

Alexis's discourse includes metapragmatic clauses in which he alludes as well to the tension between "history" and "believing" ("But ... can we actually believe in the existence of more than one White Lady?"). By using the pronoun "we", he highlights the intersubjective aspect of belief discourse. Once and again, Alexis relativises the true value of the narrative, when he refers to "the possible existence of ghosts who we meet in our lives..." with a modal form of possibility. Such metapragmatic clause acts as an opening formula to introduce the "real case" of the "history" of Rufina Cambaceres, presented as a polyphonic dialogue between Alexis and the parapsychologist. In this dialogue, Ojeda refers the sudden death of Rufina, emphasizing its tragic dimension:

Michael Ojeda - Rufina Cambaceres is the case...a well known case...of the Recoleta cemetery ...Rufina was very young...and she suddenly appeared dead on her bed... in the best period of her youthAnd there are several theories [that try to explain such anomalous phenomenon] because her death caused a very strong impact... But the fact is that she can be seen ...from time to time... in the Recoleta cemetery...

Ojeda's narrative presents the structure of oral versions of personal experience, as described by Labov and Waletzky (1967), with an introductory orientation clause, in which the narrator provides information about time and space (" in the Recoleta cemetery...at the beginning of the XX th. Century"), a complication, that consists in her mysterious sudden death "in the best period of her youth", an evaluative clause referred to the strong impact that her death has caused, an implicit resolution dealing with her burial in the Recoleta cemetery, and a final clause corresponding to her ghostly appearance that takes place from time to time since the moment of her burial.

In a polyphonic counterpoint with Ojeda's version, Alexis refers the "history" of Rufina, which he considers, in an evaluative clause, as a "terrific" and "catching" one:

Alexis - The history of Rufina, daughter of the writer Eugene Cambacères, is really catching... Just the same day of her birthday number nineteen, she was found dead, and, after have being buried almost without a funeral ceremony, her coffin has been found displaced . Thus the coffin has been opened, and there she was, with all her faced scratched... That is why the statue that decorates the entrance of her tomb represents a young girl in attitude of opening the door...the door of her own tomb...

Alexis begins his narrative by mentioning the young protagonist, Rufina. As a temporal reference, he alludes to "her birthday number nineteen". The point of the narrative is the discovery of her sudden death, her displaced coffin, and her scratched face. The final clause proposes a causal entailment between this fact and "the statue ...of her tomb [which] represents a young

girl in attitude of opening the door". As it happens in Bonacina's version, such causal entailment turns the narrative into an aithiological tale, which provides an explanation about the origin of the funeral monument. In such polyphonic counterpoint, there is a displacement of the focus of attention from the "present vision" of the ghost mentioned by the parapsychologist, to the retrospective narration of an ethiological tale. In fact, Ojeda focuses his attention is the present, by emphasizing the effect of the history of Rufina in her present ghostly appearances. Alexis, instead, focuses his attention towards the past, and he moves from the present of the funeral monument of the girl in attitude of opening the door of her tomb to the causal explanation for this image. By means of this temporal movement, he recreates the "catching history" of the tragic death.

In the next turn of conversation, Alexis introduces an opening clause towards other itineraries of the same narrative matrix, regarding "Lady in white" ("...But it seems that Rufina is not the only Lady in white of Recoleta cemetery...") By means of the modal clause "it seems", he locates his discourse in the narrative arenas of belief. He also introduces a metapragmatic clause, referred to the variation of "details". He adds as well an evaluative clause, in which he considers these out of ordinary events as "paranormal histories". Such evaluation justifies the presence of the parapsychologist Ojeda who can give a conceivable explanation of these ghostly appearances:

[Mysterious musical effect. Pause] Alexis - The apparent coherence and the details of each version seem to give more life and to make more credible these paranormal histories that sometimes take place in the bordering pubs of the Recoleta graveyard (necropolis) of Buenos Aires city[Mysterious musical effects]

The reference to the "life" of these "histories" introduces an antithesis with the semantic universe of the death, related to "the graveyard" in which these mysterious appearances take place. The reference to "the bordering" pubs reinforces the liminar character of such narratives, whose discursive construction deals with a "rhetoric of believing" mentioned also by the narrator, in a metapragmatic clause in which he mentions the "credibility" of these "histories".

Afterwards, Ojeda refers a third version of this urban legend. The introductory clause refers once more to the tension between local and global which serves as frame for this new "case":

Michael Ojeda - There had been cases of people who have known... a very pleasant and interesting lady in a fancy pub, or they have met her walking down the street, just round the corner, here, in Vicente Lopez street. And, later, when the woman decided to return home, and the man went along with her, after a little while, he has seen her for the last time just here, at the entrance of Recoleta cemetery ... and then she disappeared inside the graveyard...

This narrative develops the sequences of the "meeting" between a man and a "very pleasant and interesting lady" in the space of "Vicente Lopez street". In this new version, the protagonists are both an unknow girl and an unknown guy. In this way, it establishes an antithesis with the previous narrative, whose protagonist is a well-known woman of an aristocratic family dealing with Argentinean history. The counterpart of this "meeting" is the "separation" of the

couple, that takes place "when the woman decided to return home, and the man went along with her". Such separation acquires the characteristics of an implicit flight, such as the one of Aarne-Thompson's tale type number 313: "The magic flight". The narrator refers that the woman enters the graveyard, in an implicit allusion to the sequences of "the quest" and "the encounter of the grave".

In a commentative clause, Alexis develops the reference to "the lady's flight", saying that "as most of the versions of this history tell, this lady is a young girl who escapes", adding that "The white lady does not drag her lover to death". One of the distinctive features of Estonian lilac lady, instead, is that she drags to death everyone she meets. He mentions once more the presence of eyewitnesses, and he gives as well a precise temporary location. In this way, he refers "the meeting" of a famous Argentinean actor, "Arthur Garcia Buhr" with "the lady in white" that has taken place "in the fifties" in the same place of "Recoleta cemetery:

Eeh... even a very famous actor... of the fifties... I think it was Arthur Garcia Buhr... said that he had met The White Lady there, close to the Recoleta cemetery, which is the place where she uses to appear ...

As a final clause, Alexis introduces an intertextual reference to the book *True lies*, written by the journalist Jorge Halperin, who has collected and recreated some versions about "The white lady" and other urban legends. This intertextual reference serves the function of a testimonial authority, which acts as an argumentative resource to convince the audience. The speaker uses the same paradox used by Halperin in the title of his book, when he mentions the true existence of non existing beings: ("Jorge Halperin... is the author of the book *True lies*... This book deals with these non existing beings... that actually do exist..."). Such non existing beings constitute symbolic representations of the sense of life and death in Argentinean culture. In fact, the allusion to the untimely death of an aristocratic young lady that actually did exist connects this global legend with local history, in a narrative expression of Argentinean cultural identity.

This narrative text corresponds to TV program that can still be seen in YouTube. Such mediatic discourse includes a video that circulates in Internet, as an argumentative resource to proof the verisimilitude of the message. The discursive construction of such message is the result of a plural emitter that includes not only the speakers but also the scriptwriter, and all the production team of the TV program. Such multisemiotic message includes also music and visual images, in a virtual text. In this virtual version, Rufina's "history" is presented as a polyphonic counterpoint between the female presentator Monica, the journalist Alexis and the parapsychologist Ojeda, who gives a parascientific explanation of this out of ordinary event. This polyphonic narrative provides three alternative versions of this narrative matrix: a prospective narrative of Rufina's history and her ghost, referred by the parapsychologist; a retrospective narrative referred by Alexis as an aithiological tale, and the last one, focused in the meeting of an unknown Lady in White with a famous Argentinean actor. The speakers use the reported speech in order to construct a credible message, connected with urban traditions. Such traditions are recreated in a mediatic discourse that mixes up history, fiction and entertainment. The virtual channel of Internet, with its mechanisms of flexible linkage, provides a technological way of transmitting such urban legends, and gives also the opportunity of searching alternative versions of these local narratives in global contexts.

The lady ghost in Italian virtual versions: Beatrice di Canossa in the Livorno Palace

The legend of "The lady ghost" is spread all over the world, in the most different times and spaces. That is how in an Italian web site www.mmedia.kataweb.it, there is a reference to the ghostly appearance of Beatrice di Canossa, the elder sister of the countess Matilde di Canossa. It is said that Beatrice died the same day of her wedding, in the old castle (fortezza) of Livorno, during the XIth. Century. In a referential style, this web site tells that

In the old castle of Livorno, it can be seen the ghost of Beatrice, the elder sister of contessa Matilde di Canossa, tragically dead the same day of her wedding.....

This synthetic narrative, included in a written version, is reinforced by a video representing a young lady with long, dark hair, dressed in white, rushing away from the staircase of the old castle of Livorno. Like the virtual recreation of Rufina's history in Internet, the iconic discourse creates an illusion of reality, in a multisemiotic message that establishes an intertextual gap regarding the oral versions. The inclusion of such video in the web site is the result of a rhetoric work of editing images in movement. The poetic combination of moving images constructs a visual metaphor which concentrates antithetical significations such as life and death, youth and oldness, fiction and history. That is how the image of the "old castle" acts as a contextual environment to the appearance of a young girl, whose face is erased. A mysterious music, mixed up with horrible shouts, acts as well as sonorous environment to this ghostly appearance. The same visual resources have been used in the previous video, shown in the TV program regarding Rufina's tragic history. These similarities give account of a "virtual rhetoric" regarding ghostly appearances.

As the ones of Argentinean Rufina Cambacéres and Estonian Frederike von Grottes, the ghost of this young woman is also identified with a lady that actually did exist in Italian history. The narrative point is the sequence of the "Recognition" of this ghostly lady as a supernatural appearance, associated with the emblematic figure of Beatrice di Canossa, who belonged, like Rufina and Frederike, to an aristocratic family closely associated with the local history. The contextualisation of the narrative plot in a "castle" is similar to the one of Argentinean versions, regarding "The Tower of the Ghosts", that I will consider in a next section. Another similarity with Argentinean oral versions is the topic of the death of the protagonist the same day of its wedding. The wedding, associated with fecundity and vitality, establishes an antithesis with the tragic outcome of the heroine, whose untimely death is associated with her ghostly appearances.

This web site includes as well other written version of the same legend. Such version mentions the eyewitness "Luca Menicagli" who had "really" seen this ghost "one day of August". This presence of witnesses is also mentioned in Estonian versions, in which the narrator Lintsii mentions "a certain Int" who has actually seen "the Lilac lady" in the darkness. The presence of an eyewitness is also mentioned in Argentinean virtual version regarding Rufina Cambacéres, in which the narrator mentions the actor "Arthur Garcia Buhr" as an eyewitness of the ghostly

⁵ For an accurate analysis of this Estonian version, see Palleiro (in press).

⁶ In a previous research (Palleiro 2004) I have already analysed the rhetoric construction of this Halperin's version.

⁷ As I have already analysed, legends about urban ghosts began to be included in folk narrative collections after the last military government (1976-1995) in which a lot of young people has disappeared. For further considerations, see Palleiro (2010).

appearance. Such allusion to eyewitnesses is a distinctive feature of legendary discourse.

The video is accompanied by a discussion forum whose main point is connected with rhetoric of believing. The participants discuss about the credibility in supernatural appearances, whose veracity is put under the consensus of the different participants. It is worth remembering the relevance of believing in legendary discourse (Dégh and Vázsonyi 1976). The main topic of the forum is the discussion about "the true ghosts". That is how the different participants mention different attributes of a "real ghost", such as the absence of a body. They give their different opinions not only about the credibility of the narrative message but also about the constructive process of a credible discourse. They include thus metanarrative considerations about the credibility of this virtual iconic discourse regarding the ghostly appearance of Beatrice. Some of the participants reflect, in this way, about referential aspects such as the shadow projected by the ghostly figure, in order to discuss about the credibility of the image. Other arguments allude to the possibility of identifying the exact place of the appearance, in the staircase of Livorno castle. These argumentative strategies, oriented to the reach a social virtual consensus, show the intersubjectivity of beliefs. Such beliefs regarding death and the supernatural are represented in the metaphorical figure of the lady ghost Beatrice who, in the same way as Rufina Cambacères and Frederike von Grottes, is linked to a real young lady. These three aristocratic women have really been victims of untimely deaths. Such untimely deaths invite human imagination to go beyond the limits of the rational knowledge, and promote a discussion about beliefs in a supernatural dimension. The point of departure of such forum discussion is a written version that recreates oral discourses in a virtual channel. This virtual channel mixes up oral and written messages with an iconic discourse. In this way, it offers a video that recreates this mysterious event with sound and with the iconic support of a moving image, in a web site that assures the diffusion of a local legend in a global circuit.

The visual message of this video is the result of a chain of multiple emitters, from the ones who registered and edited sounds and images, to the participants of the virtual forum, that create a special dynamics of reception. In this way, the virtual channel provides both the emitters and the receivers with its own structure. Such structure is given by the conditions of production and access to the Web page through the technological mediation of a computer, with the virtual modality of navigation and the rules of the site, which offers the possibility of an interactive dialogue. Such polyphonic interaction is similar to the dialogic structure of folk message.

The rhetoric of image reinforces the illusion of reality of this legend, recreated in a sort of dramatic representation, similar to the ones of the Literary Museum of Tartu and of the Recoleta graveyard. Both the Museum and the cemetery act as symbolic places linked with the reconstruction

⁸The original text is the following: "...Nella fortezza vecchia di Livorno si aggira il fantasma di Beatrice, sorella della contessa Matilde di Canossa, morta tragicamente il giorno delle nozze..."

⁹An oral version which I collected in Buenos Aires city in 1995, from Claudia Ricigliano, aged 35 years, refers the tragic disappearance of a just married couple the same day of their marriage, in "The Devoto palace" ("... This has happened in a very large house of Devoto...almost a palace... A guy and a young lady got married... And there has been a wedding party...And in a certain moment, they went out... in a car ... And when they arrived to the railway station...they didn't see the train arriving... It has been a tragic accident. Both of them died... And from that day on, it is said that strange voices can be heard ...And once a beggar dared to enter...and he saw ... a ghost...And that the palace has been put for sale, but nobody wants to buy it...")

of social memory. As Kalmre (2001) refers in her study about The lilac lady, the mysterious legend of the Estonian lady ghost has been recreated in the last years in actoral performances which take place in the Tartu Literary Museum. In the Recoleta cemetery, as well, the so called "festivals of light and sound" recreate the "history" of the lady ghost in a recorded performance, in which Rufina's funeral memorial is illuminated, and a voice in off refers a version of the legend, mixed up with the history of her tragic death. In the same way, the recorded video of the Italian site recreates the voice of some visitors of Livorno, who "have seen" the ghost of Beatrice in the staircase of the old castle. That is how, in a different scene, the action of crossing the boundaries between the life and the death is recreated in a virtual message which promotes a metanarrative discussion about legend and belief. Such discussion is based on a local legend circulating in a global channel which favours the interactive discussion in virtual forums.

The ghost of Clementine in Internet

Searching "ghosts", "ladies" and "Buenos Aires" in Internet, the web visitor can find a virtual site whose title is "Curiosities of Buenos Aires city". The home page of this colorful site, full of photographs of different famous buildings of Buenos Aires city, such as the "The Council" (El Cabildo), "The English Tower" and Retiro malls, includes one link intitled "The tower of the ghost". Such link opens another colorful page with the photograph of an ancient building of Buenos Aires city, located in la Boca district, whose distinctive feature is the presence of Italian inmigrants and local artists. This geographic and cultural environment is associated with two lady ghosts. One of them is Felicitas Guerrero, a young widow who has been murdered the day before her second marriage, whose ghost "can be seen" in the top of the tower of St Felicitas church, built by her parents in honour of her memory. The other one is Clementine, whose ghost also can be seen in the top of other tower of La Boca. In another research, I deal with Felicitas's history and legend, in oral versions that I collected in October 2010. In this presentation, I will focus my attention in Clementine's legend, as it is presented in this virtual site.

It is worth remembering the substitution of the historic name of "Rufina" for "Clementine" in the oral version I have already analysed. As I have already said, the substitution of the real name of "Rufina" Cambaceres by "Clementine" is connected with the protagonist of an English traditional ballad. It is also connected with the Argentinean ghost Clementine I will deal with.

In the web site, whose complete title is Corners, Histories and Myths of Buenos Aires city, the page I deal with is presented, in a metapragmatic clause, as a touristic "page... dedicated to know the corners, histories and myths of Argentinean Buenos Aires city", in a mixture between geographic and symbolic spaces. As I have already said, the messages that circulate in this virtual channel are the result of a chain of emittersers. These messages combine visual and written codes, with the aim of articulating an attractive speech, in order to catch the attention of the virtual receiver, who arrives at this page through a virtual search. This narrative discourse, written in different colors, has a strong illocutionary force. The emittersters use a colloquial discourse and an argumentative style, oriented to persuade virtual visitors to "enter the site" so they can "watch" the curiosities of Buenos Aires city. The written message combines brown and grey letters, with a title in blue that introduces the "old legend", contextualised in la Boca district.

¹⁰ Gentle acknowledge is due to Eleonora Gonano, who gave me the information about this virtual legend.

RHM
Buenos Aires



The narrative is located not also in space but also in a concrete time, "in the middle of the decade of 1910". It is also classified, through a metapragmatic clause, as a "legend". The title is preceded by a photograph of this building. The visual image creates an illusion of reality, reinforced by the invitation to visit this building, addressed to the virtual receivers. In the same way as the Italian version, contextualised in the palace of Livorno, this fancy building is associated with an aristocratic European tradition. The opening formula has strong similarities with the virtual text regarding the Lady Ghost of Recoleta. Both of them make reference to "legend and ghosts" of the big cities, in a tension between local and global:

Big cities of the whole world have their own legends and ghosts, and Buenos Aires does not escape to this trend. In this city full of history, **CURIOSIDADES DE BUENOS AIRES** I not be absent...
¡aprovechate y mira las curiosidades de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires

The verbal speech gives precise details of the location of the palace. In a descriptive clause, the narrator makes also reference to the "Bohemian" cultural atmosphere of La Boca district. The reference to typical elements of the culture of Buenos Aires, like soccer and tango, serves as an opening clause to "a peculiar legend referred from ones to the others by the neighbours of La Boca district". A distinctive feature of this narrative is the entailment of this "tradition" of Buenos Aires city with European immigrant tradition, since some of the mysterious protagonists will be a sort of Catalanian elves, identified with garden dwarfs. In the description of the building, the narrator uses the rhetorical resource of the accumulation, in order to incorporate the spatial dimension in the temporary sequence of the narrative. The iconic resource of the photograph emphasizes the relevance of the space in this narrative discourse:

...in the intersection of Admiral Brown Avenue and the streets Wenceslao Villafañe and Benito Pérez Galdós [there is]... an old building constructed on a trapezoidal perimeter... the first appearance is the one of a small palace ... On the top... it excels the tower...

The adjective "old", referred to the building, is a leit motif of this narrative, used to construct an ancient tradition, in a poetic process of "invention of traditions" regarding the past of "new" Buenos Aires city, strongly connected with European "old" one. The legend of Clementine is associated to the history of "María Luisa Aubert Aurnaud", the previous owner of the palace. This woman, who actually did exist, was a rich landowner who lived part of her life in the city and part of her life in the country. The narrator includes a retrospective narration of

the history of this building, from the moment in which "the lady hired the the Catalan architect Guillermo Alvarez" to construct "a fashionable building [of] modern Catalan style" decorated "with Catalonian objects" and "plants of that Iberian zone". Such allusion to Iberian plants and objects is an important indexical detail which will become important in the sequential development in the narrative. That is why the narrator includes an accurate description, regarding "the exotic plants of the balconies":

Mme. Aubert... put in all the balconies exotic plants from Catalonia especially brought from Spain to decorate her new palace...Some of them were used to cook special dishes and the others had some hallucinogenic properties...

The following episode refers asequence of mysterious facts, whose result is Mme Aubert's decision "to go away from the building located in Admiral Brown avenue of La Boca district", in a sudden flight. Such mysterious flight, in which she abandons "the palace...mysteriously and silently", has some similarities with Aarne-Thompson's tale-type 313, "The magic flight". Until the moment of this flight, "the neighbors affirmed that they heard shouts of scares" coming from the palace. In this way, the neighbors act as witnesses who confirm the tale's verisimilitude.

After this initial sequence, the narrator refers that the old hose was given for sale and in that way different apartments have been given for rent. One of these renters was young Clementine, who came from the country to study art in Buenos Aires city ("Aubert, in her quick flight, gave her house for sale, and thus this big structure became a collective house of rent. In that way... the house of the tower received new renters...") By means of visual images, the narrator describes this young artist, as a "beautiful and cheerful young woman with a very long hair" and he adds that "almost everybody in that neighbourhood loved and admired her". In this way he presents this young lady as an emblematic figure, strongly associated with the space in which she chose to live. The polyphonic voice of the neighbours reinforces this strong connection between the woman and the space. The web page includes another image of the plant of the building which emphasizes the illusion of reality. The iconic discourse reinforces the magnificence of the building which seems a royal palace, similar to the one of the Italian version. Such iconic resources tend to cause a visual impact oriented to attract the attention of the visitors of the web page:



The following sequence constitutes a retrospective unit, referred to the "prehistory" of Clementine. This unit includes indexical signs regarding the contextual environment of Buenos Aires in the first decade of the XXth. Century, such as the reference to the art studies of Clementine in "Buenos Aires University". These details tend to associate the young woman with a concrete period of Buenos Aires history, as contextualisation resources.

The next episode includes another leit motif of these virtual tales. This leit motif is the allusion to a mediatic figure which acts as an eyewitness whose testimonial authority guarantees the veracity of the tale. Whereas in the virtual version regarding Rufina Cambacères, the witness was a "famous actor", in this one, the witness is "a female journalist whose name was Eleonora". This journalist wanted "to write an article about the young painter whose "pictures were exhibited in important art galleries of Buenos Aires city." Such reference acts as an argumentative resource, to convince the receivers about the historic existence of this mysterious young lady.

The point of the narrative corresponds to the mysterious death of Clementine, who falls down from the tower, a few days after the visit of this journalist:

...one night [] strange event happened... The neighbors heard loud shouts that that came from the tower... Clementine fell down from the tower, and her body crashed against the floor ...

By means of an evaluative clause, the text emphasizes the impact of this tragic unexpected event in the local space of la Boca district ("...The whole district was hit by this event..."). Once again, the voice of the group is mentioned as a polyphonic resource, to prove the tale's verisimilitude. The following unit focus in the explanation of the possible reasons for this tragic event. It refers to the last photographs of Clementine's paintings received by the journalist. These photographs reveal the presence of "three elves" or "three dwarfs" which have not appeared before in the last Clementine's picture:

...Eleonora receives the photographs of the last Clementine's paintings. Unexpectedly, she realized that in the last picture that the young artist was about to finish there were three elves, three dwarfs she had never seen before...

This fact "encourages the journalist to begin an inquiry about Clementine's mysterious death". Such inquiry serves the narrative function of providing a cause of the death, dealing with the "elves". Such reference to the "elves" connects Clementine with Madame Aubert. Both histories are thus connected by the mystery which causes so much the flight of the first owner of the house and the death of the second occupant of the tower. Once more, the coral voice of "the neighbors" plays an important roll in the story, linked here with the information they can give to find out the new address of Madame Aubert:

... Asking the neighbors she [Eleonora] came across a piece of information regarding the old owner of the building. She learnt that the old lady had left the building unexpectedly ... in a mysterious way... Finally, the journalist... obtains the new address of Madame Aubert, who had returned to Rauch, and she was then living in the country...

The encounter of the journalist with Madame Aubert takes place in the country. In this episode, there is an accumulation of indexical details referred to the opulent rural property of Madame Aubert in Rauch, which reinforces the tale's verisimilitude. Such details serve the function of contextualization resources, which introduce an antithetical dynamic between urban and rural spaces, and between Argentinean and European culture. In a retrospective flash back, Madame

¹¹ The topic of selling haunted houses appears also in the version regarding "The Devoto palace".

Aubert presents her own speech as a belief narrative, whose protagonists are "the elves". The retrospective narrative is classified by the narrator, in a metapragmatic clause, as an "ancient Catalonian legend" which deals with the "genies of the forests that look like elves or dwarfs", associated with "poisonous mushrooms":

... After the formal presentation, the interview ... begins. At first, Madame Aubert asks Eleonora if she believes in elves and other supernatural beings, and the journalist answer that she does not believe in their real existence. [Mme Aubert refers]...an ancient Catalonian legend which says that the Pyrenaic forest is the follets' homeland... The follets are a sort of genies of the forest, that look like elves or dwarfs who use to sleep behind the mushrooms...

Like in the parapsychologist's speech regarding Rufina Cambacères, the narrator introduces some elements of scientific discourse, connected with the causal explanation of the existence of these supernatural beings. Such "scientific" explanation associates the presence of these elves with the hallucinatory effects of certain plants, but at the same time it makes room to rhetoric of believing, when it says, with an emphatic "do", that "they do exist":

... These dwarfs or elves are scientifically associated with the hallucinogenic effects of the mushrooms that can sometimes be poisonous... But others say that in fact they do exist...

Once again, the affirmation of the real existence of these supernatural beings is attributed to the plural voice of the group. This belief is here associated with Catalonian tradition, up to the extent that the name of these supernatural beings is a Catalonian name, such as follets. The narrator explains then the distinctive features of these supernatural beings. In such explanation, he uses the present tense, in a commentative clause which creates an illusion of reality. There is a clear counterpoint between such commentative clause and the retrospective narration of the mysterious events of the Palace of the Tower, referred in past tense. Such dynamics between the past and the present creates a perspectivist effect:

... Follets can be very collaborating, they can help to the people in their works or tasks, but if they get nervous they can become very wicked and their anger has no limits...

This retrospective narration is connected with the previous reference to Madame Aubert's days in La Boca palace. In fact, it provides some missing details which give a new sense to her mysterious flight. Such details deal with the irruption of the supernatural in the daily life, connected with these elves, which used to collaborate with the servants in their daily duties. By means of a reported speech, the narrator refers that, according to Madame Aubert's version, one day, one of these elves got very angry and, from that day on, "the house became a hell". In a descriptive clause, the narrator presents a sort of upside down world: the chairs and the tables are broken, and the knives begin to fly. In that way, the elves put in danger her own life, so Madame Aubert decides to leave the urban palace and to settle down again in the country. Once again, the narrator introduces an antithesis between the country and the city, reinforced by the visual discourse. In this way the text incorporates another colourful image of The House of the Tower, which emphasizes the illusion of reality, in a climatic moment:



The end of this retrospective sequence refers the return journey of Eleonora to Buenos Aires city. In a reported speech, the narrator associates the results of her research with an "old legend in which by all means she did not believe". This clause attracts the attention to the problem of the belief, with which legendary speech is closely bound. It refers also to the poetic recreation of some historic details in a fictional world. The narrator provides different "versions" to explain the tragic event. One of these explanations deals with the allucinogenic properties of certain plants, and the other, with the supernatural. The narrator uses the impersonal declarative form of the verb "to say" to mark an enunciative distance, related to both narrative itineraries:

[some people] say that the elves got so angry when they have been photographed that they never left the painter finish her skilful art work.... Therefore, her frustration has been so great that... she threw herself to the emptiness and in this way she finished with her young life...

This first "version" focuses the attention in the woman's decisions and actions, and thus presents a young lady able to decide about her own death with her own will. The second "version" attributes the cause of the woman's death to a murder committed by the elves:

... [People] tell that the anger and the resentment of the elves towards any beautiful woman were caused by the fact that they couldn't have sex with that maid, and they were also angry because they have been photographed. All this made them decide to push Clementine to the emptiness or, at least, to persuade her to commit suicide...

This reference regarding different possible "versions" constitutes a metapragmatic consideration about the folktale's constructive process. In fact, this allusion deals with the alternative itineraries of folk narrative matrices, and with the constructive process of possible worlds, articulated by means of modal clauses. Such modal clauses are closely connected with an intersubjective agreement to the veracity of the narrative, which is a distinctive feature of belief discourse. This collective agreement is introduced in the narrative by means of declaratory verbs related to the polyphonic voice of different groups, such as the one of La Boca neighbourhood, the other of Clementine's friends, and a last one composed by Madame Aubert and her servants. Each group gives a different version about this tragic death, whose mystery is connected with the evanescent arenas of believing.

After this retrospective clause, the narrator returns to the present, and he mentions that "the renters of that building ... affirm to hear at night some footsteps in the tower". They say as well that "their personal belongings suddenly disappear and they are found years later in another place". One of these missing objects is, precisely, "Clementine's unfinished picture". Such reference

to the unfinished painting is tied with the "curse" of this old building. The sense of anguish provoked by the unfinished work, associated with the "unfinished" life project of this young beautiful woman are linked to the presence of her ghost at the top of the tower, as the text expresses in an open end:

...[People say that] by night they can hear footsteps in the tower and those are the one of the ghost rushing towards the window when she recreates her last race, before her last jump towards the emptiness of death ...

This clause regarding the consequences of a past action in the present is a topic of legendary discourse. Such consequence is connected with the ghostly appearance of the young artist, untimely disappeared when her last picture was not yet finished. This allusion to the unfinished work installs a sort of synechdotic logic, dealing with fragmentarism (Le Guern 1985). In the final clause, the narrator offers a possible solution, in order "to finish with the curses and to give an end to the young woman's eternal agony". Such solution would be to find the hidden picture, and to complete the unfinished painting. This tension between the complete and the incomplete work can be considered as a metaphoric expression of the opposition between youth and maturation, associated with the dynamics between life and death. In this way, the endless work is associated with the ghost, as a mysterious being whose unfinished life is projected into a supernatural dimension.

Like Italian Beatrice di Canossa, the ghost of young Clementine is closely associated to the place where she died, in a fashionable building, described as "an urban palace", which actually does exist in Buenos Aires city. In both versions, the owners of such buildings are aristocratic families associated with the traditional past of a social group and with its cultural identity. Such connection with a concrete place is emphasized in a finishing formula, which alludes to the dynamics between global and local traditions, associated with the "series of urban legends dealing with haunted houses and haunting ghosts, which can be found in all big cities [as] Buenos Aires". Such metapragmatic clause refers to the contextualisation process of folk narrative matrices. By means of such local contextualisation, these matrices can express the differential identity of each social group, with its own culture and local traditions. Each narrator recreates such matrices with a personal style, such as the one of Wenceslao Wernicke, who signs this version. In this way, he emphasizes the individual poetic work of recreating this folk narrative matrix in a virtual channel.

This version regarding the urban "ghost" circulating in Internet has also remarkable similarities with the legendary history of Rufina, whose real name is changed into "Clementine" in Bonacina's version. In both versions, the protagonist is a young lady whose tragic death takes place in an untimely period. In both narratives, the ghostly appearance is closely linked with a well known place and time, connected with the history of Buenos Aires city, such as the Recoleta graveyard or La Boca district. These places represent symbolic spaces dealing with social memory. In both texts, these contextual details deal with an invention of tradition in an urban context.

¹² Since 1880, the official cultural policy has been to "invent" a créole culture, by recreating European folk tradition in the Argentinean context. Eugene Cambaceres, father of Rufina, has been one of the main authors of 1880 generation.

Whereas Rufina's history has a stronger linkage with reality, because, in the same way as Estonian Lilac lady, the heroine itself was the young woman who really died tragically, Clementine's existence remains in the evanescent arenas of believing, and who actually did exist was Madame Aubert, the previous owner of the building. Nevertheless, both narratives mix up fiction and history in order to create an urban tradition, in the period of "the big European immigration".

The closing segment sends to the Home Page, in which there is also a photograph of the Recoleta graveyard. The page includes a button to insert some "commentaries". In a conative style, the verbal discourse invites the visitors of this page to send a message, and to begin in this way an interactive contact. This interactive style is a common feature with dialogism of folk discourse.

Final considerations

These versions about haunting girls and haunted houses express both intimate experiences regarding supernatural contacts with the dead, and collective experiences regarding different aspects of social life in different contexts. The sudden disappearance of a young lively woman causes a special impact in the most diverse audiences. Besides, ghost lore functions as an identity marker for members of a social group who share knowledge concerning the supernatural in heterogeneous living cultures (Valk 2006). They also express the dynamics between erotic and thanatic forces, symbolized in lady ghosts, who act as metaphoric condensations of such paradox. These fictional characters are identified with real human beings who actually did exist, in a poetic recreation of history (White 1973). Folk narrative patterns serve the function of fictionalization devices that connect the textual world with the social context.

In the virtual versions I dealt with, there are certain common topics and discursive strategies, tied with the dynamics between local and global and with the invention of traditions. Such similarities reveal a virtual rhetoric of legendary discourse in the world-wide web. The dispersive itineraries of the virtual channels, with their flexible links, reflect the disseminative associations of memory. Such virtual channels allow the users to connect similar histories of distant places by means of technological resources. Internet provides as well different rhetoric resources to create an illusion of reality. Such resources include recorded oral voice, as well as written and iconic discourse: photographs, videos, maps, and other visual images oriented to attract the attention of the virtual receivers.

The analysis of different versions of the same narrative matrix, collected in different contexts and channels of discourse, shows the permeability of these patterns. Thanks to such permeability, they serve the function of narrative devices that can express the differential identity of each culture. The comparison between Argentinean and Italian lady ghosts reveals the global similarities of local legends, circulating in a virtual channel that goes beyond all national boundaries.

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PADUM BARUA AND HIS GANGA CHILONIR PANKHI: A STEP TOWARDS REALIST FILMMAKING

Minakshi Dutta

In Assamese film history the contributions of Padum Barua are worth mentioning. After *Joymoti* (1935), it was Barua who stepped into the world of realist filmmaking. Influenced by Agarwala's realist filmmaking technique Barua endeavored to make *Ganga Chilonir Pankhi* (1976) with realistic flavor. For Barua, filmmaking was not a profession, but a passion. He lost everything for this film and therefore could not make his next film. He was the man who took initiative to form a society for the proper development of film and as a result of that North East people can have the Shillong Film Society in 1962. He was interested to introduce cinema in the academic syllabus and try to enhance the aesthetic taste of the audience. Apart from filmmaking he gave importance on the study of film and with that purpose he had contributed two valuable books – *Chalachitra Prasanga* and *Cinema Somporkio Bibhinna Alochona*.

His passion for filmmaking, as he mentioned in his book *Chalachitra Prasanga*, emerged after the watching of Agarwala's *Joymoti*. He said, I was drawn towards films when I saw *Joymoti* in my adolescence. This was the first talkie I had seen. I had also seen quite a few films made by Calcutta's New Theatre and Pune's Prabhat Company while I was a school student in Jorhat. The patches of creative camera work, dramatic use of the sound track of the soundtrack and interesting editing found in the works of Pramathesh Barua and V. Shantaram gave me inexplicable joy and satisfaction.¹ Impact of above mentioned filmmakers is easily visible in *Ganga Chilonir Pankhi*. Like Jyoti Prasad Agarwala, Barua also intends to use cinema as the projector of Assamese art and culture. For that purpose he gave utmost importance on the incorporation of traditional materials both tangible and intangible, in his film.

Definition of film, for Barua is totally different from some of his contemporary filmmakers, who conceived cinema as a source of entertainment only. According to him good cinema can no longer be an admixture of literature, theatre and cinema.² He was the follower of the statement by Dr. Siegfried Crowter (Theory of Film) – Imagine a film which in keeping with the basic properties, records interesting aspects of physical reality but does so in technically imperfect manner, perhaps lighting awkward or editing unimpressive. Nevertheless such a film is more specifically a film than one which utilizes brilliantly all the cinematic devices and tricks to produce a statement disregarding reality.³ By taking Crowter's principles in his mind, Barua crafted his

film in such a manner that people are tempted to place his film at a special position.

Padum Barua was born on 11 February, 1924 and in the year 1943 he went to Calcutta for higher studies. During his stay at Banaras Hindu University, he got an opportunity to interact with famous film personals like Ritwik Ghatak, Mary Seton who offered him the knowledge about filmmaking. He tried his best to apply their techniques while telling the story of *Ganga Chilonir Pankhi*. His aesthetic sense and technical excellence creates a new path for Assamese filmmaker. Apart from that, during this period he could see films made by famous filmmakers like Pudovkin, Victor Flaming and John Ford that gave him a new perspective to look at cinema as an art. However, he got the opportunity to experienced the post World War films of John Ford, William Wiler, Charlie Chaplin, Belly Wilder, Lawrence Olivier, when he joined government services at Shillong in 1948. During his stay at Shillong, he was deeply involved with cinema related activities. Apart from film viewing, he attended various seminars, festivals and conferences held in different parts of India. More than a filmmaker, Barua was a researcher of cinema, who wanted to propagate cine literacy in Assamese society.

From his article *Bharatiya Chalachitrar Natun Dhara* (New Trend in Indian Film), he expressed his observation about Satyajit Ray's films. It is important to mention here that though Barua was influenced by Ray's film, yet his filmmaking style is closer to Ritwik Ghatak's films. The differences between these two directors are clearly mentioned in his article. Here he said that

Satyajit Ray's films of those days do not reflect the contemporary society of the day. The cacophony of the post-independence of the period, with its communal riots, influx of refugees, food shortages, inflation, injustice, black marketing, and exploitation are nowhere to be found in his films. Rather, what finds reflection is an essence of Bengal's cultural renaissance of the beginning of the century. Whereas Ritwik Ghatak had the courage to pick up sensitive and socially relevant issues for his films, something no one has done thus far in Bengali cinema.⁴

Thus, despite his filmmaking quality, Barua had a critical perspective on cinema. Unlike Ray, Barua attempted to capture the social disturbances occurred due to the implementation of development policies after independence in Assamese society. In Apurba Sarma's words Barua's *Ganga Chilonir Pankhi* is the most significant attempt in almost forty years after Jyotiprasad's *Jyotimoti* in creating a serious, socially meaningful and visually rich movie by a competent and dedicated filmmaker who has the basic understanding of the language and knows the grammar of filmmaking.⁵ Likewise, Manoj Borpujari said that Barua has carried forward Jyotiprasad's legacy in spirit as far as depiction of Assamese life style, rural atmosphere and cultural ambiance were concerned.⁶ Barua's filmmaking technique is an exception to his contemporary filmmakers. He combined the realistic and expressionist model of filmmaking in the same movie. Despite the well composed narrative structure, Barua's directorial ability expressed in the application of artistically rich and aesthetically elevated shot composition. With a single movie he is able to change the trend of Assamese cinema – from 'copycat tales and melodrama' to serious moviemaking.

Ganga Chilonir Pankhi (Wings of the Tern, 1976, B&W):

Padum Barua adapted the story of *Ganga Chilonir Pankhi* from novelist Laxminandan Borah's famous novel of same name. Both the writer and the novelist were of same generation and therefore their perspective of the storytelling is same with each other. They were highly impacted by the British rule and had also gone through the changing socio-political situations of post-independent Assam. Therefore, as a reaction to such changing situation Laxminandan Borah wrote his novel incorporating his frustration⁷ and same had been selected by Barua for his debut film. In the novel Borah depicted the Assamese society of 1950s and 60s, means the period immediately after independence. At this period there is a tendency to come out from the traditional way of life under the influence of new communication and development. The writer has beautifully sketched the changing mind of the people with some small but important events. The river Sonai is symbolized as the life blood of the people of that particular area, where people relate their lives with the flow of the river. The development of communication, especially the road communication ruined the conventional way of life of the people and their livelihood. Narrating a tragic love story, Barua uncover the socio-political and cultural situation of a post-independent Assamese society.

Though the film was not selected for any award or film festivals, the film is exceptional as well as remarkable creation of that period and even of today. The film is exceptional because, firstly, this is the first realist movie; secondly, cinematically and thematically the film is of high quality; thirdly, application of innovative techniques by the filmmaker; and fourthly, extensive cinematic space given to the female protagonist; The role of the protagonist as an individual is a spontaneous outcome as there has been less effort to capture her in her conventional roles of a daughter, wife or mother.⁸

Basanti (Bina Baruwati), the protagonist of *Ganga Chilonir Pankhi* is a village girl living with her mother, brother Bhogram, sister-in-law and two niece and nephew. By profession Bhogram is a small businessman and due to rapid growth of communication his business is down falling. One of his friends Dhananjay, who is a homeopath often visits his home and gradually a relationship grown up between him and Basanti. Initially, her family members have no objection for their relationship, but suddenly due to some political clashes, Bhogram stand against their relationship and force Basanti to get married with another man, Mathura. Failing to oppose her family members Basanti accepts the man as her husband and passed one year with him happily. But unfortunately, one day Mathura comes to know about her past and tries to avoid her. It affects Mathura deeply and one day he died in a road accident. Basanti becomes alone and like other widow attempts to find her solace in religious books. After Mathura's death she is waiting for her child to come who is in her womb, but one fateful day the baby also left her devastated. At this moment Dhananjay once again comes to her life, but this time not as a lover. Dhananjay's presence gives some ray of hope in the lonely life of Basanti and she thinks about their reunion. In the mean time she comes to know about a couple who has eloped from the village to save their relationship from her one and only mate Monbori (the housemaid). This story inspires her to write a letter to Dhananjay expressing her feelings and sends it at the hands of Monbori. Though she is expecting a positive reply from him, unfortunately without responding to her letter Dhananjay leaves the place forever. The film ends with Basanti's self confinement in her in-law's house.

Though the film is based on the love story of Basanti and Dhananjay, Barua covers diverse issues related to Assamese society. The film began with the basic premise of the contradiction

between modern outward material development and social obscurantism.⁹ The impact of post-independent development policies on the economic, social and political sphere is clearly evident in some incidents of the film. On one side, Bhogram's business is collapsed by the development of communication system, and on the other hand he gets an opportunity to earn money by doing election campaigning. This job transformation is a common picture of developing society and Barua tactfully depicts the reality of the social system without breaking the flow of the narrative. However, some other social aspects are remained unchanged, like class, caste hierarchies, celebration of widowhood, preference of arranged marriage etc.

In the opening sequence of the film Barua gives an impression of the upcoming tensions of the narrative. The sequence starts with an extreme long shot of the river and the protagonist, and then with a cut another long shot of the protagonist taking her bath and a medium close up of the *Kalab* (the traditional Assamese water carrier) followed by a long shot of the tern (Fig-1). Here Barua used the tern to show the loneliness of Basanti. Likewise, at the end of the film also Basanti is moving towards her home with a sad mood after knowing about Dhananjay's decision. The shot reveals Basanti's defeat at the hands of social norms and the fate of a widow of that period of time. Though the society is developing after independence, which clearly reflects in Dhananjay and Bhogram's conversation at the beginning of the film, yet educated man like Dhananjay is still afraid to think about widow remarriage. The developmental scheme of government can change the infrastructural and communication system of the society but not the minds of the people. More than a life history of a woman, *Ganga Chilonir Pankhi* defines the social space of a woman – as a daughter, as a wife and as a widow. Basanti is not free from all the relationship and when she attempts to free herself, she is thrown back by Dhananjay who is the representative of orthodox social system.

Cinema lover remembers *Ganga Chilonir Pankhi* for some extraordinary shot compositions. The camera work was done by veteran Phatik Mazumdar. The mid long shot of line of bullock carts after Basanti's marriage (Fig-2), the shot of the cowboy at the river bank, the superimposed shot of Basanti and Mathura (Fig-3)– these are some stunning shots taken by Mazumdar to heighten the aesthetic beauty of the film.

In the film the director tries to give the 'rhapsodic impressionism'¹⁰ which time to time makes the story more alive. Take for example, the much admired walk of the protagonist through the jungle at the moment of her elopement. This can be considered as pure cinema impression: the twilight situation, passing trees, sound of *Dheki* (the rice pounding device, typical to a rural Assamese household) like her heartbeat, close up of her feet.

Despite the mesmerizing cinematic visualization Barua's *Ganga Chilonir Pankhi* is rich with its musical elements which are a mixture of western as well as folk musical scores. In the film he uses the "sound elements of rural Assam- the toads' crackle, the vixens' howl, the clicking of the loom, the pounding of the husking pedal, chirping of birds, hymns from the prayer hall and what not. This aspect of his *Ganga Chilonir Pankhi* was mentioned in the 'Anandabazar Patrika' (January 16, 1976) as such "He uses Assamese folk music in the film which sounds pretty effective at points' and in 'Amrit': 'Folk element in the background score is brilliant.'¹¹

Apart from these, the composition of dream sequence in *Ganga Chilonir Pankhi* is praiseworthy (Fig-4). In this nine minutes long sequence Basanti is dreaming about her *desired* life where

Dhananjay has come to take her and she is coming towards him by crossing the *deona* (one type of gate of Assamese house made of bamboo). Dhananjay, holding her hand take her to the river bank where a man with a boat is waiting. Suddenly someone calls her and she comes back to her reality. Her crossing in the dream suggests the possibility of her remarriage and consequently she decides to propose Dhananjay for his companionship. However, at the end of the movie the poor widow realizes the fact that widow remarriage is only possible in dreams, not in reality.

The quality of Barua's film *Ganga Chilonir Pankhi* can be summarized by the comment given by Indian parallel filmmaker Soyed Akhtar Mirza

It is a great movie in terms of structure, one of the finest movies I have seen.....I was overwhelmed. The man knows his craft- he knows the structure of film making. The film has made me see where I have gone wrong with Mohan Joshi [hazir ho]. The main strength of the film is in treatment of emotional moments with great restraint and detachment. The director has kept his distance -he knows where to cut his shots with great artistry.(The sentinel 19.3.85)

Notes:

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2. Ibid. p. 79
3. Padum Barua: Chalachitra Prasanga, Guwahati : Asom Prakachan Parishad, 1992. p 50
4. Bitupon Borborah: 'Padum Barua : The vanguard of New 'Assamese' Cinema'. in Manoj Borpujari & Dr. Garima Kalita (eds): Perspectives on Cinemas of Assam. Guwahati: Gauhati Cine Club; 2007. p 85
5. Apurba Sarma: Jyotiprasad As a Filmmaker (and the forsaken frontier). Guwahati: Gauhari Cine Club. 2005. p 60.
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POVERTY AND POLITICS: A STUDY OF THE SELECT WORKS OF HOMEN BORGHAIN

Noor Hussain

Abstract

Poverty is a curse on mankind. The term 'poverty' has different connotations. However, it may be described as a condition when man cannot provide them with the basic needs, namely, food, clothe and shelter. Literature reflects society. A literary artist captures social events and situations applying his or her artistic mind with great dexterity and creates work of art that leaves great impression upon the reader. Homen Borgohain is an outstanding literary figure in the contemporary Assamese literature. Though a columnist by profession, he is a multifaceted genius and exhibits his superb craftsmanship in the genres of novel, poetry and short story. A keen observer of the society, he has written on various themes and issues and shown a deep understanding of them. One such important theme in his writing is poverty. In many of his works he has dwelt, among other things, on the theme of poverty and its consequences. He suggests that poverty is not the only cause of prostitution. Through the creation of the character of Subala in the novel of the same title, he has brought out the life of a woman driven to prostitution. On the other hand, many a time poverty is forced upon people by politics or the so called politicians/ middlemen of the society. This is the theme of his famous novel *Halodhiya Soraye Baudhan Khai*. Borgohain paints life with a breathtaking simplicity and there is a perfect blending between subject matter and style in his work. However, this paper attempts to discuss how Homen Borgohain responds to the issue of poverty through a critical analysis of some select writings of Borgohain.

Key words—poverty, politics, prostitution, art and society.

Poverty is a complex term. It has different connotations. Poverty may be absolute or relative. Absolute poverty refers to a condition where a man lacks the means to meet the basic needs of life, namely, food, cloth and shelter. Relative poverty implies the low social and economic status of a man compared to that of the rest of a society. Poverty is a global challenge. In fact, it is a curse on mankind. It is present in every society –rich or poor. India, or for that matter, Assam is no exception. Poverty in India is a harsh reality. From the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century poverty in India intensified and reached climax in 1920s. Famines and diseases killed millions of Indians. After India won freedom, mass deaths and famines were reduced but they continued till 1960s and 1970s. It is true particularly of Assam. Social conditions

or ethos finds expression through literature. It can “illuminate and mirror our problems and can affirm and reinforce social, political and ideological standpoints” (Carter and McRae 3). Literature indeed reflects the society, its values –good or bad. In its corrective function, literature mirrors the ills of the society with a view to making the society realize its mistakes and make amends. It also projects the virtues or good values in the society for people to emulate. Literature, as an imitation of human action, often presents a picture of what people think, say and do in the society. In literature, we find stories designed to portray human life and action through some characters who, by their words, action and reaction, convey certain messages for the purpose of education, information and entertainment. It is impossible to find a work of literature that excludes the attitudes, morale and values of the society. This is because no writer has been brought up completely unexposed to the world around him. What writers of literature do is to transport the real-life events in their society into fiction and present it to the society as a mirror with which people can look at themselves and make amends where necessary. Thus, literature is not only a reflection of the society but also serves as a corrective mirror in which members of the society can look at themselves and find the need for positive change. A literary artist captures social events and situations applying his or her artistic mind with great dexterity and creates work of art that leaves great impression upon the reader. Homen Borgohain is such a versatile artist. Borgohain is an outstanding literary figure in the contemporary Assamese literature. Though a columnist by profession, he is a multifaceted genius and exhibits his superb craftsmanship in the genres of novel, poetry and short story. A keen observer of the society, he has written on various themes and issues and shown a deep understanding of them. One such important theme in his writing is poverty. In many of his works he has dwelt, among other things, on the theme of poverty and its consequences. He suggests that poverty is one of the principle causes of prostitution. Through creation of the character of Subala in the novel of the same title, he has brought out the life of a woman driven to prostitution by poverty. On the other hand, many a time poverty is forced upon people by politics or the so called politicians/ middlemen of the society. This is the theme of his famous novel *Halodhiya Soraye Baudhan Khai*. Borgohain paints life with a breathtaking simplicity and there is a perfect blending between subject matter and style in his work. However, this paper attempts to discuss how Homen Borgohain responds to the issue of poverty through a critical analysis of the novels mentioned above.

Borgohain's *Subala* was published in 1962. The novel narrates the life and plight of a simple village girl, Subala. Being frightened by her mother's design to force her to a life of prostitute, she runs away from home and goes to the city in search of a better life. But unfortunately she ends up in prostitution. Through the poverty stricken life of Subala, the author seems to offer a critique of the socio-economic life of the time. Life in the late 1950s and early 1960s was very hard. People often starved. Subala's mother had to beg to feed Subala and her elder sister. They starved days after days and sometimes lived on roasted fish (3, translation mine). She even sold her body to save their life. When one day she returned home without alms and found that her daughters were in dying condition, she took out a ring, the last token of their marriage, and went to Naren's father, the richest man in the region. But the man refused to give any money in exchange of the ring. But he hinted that he would give her money if she slept with him. She could not help accepting the money in exchange of her character and chastity. This incident illustrates how poverty forces her to prostitution. Subala's mother even sold her elder

sister to a Punjabi Arjun Singh for one thousand rupees despite the vehement protest of Subala. This incident frightened Subala. She apprehended a similar fate or even worse.

The author questions people's attitude to prostitution and the politics of the rich man in perpetuating prostitution. The male in a patriarchal society and the rich in particular wanted to exploit women – their body and mind as well. Subala's mother might surrender to poverty but Subala wanted to defy poverty and the rich. When they had been passing through acute poverty, Naren, a lewd and scoundrel visited their house and announced that he would always come to their home and had the evening meal on payment. Subala wished her mother would protest against such a proposal of Naren. Against her expectation, her mother gladly accepted the proposal and quickly went to the village shop to buy grocery to prepare meal. Subala was utterly disappointed and a great fear enveloped her. She could see through the plan of Naren. She was sure from his greedy look that his real intention was to exploit her body. One early morning she ran away from her home and made for the city in search of a better livelihood. But unfortunately she landed in a brothel, not an ashram. The old woman with whom she ran away was really a pimp disguised as a well wisher. Naren conspired with this pimp to bring Subala to the city to exploit her sexually and he was successful. Subala tried her best to escape from the pimp or from the situation but in vain. It seems that she proposes and God disposes. Cursing her fate and despite her will, she led a life of a prostitute. The greed and politics of Naren made her a prostitute, not her poverty.

Borgohain seems to suggest that men –both rich and poor –consider women as an object of sex only. While the rich like Naren exploited the body of Subala, the poor like Kanti exploited her body and mind. Kanti, a rickshaw puller and a link man of the brothel, pretended to marry Subala. She married him with the hope of escaping from the profession of a sex worker. He took and spent all her money that she had saved so far. Then he pushed her to prostitution, destroying her trust.

So, *Subala* is a sad song of a poor girl turning a prostitute. Keeping in mind the pathetic story of the novel, Hem Barua observes that the novel is written with an “objective with a vengeance” and Hiren Gohain comments that the novel has turned into “a sad poem illuminated with the vengeance of the novelist” (quoted in Borgohain, *Jigyasha* 19). Many other critics say that the novel is too imaginary. But Borgohain himself claims that the novel is based on his experiences that he gathered as a government officer at Chaygaon. To those who opine that such incident does not occur in our society, he seems to retort with the lines of Carl Sandburg that he quotes in *Subala*: “And they tell me you are brutal, and my reply is: On the faces of women and children I have seen the marks of wanton hunger.”

However, the most important fact to our discussion is that Subala's economic condition and the conspiracy of Naren forced her to prostitution. One may blame her mother for her plight; her mother encouraged and accepted Naren's proposal that he would come their house every evening. But she had also been a victim of poverty and greed of Naen's father. She had been helpless and couldnot help but behave to her daughter in the way she did. Subala lost her chastity to Naren –the same Naren whose father destroyed the chastity of her mother. She got along with her life selling her body to one customer after another without knowing what the future held for her.

Published in 1973, *Halodhiya Soraye Baudhan Khai* is another novel of Homen Borgohain, which portrays the suffering and an unequal fight of a poor peasant. Written against the backdrop

of the 'Gareebi Hatao' (eradication of poverty) programme launched by the then Congress Government, the novel subtly shows how poverty continues in the society under the patronage of the sloganeers of 'Gareebi Hatao' (Sarma 530). The novel narrates the struggle of a simple village farmer, Rasheswar who becomes a victim of a greedy landowner. Rasheswar has a piece of farmland which has been the source of bread and butter of his family comprising seven members. Once his father mortgaged the land to the great landlord, Sanaton Sarma and did not claim any receipt when the same was released from the mortgage. So Rasheswar is forced to give up the land because he cannot produce any mortgage receipt when asked for. He takes the matter to the court and the fight between the poor and the rich continues. The important point in this fight is that on one side of this fight is the rich—the landlord, the land surveyor, the Hakim and other officials. On the other side is the poor peasant all alone. Everybody – the politicians and the government officials join hands to push the man to the vicious circle of poverty. In the process he loses his livestock and sends his young son to work as an errand boy at the house of the village headman, Sharbeswar. His wife and he himself work in the field of Kalinath 'mouzadar'. In the meantime Sanaton stands in the election and promises, ironically, to fight for the poor and the landless. Lured by his promises, Rasheswar joins his campaign. His ultimate humiliation occurs when he has to put up political banners and posters that spout the virtues of Sanaton, the man who drove him from his land and ruined his life. The novel ends with the sorrowful life of Rasheswar who has lost everything, even his dignity as a man. In this social drama of exploitation, the novelist has carefully demonstrated the anti-people character of the government servants and the politicians as well.

To conclude, poverty is an important motif of many of the works of Borgohain. Through his writing both fictional and non-fictional, Borgohain attempted to expose the nexus between poverty and politics. Besides the novels discussed above, he wrote an open letter, "Hamida Khatunloi Ekhan Chithi" in the context of the 1974 famine that took tens of hundreds of life in the then Dhubri Sub- Division. In this letter (published in *Gigyasha* 79) he makes a scathing attack on the petty politics of the then Congress leaders. This is not say that poverty inevitably leads to prostitution. Borgohain seems to suggest that many people are forced to this profession due to poverty or due to the misdeeds of the politicians. He has lived a life both in the village and in the city. He has a deep insight into the socio-political life of his time and depicted it artistically with great mastery. His reaction to social issues is very conspicuous. His colourful career in journalism might have made a significant contribution to shape his attitude to social problems, particularly poverty.

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PLACE OF OUGRI IN THE MEITEI LAI HARAObA

Dr. Kshetrimayum Premchandra Singh

‘Ougri’ is a ritual song sung on the concluding day of *Lai Haraoba* or the ceremony of ‘appeasing the gods’. The singing of this song at *Lai Haraoba* is preceded by meticulously observed rituals and practices. At the *laipung* (sacred ground) an even number of male and female devotees stand in a circle and a rope is handed over to them. They must hold the rope and must not let it fall and touch the ground. It is considered a bad omen if the rope falls and touches the ground. The two ends of the rope are joined (tied in a knot) in front of the deities. Both the male and female leaders in the circle should be married and must have healthy children. The male participants stand on the side of the male deity (right hand) and the female participants on the side of the female deity (left hand). Once the ‘Ougri’ starts, the rope must not fall at any cost. *Maiba* (high priest) makes the announcement that ‘Ougri’ is going to be started and cautions everyone present (those who are participating in the ritual as well as the spectators) not to move from their present position. It is considered a bad sign to move body parts like hands and feet during the singing of ‘Ougri’. The high priest (*Maiba*) faces the deity and starts singing ‘Ougri’ while the high priestess (*Maibi*) stands beside him. Those who had sex the previous day, or ate leftover, or wearing unwashed clothes cannot take part in the Ougri ceremony. ‘Ougri’ is sung in front of the deities concerned to bless the land with more population and prosperity.¹ Before I discuss the place of ‘Ougri’ in the Meitei creation myth, let me put forward a few facts about Manipur, to give this paper a semblance of completeness.

Manipur is situated between Myanmar and Indian states of Nagaland, Mizoram, and Assam. As per 2011 Census the population of the state is 2.7 million. The ethnic demography of the state is so diverse that there are as many as 35 different ethnic groups speaking 35 different languages. Meiteis, who are about two thirds of the population, speak Meiteilon (*lingua franca* of the state) and follow Vaishnavism, Sanamahi worship, and Islam. The hill peoples, broadly divided into Kukis and Nagas, are predominantly Christians. *Cheitharon Kumpapa*, the royal chronicle of Manipuri kings, records Nongda Lairen Pakhangba who ascended the throne in 33 AD as the first king of Manipur and Meiteingu Bodhachandra as the last sovereign head of Manipur in 1955.

The authenticity of Manipur’s historicity before 1485 AD is still under academic scrutiny. However, the accuracy of the royal chronicle after 1485 has been established. Writing in the Manipuri script commenced ‘at the close of the 12th century but not later than the 15th century’.²

Many theories are there linking us to the culture of India from an early stage. But the real contact, though remotely, began in the 15th century when ‘Vishnu worship was patronized by the king of Manipur’. It was only in the 17th century that Manipuris came into a long and direct contact with Indian culture and religion. The kingdom changed its religion from Sanamahi Worship to Vaishnavism during the reign of Pamheiba (who his master calls Garibaniwaj) in early 1700s. The British invaded Manipur in 1891. Manipur got independence from the British in August, 1947. India annexed Manipur in October, 1949. So, Manipur carried along with it some 2000 years of history, language, literature, culture, etc. when the annexation happened in 1949. Meitei social structure was founded on a clan system known as *yek* (lineage). Meiteis are divided into seven *yeks* namely, *Ningthouja* (*Mangang*), *Angom*, *Khuman*, *Khaba-Nganba*, *Moirang*, *Sarang-Leisangthem* (*Chenglei*), and *Luwang*. The traditional Meitei religion centres on Sanamahi and other *lais* (deities) who must be appeased (*Lai Haraoba*) by *maibas* and *maibis* (high priests and priestesses). During the reign of Kiyamba (1467-1508) Hindu conversion efforts accelerated in Manipur. Waves of Shaivism and Vaishnavism sects entered Manipur. Chief among them are Nimbarka Sect, Vishnuswami Sect, Madhavcharya Sect, Ramandi cult, Madhu Guru Sect, etc. Vaishnavism was adopted as a state religion during the reign of Maharaj Garibniwaz (1709-1748) but not one sect could hold the ground for long. Finally in about 1777 Rajarshi Bhagyachandra (1748-1799) adopted Gouranga (Narotam) Paribar of the Bengal branch of the Madhu Guru Sect of the Vaishnava Sampradaya. The *madhur bhava* of Radha and Krishna enticed the valley of Manipur for more than two centuries and continues to do so.

Meiteis are polytheistic and follow what is known today as Manipuri Vaishnavism – an amalgamation of Sanamahi worship and Vashnavite traditions. They embraced Vaishnavism imposed upon them by the kings without abandoning their traditional faith known as Sanamahi Laining (worship). Sanamahi Laining originates from the principal God Sanamahi in the Meitei belief system. Along with the *Umang Lais*, *Sagei Lais*, and *Lam Lais* the following *lais* are also worshipped. Some principal *lais* are; Shidaba Mapu (literally Immortal Owner/father), Lainingthou Sanamahi (Supreme God of the Household Gods and Goddesses), Ebudhou Pakhangba (Younger Brother of Lainingthou Sanamahi and the Ruler of the outside world), Ima Leimarel Sidabi (Prime Ancestor Goddess, different according to different surnames), Ebendhou Emoinu (Goddess of prosperity, wealth and hearth), Ema Panthoibi (goddess of valour and battle), Yumjao Lairembi (Household Goddess), Ema Phouoibi (Goddess of Bounty), Ebudhou Marjing (God of sports and also the protector of North-East Direction), Ebudhou Thangjing (God of power and also the protector of South-West Direction), Ebudhou Wangbrel (God of death and also the protector of South-East Direction) Ebudhou Koubru (Giver of water and also the protector of North-West Direction), etc.

On the literary front, Manipuri literature is broadly divided into three periods: 1. Early Period – 12th to the 1732 CE (ending with *puya meithaba* – pre Hindu period), 2. Middle Period– 1733 to the British occupation of Manipur in 1891 (Hinduisation/Sanskritization period), and 3. Modern Period – 1892 to the present. *Ougri* belongs to the ‘Early Period’ of Manipuri literature.

Manipuris have a rich manuscript tradition belonging to both the Early Period as well as Middle Period. Pandit Khelchandra divides the manuscripts of Manipur known as *puya* in the following broad areas: 1. *Loinashilon* (literary works), 2. *Laihui*, (Chronology of Lais) 3. *Chinggoiron* (About Hills), 4. *Nunglon* (About Stone Erects), 5. *Khunthoklon* (about migration and origin of

peoples), 5. *Meihoubaron* (Origin of clans and lineages), 7. *Wayen Pathap* (laws), 8. *Lamilton* (Toponymy), 9. *Leisbem-Nongsemton* (creation myths – *Leithak Leikharol*, *Pudin*, *Leisbemton*, *Sahamabi Laikan*, *Thenggouron*, *Leihou Nonghou*, *Khamlangpa Wari Abuirol*, *Thiren Meiram Liba*, etc.), 10. *Yangbi* (Important tracts), 11. *Sekning* (Important tracts), 12. *Naoyom* (Important tracts), 13. *Jagoi-Esbei* (dance and music), 14. *Sha-Lan* (war and exploits), 15. *Tungda-thoklagadaba* (prophecy), 16. *Khonggul* (literally foot print, tracts on origin) 17. *Panji* (astrology), 18. *Laining Lambi* (religious life), 19. *Laiphamlon* (places of worship), 20. *Layeng pathap* (medicine), 21. *Erat thounirol* (religious rites and rituals), 22. *Laisbon-tinshon* (religious chants), 23. *Puwari* (historical accounts), 24. Dharma, 25. *Thiren* (Major research findings), 26. *Mahou* (Treatise on the origin), and 27. *Paorou-paotak* (proverbs).³ Tales of love and heroism, socio-religious and political tracts, are also found in abundance in the Early Period. Mention can be made of *Numit Kappa*, *Thawanthaba Hiran*, *Chainarol*, *Nongsamei*, *Chengleiron*, *Tutenglon*, *Nungpan Pompi Luwaopa*, *Khongchomnuipi Nongkarol*, *Panthoipi Khongkul*, *Panthoipi Naberol*, *Sakok Lamlen*, *Poireiton Khunthok*, *Salkao*, etc. This was also a period in which *Ningthouron* or chronicles were written. These texts are the lucky few which survived the historic ‘bonfire’ done at the behest of Santa Das Goswami, the Vaisnavite who changed the socio-religious, culture, and literary landscape of Manipur in 1732 CE.⁴ Such a heinous crime of one missionary made the eminent Indologist Prof. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee make this comment, “The older literary tradition suffered from a set-back, owing to the ill-conceived and mischievous action of the Ramandi missionary Santadas Babaji, whose vandalism in getting together and burning a number of Old Manipuri MSS. appears to have received the support of Gharib-nawaz himself; and this continued during the 18th century.”⁵ Despite the setback, Manipuri manuscript tradition continued outside the royal court.

Ougri, also called *Leiroi Nongloishei*, is one of the earliest ritual songs in the history of Manipuri oral tradition. It is also an integral part of the Meitei creation myth. Though very difficult to ascertain the period in which *Ougri* was first sung, there are mentions of *Ougri* in many *puyas*. According to *Panthoibi Khongkun*, ‘*Ougri*’ was first sung during the reign of Khaba Sokchronba.⁶ Khaba Sokchronba was a king in the protohistory of Manipur (prior to the 1st century in the Christian Era). In *Naothingkhong Phambal Kaba* it is mentioned that Luwang Ningthou Punshiba taught ‘*Ougri*’ to Naothingkhong (663-763 CE).⁷ ‘*Ougri*’ with political overtones was first sung by Meitingu Loiyumpa (1074-1122 CE).⁸ Notwithstanding the confusion over its origin, we can fairly conclude that the traditions of ‘*Ougri*’ were very popular among the rulers of Manipur as well as the royal court.

Puyas dealing with Meitei creation myth are polyphonic. In other words, these texts are multi layered and there are several perspectives with which we can approach them. Some of the already established perspectives with which we can deliberate the *Puyas* are:

1. Rites and ritual (*laining laishon*)
2. Dance and music (*jagoi esbei*)
3. Literary (*khorirol*)
4. Dichotomy of good and evil (*laisbon tinshon*)
5. Games and sports (*shana khotnaba*)
6. Polity and governance (*leingaklon*)
7. Toponymy (*lamilton*)

The present study is a religio-literary exploration of ‘Ougri’ as envisaged in *Pudin*⁹ and *Leithak Leikbarol*¹⁰. The song tends to vary from one text to another in rhyming and line separation. However, the central idea of the song remains the same. The story is given below in a nutshell.

After Ashiba creates the universe Atiya Shidaba (immortal celestial father) instructs Apanba to create human beings to populate it. Apanba (variously known as Lainingthou Konglouton Louthipa, Konglouton Louthipa, Onglouton, Khoiyam Laiyingthou Thangwai Mara Ningthou) confers with Leinung Chakha Khongchompi to plant *punung hawai thangpak* (lablab, Indian bean, also known as Egyptian kidney bean). Ashiba, who is the creator of the cosmos, is unhappy with the developments because he is not given the task of creating human beings. So, he creates Samaton Ayangpa (a horse with wings) from the dust on his feet to disrupt the process of planting of *hawai thangpak* by Khongchompi and Louthipa. Samaton Ayangpa successfully tramples upon the plants and this infuriates Konglouton Louthipa. He sets a trap and Samaton Ayangpa is caught. There ensues a big wrestle between Samaton Ayangpa and Konglouton Louthipa. But neither can defeat the other. Leinung Chakha Khongchompi, then helps Konglouton Louthipa by chopping off the wings of Samaton Ayangpa and also by plucking out its mane. The act of helping Konglouton by Chakha Khongchompi in catching and taming the Flying Horse Samaton Ayangpa is sang out and danced out in *Lai Haraoba*.

I have kept the last word ‘kollo’ in Manipuri which variously means embrace, preserve, to ‘recall or ‘hold on to’ in order to retain the original style of singing and also to retain the inner sense of the song. It is done with the aim of maintaining the fundamental aspect of the Ougri ritual. The tradition of ‘*konsinba*’ as in *thawai mi konba* (embracing or calling back the senses and the spirit), and *kaosen konba* (keeping hold of the bulls), to give a few examples, have been in practice since time immemorial. This is also done keeping in mind the Meitei poetic tradition in which lines end with *se, de, re, o*, etc. ‘Kollo’ here is equivalent to *konba* as in *thawai mi konba* but not for an individual but for all human beings. The English translation is from the original Manipuri text of *Pudin* edited by Naoroibam Indramani.¹¹

Oukari-o kollo
 Beginning of universe kollo
 Beginning of sun kollo
 Beginning of rain kollo
 Beginning of terra firma kollo
 Making of landmass kollo
 Levelling of ground kollo
 As Ponglouton self kollo
 As Louthipa self kollo
 As Chapopi self kollo
 As Khongchompi self kollo
 Planting of *punung* kollo
 Planting of *hawai*¹² kollo
 Climbing of vine kollo
 Growing of it kollo

Stories of it growing kollo
 As Samaton self kollo
 As Ayangpa self kollo
 Of climbing vine kollo
 Of trampling it kollo
 Of growing itself kollo
 As Ponglouton self kollo
 As Louthipa self kollo
 Burning of heart kollo
 Burning within kollo
 Leiping trap prepared kollo
 Kangkhu trap is set kollo
 As Samaton self kollo
 As Ayangpa self kollo
 Trapped in Leiping trap kollo
 Trapped in Kangkhu trap kollo
 As Ponglouton self kollo
 As Louthipa self kollo
 Wrestled there kollo
 Shoulders barged kollo
*Mongba tajin khurou netnare*¹³ kollo
 As Chakhanupinu¹⁴ self kollo
 As Khongchompi self kollo
 Plucking its hairs kollo
 Named thus Sawa Tukonbi Ching¹⁵ kollo
 Plucked the whiskers kollo
 Named thus Marang Kofoi Ching¹⁶ kollo
 Pulled out its mane kollo
 Named thus Langsang Chinglangmei¹⁷ kollo
 What was trampled became clouds kollo
 Grew up once again kollo
 Planting of *punung* kollo
 Planting of *hawai* kollo
 Samaton-o kollo
 As Ayangpa self kollo
 What was crushed kollo
 Became snow kollo
 Grown once again kollo
 Planting of *punung* kollo
 Planting of *hawai* kollo
 As Ponglouton self kollo

¹ *Punung hawai thangpak* – lablab, Indian bean

As Louthipa self kollo
 Ready to throw kollo
 The lasso is prepared kollo
 As Samaton self kollo
 As Ayangpa self kollo
 The throw is a success kollo
 The lasso caught his neck kollo
 Langchel waire kollo
 Liton waire¹⁸ kollo
 Thus named Waiton Lamahal¹⁹ kollo
 Reduced his strength kollo
 Thus named Sekta²⁰ kollo
 Chopped off his wings and limbs kollo
 Thus named Heikak²¹ kollo
 Put on the bridle kollo
 Thus named Ekop²² kollo
 Rapid pace started kollo
 Galloping has begun kollo
 Dust rises thus kollo
 He reaches Langsang Sanglangchang²³ kollo
*He hum ha-ye hup.*²⁴

We can infer, from this song, that in the Meitei cosmogony the cosmos was created out of nothing (creation ex nihilo). Creation of the sun is the birth of the solar system and the creation of rain can mean the progression of a hospitable atmosphere. Then the landmass is created and leveled to populate it with plants and other living organisms.

In the Meitei creation myth, Pakhangba is depicted as the nemesis of his brother Sanamahi. They often work against each other and this makes them two principal gods in the creation myth. The story of Ougri is a narrative of the god brothers working against each other in the procreation effort. Atiya Sidaba (the immortal celestial father) instructs Konjil Tuthokpa²⁵/Pakhangba to create human beings to populate on the land created by Ashiba/Sanamahi. While Asiba/Sanamahi was creating the universe, his brother Pakhangba took the form of Haraba and interrupted his brother's work. Now that Pakhangba takes the human form of Konglouton Louthipa to create human beings Ashiba/Sanamahi takes the form of a flying horse called Samaton Ayangpa to disrupt the creation of human beings. Konjil Tuthokpa/Haraba/Pakhangba does ultimately take the human form as Konglouton Louthipa and entices Chakha Khongchompi,

² A technique of Manipuri wrestling known locally as *Mukna*. The technique mentioned here is *longkebrou* in which the calf of the opponent is drawn in and twisted by using one of the legs. This is also one of the earliest mention of *Mukna*.

³ Chakha Khongchompi

⁴ Name of a hill in Manipur

⁵ A hill in Manipur. Marang Khoifo Ching means the hill where the whiskers were plucked.

⁶ A place/spot in the present Kangla

the human form of Goddess Panthoibi, as his consort. Together, they prepare to procreate. The idea behind the union of the male and female to procreate is allegorically expressed as '*punnung hawai thaba*'. It literally means planting of the bean. The act of the sexual union is described as:

Planting of *punnung* kollo
Planting of *hawai* kollo
Climbing of vine kollo
Growing of it kollo
Stories of it growing kollo

Hawai is a symbol representing the womb of the first mother. The first vital seed from the father Konglouton Louthipa is sown in the womb of Chakha Khongchompi. The seed entering the womb is illustrated as 'climbing of vine' as a conceit. The seed then grows inside the womb (conceive) and it must be narrated to all the humans how this sexual union is the first attempt to procreate. The belief that copulation is primarily for procreation is reiterated here.

Samaton Ayangpa, the flying horse, created by Ashiba is the agitated/excited 'energy/sperm' which tries to disrupt the insemination process of Konglouton and Khongchompi. Samaton Ayangpa is also referred to as *Langgoi eenilba sagol ethakpa* which means 'the excited horse'. Samaton Ayangpa successfully destroys the 'vital seed' by trampling on it. An important aspect of the song is the idea of 'mystic physiology' in the Meitei creation myth. The female anatomy is shown as possessing certain energies which can resuscitate on its own. The male energy is capable of planting or destroying the 'vital seed'. Konglouton has the ability to plant the seed and make it grow. At the same time, Samaton Ayangpa has the malevolent energy to destroy and trample the seed. So the dichotomy of bad energy and good energy working against each other for ascendancy highlights prominently in this song. The concept of 'heavenly father' and 'earthly womb' is not found in the Meitei creation myth. However, the sexual act of the male and female is reflected as a 'cosmic union' in which energies possessed by the bodies must come together to create human beings. That the vital seed is destroyed several times by Samaton

⁷ *Liton* is a conflation of two words, *li* (cane) + *ton* (top end) and *waire* would mean to merge or to touch. Here the two words are used as internal rhyming to rhyme with a word in the next sentence. *Liton/Waiton*.

⁸ Regarding the toponymy of Waiton Lamahal it is written in *Thangwairon* (in manuscript) that, "*Thangwai madaimadi Waiton koubadi. Khoiyam Laiyingthou Thangwai Mara Ningthouna charwaipei leipi kangkebul langpu langthakpada samaton ayangpabu langthure. Yoiyam yaipi kanbounikena langgoi shamei waina sagol matungenna tannarakye. Samaton ayangpadi thuba langbu langchal louton waire. Adunonggibu Waitol o touna kouye.*"

⁹ Sekta is an autochthonous Chakpa village some eight miles from the capital of Manipur. How the village was named is described in *Lamiton* (manuscript) as, "*Thangwai mar Ningthou Onglouton (Ponglouton/Konglouton) langgoi samadon Ayangpabu tannarakpada lam sangna tannarakpaga langgol sagol masek taduna kanna chenba ngamdabadagi fare. Langgoi masek tare haiduna mafam adubu sekta kounakhi.*"

¹⁰ Heikak is name of a place. "*Thangwai madaimadi heikak koubadi. Khoiyam Laiyingthou Mara hanna langgoi samaton ayangpabu langgoi masha animabu kaklamye. Heikak o touna kouye.*" (*Thangwairon* – manuscript)

¹¹ Ekop also name of a place. "*Thangwai madaimadi Ekop koubadi. Langgoi enilba sagol ethakpada konchal yachal yotpu bikthokle. Khoiyam laiyingthouna langgoi makokpaina challamye. Adunonggibu Ekop touna kouye.*" (*Thangwairon* – manuscript)

¹² The present Kangla, the seat of Meitei Kings, at the heart of Imphal, Manipur

¹³ *Konsinba* of the song so as to embrace and call back the spirit of and in the song

Ayangpa inside the womb of Chakha Khongchompi highlights certain ‘excited energies’ which can cause instantaneous destruction of the seed.

Konglouton is perturbed exceedingly as all his efforts to procreate are hindered by Samaton Ayangpa. So he sets a trap to catch the flying horse. His plan is a success and Samaton Ayangpa is trapped. However, it is not an easy job to tame the flying horse. There ensues an epic fight/wrestle between the two forces. Their epic fight took them to many places in Manipur and those places are named according to the occurrences in the clash. The clash between Konglouton and Samaton Ayangpa is no ordinary clash. It is the clash for the right to the first womb.

Samaton Ayangpa is humiliated by plucking out its hair/mane, whiskers, tail, etc. The flying horse takes this humiliation very seriously and becomes more destructive. In the meanwhile, Chakha Khongchompi and Konglouton Louthipa make another attempt to plant the vital seed. This infuriates Samaton Ayangpa and destroys the seed again. This time the destroyed seed becomes cloud. There is another attempt to procreate followed by Samaton’s destruction. This time the destroyed seed becomes snow. Konglouton, who is asked by the immortal celestial father Atiya Sidaba to create human beings and rule over them, feels the urgency of the situation and tries to catch the flying horse and destroy it once and for all. So he makes a *kongoi*, a Manipuri equivalent for a lasso, and throws it. Samaton Ayangpa is finally caught and this time Leinung Chakha Khongchompi chops off its wings. It is symbolic of the annihilation of the malevolent energy by the female womb. As the strength of the flying horse has been reduced, Konglouton rides on it and is taken to Kangla, the seat of power in Meitei history. Finally, the destructive ‘force’ is exterminated and the productive ‘vital force’ is made to emerge triumphant. The great fight between the two forces working against each other to populate the earth is sung and danced out on the concluding day of every *Lai Haraoba* in the valley of Manipur. The ascendancy of the productive ‘vital force’ is thus celebrated and recalled. The creators’ overlordship over the created is evoked. The essence and spirit of ‘Ougri’ is embraced thus for peace and prosperity and for bigger villages with more population.

He hum ba-ye hup.

Notes and References

- 1 On the rituals involved in *Lai Haraoba*, See N. Kulachandra Singh. *Meitei Lai Haraoba* (Imphal: Self, 1963), pp. 114-17. *Lai Haraobagi Kanglon* (Imphal: UKAL, 2013), pp. 158-62.
- 2 Ch. Manihar Singh. *A History of Manipuri Literature* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2003), p. 12.
- 3 N. Khelchandra Singh. *Ariba Manipuri Sahityagi Etihās* (Imphal: Self, 2011), pp. 46-48.
- 4 *Cheitharon Kumpapa* records that in Sept/Oct of 1732 AD, Santa Das Goswami declared all the texts in the Meitei Script Unclean and organised a ‘Bonfire of Meitei texts’ at the Kangla gate. In the *Cheitharon Kumbaba* edited by L. Ibungohal Singh and Ningthoukhongjam Khelchandra Singh (Imphal: Manipur Sahitya Parishad, 1967, 93) it is written that “[*mera*]17 ni langmaichingda Meitei lairik mangban-e.” Bhramacharimayum Kulachandra Sharma et. al. *Cheitharol Kumpapa- 33 AD- 1984 AD* (Silchar: Manipuri Sahitya Parishad, Assam, 2015) 44, also has similar lines, “17 ni langmaijingda meiteireima mangban-e.” Also see, Saroj Nalini

- Arambam Parratt, *The Court Chronicle of the Kings of Manipur: The Cheitharon Kumpapa Original text, translation and notes Vol. 1, 33–1763 CE* (London: Routledge, 2005).
- 5 Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, *Kirâta-Jana-Kriti, The Indo-Mongoloids: Their Contribution to the History and Culture of India* (Calcutta: The Asiatic Society, 1998), p. 160.
 - 6 Chandra Singh (ed.). *Panchoipi Khongkun* (Imphal: Manipuri Sahitya Parishad, 2012).
 - 7 *Naothingkhong Phambal Kaba* quoted in *Ariba Manipuri Sahityagi Etibas* by N. Khelchandra (Imphal: Self, 2011), p. 28.
 - 8 Saroj Nalini Arambam Parratt. *The Court Chronicle of the Kings of Manipur: The Cheitharon Kumpapa Original text, translation and notes Vol. 1, 33–1763 CE* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 32.
 - 9 *Pudin* is an ancient text left in manuscript form. It deals with the Meitei Creation Myth. The text has been edited by Naoroibam Indramani and published at Imphal by NI Publications in 2015.
 - 10 Similar to *Pudin* but different in stylistics, the text of *Leithak Leikharol* also deals with Meitei Creation Myth. See, Chanam Hemachandra. *Leithak Leikharol* (Imphal: Self, 2014).
 - 11 Naoroibam Indramani. *Pudin* (Imphal: by NI Publications, 2015), pp. 41- 44.
 - 12 Konjil Tingthokpa is the third son of Atiya Sidaba and Leimarel Sidabi. He is also known as Haraba when he disrupts the creation process.

ASSAMESE CINEMA FROM PRE TO POST INDEPENDENT ERA: 1935-1958

Rana Sharma

Assamese cinema as a regional division of Indian cinema emerged in 1935 with Jyoti Prasad Agarwala's Joymoti. For the proper understanding of the history of Assamese cinema, a study on the first phase (1935-1958) of its growth and development becomes very important. This paper will be an attempt to delineate some specificities of this phase. It will illustrate the distinctiveness in respect of its thematic and stylistic features of the films of this phase along with its differences with the other Indian films of that period. Apart from that the paper will also show the importance of this phase in the development of Assamese cinema.

Keywords: Assamese Cinema, Regional Cinema, Jyoti Prasad Agarwala, Pre-Post Independent Era

Introduction:

After completion of four years of *Alam Ara* (1931), The first Indian feature film, Assamese legendary genius Rupkonwar Jyoti Prasad Agarwala made the first Assamese movie *Joymoti* (1935). While artists and professionals in Maharashtra, Bengal and the Southern part of the country began actively exploring the new mass medium right from the silent era, it was only in 1935 that the Assamese audience had their first viewing of a film made in their native mother tongue. Though Pramathesh Chandra Barua was the first Assamese to join the adventures of cinema he did not make any films in Assamese. Barua was exposed to Bengali and Hindi cinema and went on to direct, Charat Chandra's *Devdas* in both the languages that has remained a masterpiece till date.

It was Jyoti Prasad Agarwala who had dared to make a film in Assamese language with his limited knowledge and other challenging circumstances. Agarwala, who was a son of wealthy business man went to Calcutta for his college studies but soon left it mid way to travel to England in 1926 and join Edinburg University. Agarwala again left his education half way and travelled to Germany. He then got an entry into the UFA studios, where for seven months he learnt the art and science of movie making. It was in Germany that Agarwala also came in contact with the stalwart of Indian cinema, Himanshu Roy. While in Germany, Agarwala was exposed to the legends like Griffith, Einstein, Pudovkin, Pabst, Chaplin, Karl Dreyer, Munrau and Stronhein. Jyoti Prasad's *Joymoti* was a significant step towards the development of Indian

cinema also. It is the privilege for the people of Assam to witness that the first Assamese film *Jyoti* was also the fourth film of Indian film history. Unlike the films of other parts of India, *Jyoti* was based on a historical fact. Along with history it represents the bold and sacrificial nature of Assamese women folk. But it was not acknowledged by the Assamese people and the Indian people also. Aparna Sharma, a researcher from California University researching on Jyoti Prasad Agarwala, during her visit to Tezpur University opined that *Jyoti* was much technically and artistically advanced than most films made in India during that time (Sharma, 2012). His cinematic techniques involved a generous mixture of varying shots. The style of using dominant long shots found a healthy break in *Jyoti*. He also gave Assamese cinema its first actress in the form of Aideu Handique. Handique overcame her initial hesitations and dared social taboos associated with acting in cinema to create a history and legacy of her own. She has been an inspiration to all generations of actors of Assamese cinema. Another important feature of his film is the extensive use of Assamese folklore material. *Zapi*, *Xarai*, etc were used in his film in an innovative manner. In this paper our study will be limited to the Assamese films produced from 1935 to 1958. This is the initial stage of Assamese film history. This phase has a great importance in the development of this industry. The quality of this phase decides the way of its movement. Therefore, a study on this phase is a must for the researchers of this field.

Films of this Era:

After *Jyoti*, the filmmakers were not concerned about the serious nature of the art. They are making films for entertainment only. During this significant period total twenty one movies were made. i.e *Jyoti*(1935) and *Indramalati* (1939) by Jyoti Prasad Agarwala, *Manomati* (1941) by Rohini Kumar Barua, *Rupohi* (1946) by Parbati Prasad Barua, *Badan Borphukan* (1946) by Kamal Narayan Choudhury, *Siraj* (1948) by Phani Sarma and Bishnu Rabha, *Parghat* (1948) by Prabin Phukan, *Biplabi* (1948) by Ajit Sen, *Runumi* (1948) by Suresh Goswami, *Sati Beola* (1948) by Sunil Ganguli, *Nimila Aanka* (1955) by Lakha Dhar Choudhury, *Piyoli Phukan* (1955) by Phani Sarma, *Smritir Paras* (1955) by Nip Barua, *Xara Pat* (1955) by Anowar Hussain, *Era Batar Sur* (1956) by Bhupen Hazarika, *Mak aru Maram* (1957) by Nip Barua, *Dhumuha* (1957) by Phani Sarma, *Lakhimi* (1957) by Bhaben Das, *Natun Prithivi* (1958) by Anowar Hussain, *Ranga Police* (1958) and *Bhakta Prabhad* (1958) by Nip Barua.

Specialty of this Era:

The films were based on historical, social, romantic and mythological story. First movie *Jyoti* was made on a historical story called *Jyoti Kunwari* written by Sahityarathi Laxminath Bezbarua. Film critic Apurva Sarma said, “A comparative overview of Assamese and Indian [mainstream] film histories ... marks a significant distinction between the two at least in the beginnings. While in the initial period Indian cinema, unlike in the West, meant a form of mere entertainment based on religious or mythological stories from the epics, Assamese cinema began on a serious note.....” (Sarma 2007: 3). Though, Assamese film tradition starts with a serious note but films of later period were mainly based on the style of so called commercial Hindi cinema. Because of this reason the films of this period could not acquire a distinct position in the larger Indian context. Therefore, the films of this period were mainly the photocopies of ‘Indian Commercial Cinema’. During this period Assam was far away from development; we

can say that at that period Assam was extremely backward and underdeveloped. Comparing to other parts of India like Bombay (now Mumbai) or Calcutta (now Kolkata), Assam was not developed in scientific and technological infrastructure. Despite these infrastructural limitations, Assamese film directors were dared to produce a bulk of movies with some specificity. The directors of this period introduced many aspects in this film industry. Some of them were able to achieve the national awards also. Some movies of this period were adapted version of stories or famous novels of that period. Apart from *Joymoti*, *Manomati* and *Siraj* were adapted from the novels called *Manomati* by Rajanikanta Bordoloi and *Siraj* by Lakshidhar Sarmah respectively. *Siraj* was the first movie which is based on the Hindu-Muslim harmony. This movie was remade by Dr. Bhupen Hazarika in the year 1988. At the time of Hindu-Muslim hostility, this movie played an important role in the minds of the Assamese people. Indeed, it can be called a nationalist movie of that period. Apurba Sarma in his write up on Assamese cinema said that “of seven film made in the forties only *Siraj* by Phani Sarma and Bishnu Prasad Rabha deserved mention as a poignant, socially relevant and well-crafted film. Based on the powerful story of Lakshmidhar Sarma written with a theme of Hindu-Muslim unity against the backdrop of the traditionally conservative Hindu society and reflecting the conflicts between the rich upper class with their mean and false pride and the tender human attributes of the simple, generous downtrodden people, the film produced a sensitive love story. The freedom movement brought in its wake a progressive outlook and an attitude of protest in the society and the film was possibly an artists’ response to such changing social attitudes” (2007:6). Likewise, *Manomati* captured the terrible days of ‘*Manar Din*’ (the invasion of *Maan* or Burmese). It was the first Assamese movie where poster was made for publicity. Till 1970, *Manomati* was the longest Assamese cinema with a total 19 rills. During this period some movies were made on the story of Assamese freedom fighters. Say for example, *Badan Borphukan* and *Piyoli Phukan*. *Piyoli Phukan* was based on the life and sacrifice of the freedom fighter Piyoli Phukan, who stood against the British Rule. It was the first film from Assam to receive the President Certificate of merit, the highest Regional Film Award given by Union of India. Some of the social movies like *Rupohi*, *Siraj*, *Parghat*, *Runumi*, *Nimila Aanka Smritir Paras*, *Xara Pat*, *Era Batar Sur*, *Mak aru Maram*, *Lakhimi*, *Natun Prithivi* and *Ranga Police* were based on the familial or love stories. Apart from that some of those films bring some political issues like freedom movement, Burmese invasion, corruption within the film narrative. Indian mythology had a good connection with Indian cinema from its inception. Many films of the first phases were made on mythological stories only. Though Assamese cinema starts with a historical film, yet impact of mythology is evident in this industry also. *Sati Beola*, and *Bhakta Prablad* were two films of this category. However, in Assamese film industry the impact of mythology is lesser than the film industries of other parts.

In the film, *Mak Aru Maram*, a well trained Alsatian dog was introduced. ‘*Runumi* was a controversial film of this period. Based on Goswami’s adaptation of Henrik Ibsen’s play ‘The Warriors at Helgeland’, *Runumi* set in Assam and Nagaland had been running to a good response when it was unexpectedly banned by the then state government under Chief Minister Bishnu Ram Medhi without giving any reason’ (The Hindu: 2010). However, in this movie the Assamese *Bihu* folk dance was shown for the first time in history. Rajeshwar Bordoloi’s *Natun Prithivi* was

the first Assamese Film where trailer was introduced. Likewise, in the film *Smiritir Paras*, first Hindi song was introduced.

In this phase some woman-centric movies were also made. *Jyotimoti* is an excellent example of such woman representation. This phase built an imaginary of Assamese woman folk by visualizing an 'ideal' image of 'Assamese woman'. Jyoti Prasad Agarwala, about the character of *Jyotimoti*, said that, "Jyotimoti my film neither speaks much at the royal court, nor speaks publicly in any place. She is represented as a stoical 'alpa-bhasini' Assamese aristocratic *bowari* who maintains silence, speaks only when required proves herself through her actions....I have sketched out the character of *Jyotimoti* following my understanding of the Assamese woman. Silence is one of the features of the Assamese character. It is the quality that I have tried to highlight in my portrayal of *Jyotimoti*" (Agarwala: 537-538). In this way he constructs the ideal image of an Assamese who speak less in a public place. She is also strong enough to resist the intolerable torture. After *Jyotimoti* other movies like *Manomati*, *Rupohi*, *Runumi*, *Lakhimi* all are based on woman protagonist. Even the films are titled by their name.

From 1949 to 1950s there was a long gap in filmmaking. This was due to the lack of importance given by Assam government in this line. It was during sixties the Government had taken initiative in national theatre.

Conclusion:

In conclusion we can say that though Apurva Sarma said that "the films made by Assam immediately after independence were nothing to talk much about" (2007:5), this phase was an important phase in the development of Assamese film industry. It can be considered as the base of development. However, taking into account the quality and purpose of Jyoti Prasad's *Jyotimoti*, it is easily observable that, the other films of this period were for mere entertainment. Jyoti Prasad's vision was not followed by his followers; the pursuit of artistic excellence in themes deeply rooted in Assamese life and society initiated by Jyoti Prasad was forsaken who followed him. His vision of Assamese cinema vis-à-vis Assamese culture and society was lost on them as they failed to build up a sound tradition of Assamese cinema rich in the aesthetics and the ethos of a culturally endowed nation" (Ibid).

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IDENTITY POLITICS AND NORTH-EAST INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE

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Identity is the one of the important markers of the civilizations which helps one to associate oneself with a larger body for specific reasons. Since independence, Identity has become the chief pointer in the politics of inclusion and exclusion in India, operating from within and without. Apparently, this identity politics has assuaged the tribal groups by including them as ethnic citizens and ensuring exclusive rights for them within a defined territorial boundary, and pushing the non-tribal towards an uncertain future who have inhabited these places as denizens. This continual classification has triggered contestations and conflicts which have given birth to new identities in the post-colonial era. The paper discusses the changing contours of post-colonial identity as a problematic which can be seen as distinct from what identity had been during the colonial times.

The politics of identity in north-east India has been dealt with by most of the writers who are writing in English, because the choice of the language and their Identity naturally subsumes the politics of Identity in north-east India. The paper analyses the works of four writers; viz. Anjum Hasan's *Lunatic in my Head*, Mamang Dai's *Stupid Cupid*, Temsula Ao's *These Hills Called Home*, and Janice Pariat's *Boats on Land*. Whereas, Anjum Hasan, being a dkhar (outsider) herself treats Identity issue in a different way than the other three writers who belong to the ethnic communities from North-East India. For Hasan's characters, identity becomes a prized possession and a key for belongingness, and the crisis of which becomes traumatic for them; for the other three writers, Identity works as a vanguard in reclaiming a past and forging affinity with the land and place automatically excluding the non-tribal population as the first step to identity politics. This eventually creates a polarity in the identity politics; and as a result Identity becomes a matter of choice and not a matter of discovery which is limited by external agencies. This paper shall examine the external agencies that problematise the identity formation of an Individual.

The novel *Lunatic in my head* is the story of the lives of three characters: Firdaus Ansari, Sophie Das and Aman Moondy who undergo severe identity crisis owing to the changing political scenario in the state of Meghalaya in particular and Northeast India in general. Their predicament is worsened by the external identity foisted on them by the word *dkhar* and they jostle with this crisis throughout the novel. Firdaus is a school teacher who is born and brought up in Shillong. The writer says:

She refused to introduce herself as a Bihari because though her parents were from Bihar, she was born in Shillong and had never lived anywhere else. What did that make her? In Shillong's eyes if nothing else at least a *dkhar*, a foreigner, someone who did not have roots here, did not have the ground needed to put roots in (Hasan 10).

This idea of not belonging to a place, but being a *dkhar* made her feel uneasy. She is unlike her colleagues at school. Her colleagues like Nibedita, Konkona, Flossie Sharma are all *dkhars*, but they are bound in an Identity which also goes beyond their ethnic identities. When Nibedita shares her conjugal problems with her colleagues, they all show some kind of sympathy except Firdaus. Here, identity formation helps in solidarity because it brings individuals together to help each other. Firdaus, on the contrary supports Nibedita's husband, who is having an extra-marital affair with a *Khasi* lady, because of the simple fact that she is a *Khasi*. Firdaus toys with this idea-"It made her happy to think that connections were still being established between people from opposite sides of that invisible, yet very palpable, line that divide people in Shillong" (Hasan 16).

Of the multiple identities that Firdaus has: like she is a teacher, a bihari, a muslim, an M.Phil scholar, an outsider in the language of others, an insider in her own feelings, so on and so forth; she constructs a new identity for herself by imagining Shillong as an indispensable part of her life. Firdaus is neither a devout Muslim nor has she any religious scruples about eating pork. Whereas for Nibedita and her colleagues, the Khasi is the despicable other with whom they can never identify themselves. This becomes apparent from their conversation. Nibedita says, "See, Miss. First of all, he is running around with some woman and dragging my name in the mud. Secondly, she is a tribal..." To this Firdaus retorts, "Tribal, non-tribal?" she asked. "How does that make things better or worse?" (Hasan 16)

Among all these possible plurality of identities, she intensely craves only for belongingness to the place. She is an adult who can escape to some other place anytime, however, she cannot do that because she has never been out of Shillong and she wants to be a part of it. Her longing is so strong that she starts an affair with a tribal (though Manipuri). Her love for Ibomcha (her Manipuri lover) is doubtful, but her love for Shillong is undeniable. She wants to form an affinity with the place and that transpires into her relationship with Ibomcha. Although she could not connect with Ibomcha and wants to tell him that *things are not working* out (Hasan 101), yet she could not. It will be pertinent to quote Sanjoy Hazarika here-

Affinity and Identity. These, more than any other factors, represented the principal compulsions that triggered the Naga, Mizo, Meitei, Tripuri and Assamese affirmation of separateness from the non-Mongolian communities that dominate the Indian subcontinent. (Hazarika xvi)

Firdaus is a non-Mongolian, but she does not identify herself as such. She chooses not to identify herself that way, but at the same time her non-tribal look betrays her emotions. Like Sanjoy Hazarika, she is also enchanted by the charms of Shillong. Firdaus echos Hazarika when she says, "Where had they all gone, she thought. What had become of them, what had they done with their sex appeal and nice cloths and large music collections?" (Hasan 103)

Shillong has immensely changed. Hazarika explains:

For me, as for millions of others, it also is home and sanctuary, where I grew up and which holds a special, magical attraction with its mist clad hills, lush green forests...all these has changed in my lifetime...the shape of the Northeast... has been altered with new lines drawn to recognize new political and administrative realities...and if these frontiers have changed, so have attitudes among its people...so has the way people talk to each other, the things they talk about... (Hazarika xv)

The effect of this transformation is immense and can be seen reflected in what Aman Moondy's father, Dr. Gorakh Moondy has come to realize over the years. Dr. Moondy is born and brought up in Calcutta, and he comes to make a living at Shillong as a medical practitioner. He is the middle class man who like many others, has come to this region looking for opportunities and not for philanthropic service. Dr. Moondy instructs his son-

...Shillong has no future. In my time, things were different. One could make a life here. There were opportunities. People were open minded...sab khatam ho gaya. That time has gone. Now, people, boys you know, boys half your height, barge into people's shops, into offices, and demand money! (Hasan 65)

Dr. Moondy's comment on the open mindedness of people is worth a scrutiny. Who have been these tolerant people? Are these the same people who have turned violent now? This is a cliché and needs a better understanding of the political scenario and the interplay or rather the tension between nationalism and sub-nationalism as a default feature in post-colonial times. Mamang Dai in her novel, *Stupid Cupid*, projects this issue as a developmental project undertaken by the government of India. She cites the instance of Mareb's father who has been described as a contractor undertaking different projects and "who toured the frontier speaking the language of the communities and marrying into the tribes" (Dai 36). She further says that "new settlements with new identities could spring up, inhabited by mixed populations full of new hopes and dreams" (Dai 36). To quote Sanjib Baruah in this context-

Many of these tribal societies have been going through a process of transition from shifting cultivation to settled agriculture, from clan control of land to commodification of land, urbanization, and cultural change associated with the process of 'modernization'. The new economic niches created in this process of social transformation attract many denizens to the region (Baruah 185).

Whereas, Sanjib Baruah, sees this development discourse as the product of the Indian state's push to nationalize the space of this frontier region (in case of Arunachal), he quotes Anil Agarwal to show the other side of it- "in Agarwal's words, 'excellent corridors to siphon off the existing natural resource of the region, its forests'" (Baruah 34) However, both these appositions are true and they have internal dichotomies as well. In the attempt to nationalize space, these sparsely populated frontier regions have seen the coming of immigrants from other parts of India, as Sanjib Baruah puts it:

Extending state institutions with a developmentalist agenda therefore has had political functions ...In a sparsely populated frontier region, a developmentalist trajectory invariably means changes in demography; this has made the political

trends in the region increasingly more complex and contradictory, and has provided a significant political counterweight to actual and potential pro-independence rebellions (Baruah 40).

This attempt at nationalizing space has also been seen as an attempt to assimilate and detribalize the population, hence they met with severe opposition as well. In this connection Tilottoma Mishra opines-

The policy of integrating the tribal people with the mainstream through exposure to the national culture, however, ironically backfired in later times. Almost every tribal state of the region- Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh- virtually rejected Hindi as the medium of instruction and introduced English which subsequently became the official language of the state (Misra 222).

In her collection of short Stories *These Hills called Home*, Temsula Ao has romanticized this rebellion against the Indian forces which tried to contain the crisis. The stories capture those moments from history which has witnessed the conflict between the Naga rebels and the Indian forces, the former often portrayed in a romanticized manner and the latter as colonizers. Temsula Ao goes on to the extent of eulogizing them as nationalists. It would be pertinent to cite an instance from one of the short stories called *Soaba*:

Unlike the homogenous population of the villages, the citizens of these new towns belonged to the tribes of the Nagaland. Such towns had many 'outsiders': Assamese or Bengali doctors or teachers, Marwari and Bihari traders, Nepali Settlers, whose forefathers have fought with the British army and were given land to settle down. Slowly but steadily, a new environment was emerging and overtaking the old ways, and youngsters growing up in such places began to think of themselves as the new generation.

These young people were caught, as it were, at the crossroads of Naga History. The way of dissidence and open rebellion was head winey for many of them and they abandoned family, school careers and even permanent jobs to join the band of nationalists to liberate the homeland from forces, which they believed were inimical to their aspirations to be counted among the free nations of the world (Ao 10).

Firstly, both Anjum Hasan and Temsula Ao, comments on the change in 'old ways'. What has been possible in the past is not permissible in the present times and also the past has to be undone in order to ameliorate the aggrieved conditions of the tribal people. Secondly, Mamang Dai, Temsula Ao, Janice Pariet and Anjum Hasan observe that these rebels or the protesters are all from young generation and they are from urban or semi-urban background. These group of people has eventually formed the elite section of the tribal groups and soon there can be seen a growing disparity between the elite class controlling the natural resources and contracts, and the rural poor who continue to be deprived of all privileges. Thus a new hierarchy has been created (see A New Chapter, (Ao 123)). The accusations of plundering of natural resources by 'outsiders' which has raised a hue and cry in the past, has now taken a different shape. It is now plundered by the tribal themselves but of course they have far reaching political implications².

Nevertheless, to protect the land and its people certain reservation policies have been adopted by the Indian government. Apart from the reservations, the Khasis also demanded that

only those people should be considered Khasi whose both parents are Khasis. This would stop Khasi men and women from marrying into other ethnic groups on one hand, and would also ensure a purity of family lineage on the other. Sanjib Baruah maintains that-

Nearly 85 per cent of the public employment in Meghalaya is reserved. Fifty-five of the 60 seats in the state Legislative assembly are reserved for the STs. While the historical disadvantages that the tribal people suffered account for this elaborate protective discrimination regime, the status of non-tribals in Meghalaya as well as in the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Nagaland where such protective discrimination exists, is best described as that of denizens (Baruah 183).

Thus opportunities started shrinking for the 'outsiders' and these exigencies further made it imperative to assert one's identity in relation to the land. To contain the revolt/protest the government has to make changes in its policies. The 'outsiders', who have been living for centuries or decades, are no longer native or locals. They have to go. Janice Pariet's short story 19/87 recounts the plight of the outsiders through the eyes of a character called Suleiman. He has lived in Shillong since the age of 2. The father and the son arrived in Shillong in the year 1955, the former being an employee of the All India Radio. But after Meghalaya has been carved out of Assam in 1972, things changed-

After that, many locals in town, frustrated with having 'outsiders' running the state and controlling banks and businesses, organized themselves into various insurgent groups- the Khasi Students Union (KSU) and the Hynniewtre National Liberation Council (HNLC)- and waged a civil war against the government and the ethnicities they saw as most threatening. The ones who had taken their jobs, their resources, their women. Now, around him Suleiman heard 'It was the Nepalis in '79, Bengalis in '81, then the Marwaris...." (Pariat 98)

Such groups like Hynniewtre have taken the onus of liberating their state from the encroachers or 'outsiders' by invoking a new homogenous identity from their myths. To quote Patricia Mukhim-

They are called the Khun U Hynniewtre or the children of seven huts. The term Hynniewtre is today a favourite slogan of politicians and rabble-rousers. It still arouses deep sentiments in people. No one wants to blow apart this preposterous myth. It suits all to keep the myth alive. (Mukhim 200).

The new identity formation of the tribal population has obviously excluded the non-tribal in the region. Coming back to the identity issue in Anjum Hasan's novel, the second generation of the outsiders is gradually leaving the place. The violent revolutions has not only alienated the 'others' (now role of the other is reversed; the outsiders are the others and are looked down upon with much contempt), but has also instilled a sense of fear and bitterness. Be it Suleiman or Aman Moondy. The only escape is to find a better opportunity and move out of Shillong. People like Suleiman or Sarak Singh (in Lunatic in my Head), who has no roots outside and no education but lives by tailoring or selling *aloo-muri*³ has little scope to go elsewhere. They live in constant fear and wait for the end.

In the case of Aman Moondy, he has many identities to choose from except 'tribal'. He is a lover of Pink Floyd and the member of a musical band 'Proto-Dreamers'. This itself forms an identity for Aman; and all his friends who are member of this band automatically connects to

him irrespective of their disparate ethnic identities. His close friend is Ribor, a Khasi, who shares the common interest in music and art. Since individuals have the propensity to identify themselves with groups which would serve their interest, Ribor naturally aligns with Aman. So does David Rockwell. On the other hand, Ribor's elder brother is not just a bully, but also a murderer. Ribor stands as a defense between his brother and Aman. This gives Aman some kind of confidence. But since choices are to be made by keeping priorities in life in view and also the limits of it, it is imperative for Aman that he cannot belong to the place. Shillong can never give him any identity and will always treat him as a *dkhar*. Towards the end of the novel, we see him preparing to leave for Calcutta in Shatabdi Express from Guwahati.

The identity politics has gained such intensive momentum that it has also percolated into the younger generations. The writer makes it apparent through Sophie Das. Sophie is half Bengali and half North-Indian. She is just 8 years old when she has been introduced in the novel. We find her to be very close to the landlady where Sophie's family lives. Sophie has the habit of concocting fictitious tales about her family and herself. But this feeling has come into her apparently because of her choice of identity to identify herself as one of the Khasis, and not a *dkhar*. She imagines herself, and also she tells her friends this story, that she is not the biological, but adopted child of her parents. Her real father is some imaginary Uncle Syiem, whom she conjured up to establish her affinity with the Khasis. Sophie faces the worse humiliation when she accompanies Elsa to a wedding feast. She is ignored by girls of her own age; and also denied food as a guest: "But a girl about her age from the facing row had noticed that Sophie had been ignored, that the *dkhar* had been shown her place" (Hasan 87). Sophie, at such an early age has become so conscious of her identity that she knows the drawbacks of not being a Khasi in Shillong. Sophie, therefore, thinks that "the nicest thing, the nicest thing by far, even better than being adopted, would be if she could somehow turn into one of them, somehow become Khasi" (Hasan 88). Only Sophie can dream of such an impossible possibility; the grownups like Firdaus and Aman has accepted the reality and also their fate. Thus identity based thinking and politics create disparate groups, divides them, instead of linking them. The Novel ends with no signs of hope for these outsiders. We see Mrs. Nibedita and her husband leave for Calcutta. Ibomcha's cousin move to Shillong to set up a beauty parlour at Sharon's place. Firdaus is waiting for her grandfather to return from Bihar so that she can announce to him about her affair with Ibomcha. Sophie gets her new sister and is happy.

Thus the politics of identity has rendered the younger generation of the migrants in a deplorable condition. Not only they suffer from insecurity in the face of violence, but also have to struggle hard to make a living with limited opportunities. Instead of increasing mutual recognition and respect, this kind of depravation has only cultivated hatred and disregard for each other in the region. Although, the government has reserved these areas as tribal belts exclusively with the best of intentions, the machineries involved have failed to contain the corruption. As a result the problems that existed before are more aggravated now, far less from being solved. The non-tribal people who had participated in the nation building process and also some whose ancestors have arrived in the 19th centuries are all categorized under 'outsiders' by the new generation. These 'outsiders' are like the homeless migrants waiting to align themselves with some new identity.

Notes:

¹Michael Sandel's Liberalism and Limits of Justice, used by Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen in his Keynote speech at UC Berkley.

² Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining in Asia- Pacific Case Study Series project led by Kuntala Lahiri-Dutt, edited by Joel Katz, designed by Rachel P Lorenzen. Case Study No. 16, written by Debojyoti Das, 2007.

³A mixture prepared by mixing puffed rice, sliced boiled potato, tamarind water and spices.

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MODERNITY AND NATIONALISM: A READING OF THE INDIAN CONTEXT THROUGH TAGORE AND GANDHI

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The expansion of modernity beyond Europe can be realised as the crystallization of new civilizations - a process which resembles the spread of the great religions and empires in the pre-modern world. The expansion of modernity always combined with certain structural, institutional, cultural factors functioning within the society. It further influenced the societies to develop or appropriate universal cultural, structural, institutional frameworks. Modernity in Europe affected certain major changes in the European societies. In structural terms, as Eisenstadt and Schluchter observe, modernity combined with epochal development in communication, industrialization, urbanization. Institutionally it combined with the development of the nation-state and the rational-capitalist economy. In cultural terms, modernity induced the formation of new collective identities that will be bound up with the nation-state. (Eisenstadt and Schluchter, 3) B?örn Wittrack observes that during the eighteenth and the nineteenth century the social institutions like the democratic nation-state, the liberal market economy, different disciplines of science studied in research oriented universities, that are emblematic of modernity in Europe had been spread as models, if not always as reality, to almost every continents of the globe.

Benedict Anderson observes that nation as a political institution is the product of European Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution. For Anderson, the rise of nationalism in the Western world was rendered possible by the decline of religious modes of thought in the wake of the rationalist secularism of Enlightenment. The old belief system that gave centrality to the church and theocentric worldview was replaced by a more pragmatic and worldly socio-political system of nationalism. Anderson argues, "What then was required was a secular transformation of fatality into continuity; contingency into meaning...." (Anderson, 11) Ernest Gellner opines that nationalism is the result of the rise of industrial-capitalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The sudden shift of the human experience from the pre-industrial to the industrial economy necessitated and provided the condition for the development of certain larger social and economic units that would be culturally homogeneous and cooperative as workforce. This process paved the doors for the formation of the nation-state. (Gellner, 13) This paper will try to look at modernity in the Indian context in relation to the formation of national consciousness

and nation-state in the British India through various debates and intellectual exchanges. At the same time, it will concentrate in the intellectual debates that Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore had been engaged in over the ideas of nation, state, independence as well as various exponents of western modernity.

India or the South Asian subcontinent confronted with the different tenets of Western modernity through the economic invasion of the East India Company, or more precisely, the British colonialist enterprise. In the name of modernity, India witnessed diffusion of technology, growth of an international - if not global - economy, rise of large scale complex economic, political and administrative organizations that gained size, capacity, stability and efficiency. The economic aggression of the Company gradually transformed itself to the political. In the eighteenth and the nineteenth century, the gradual transition of the East India Company's concern from the mercantile to the colonial was resisted by various small and indigenous rulers and merchants who were interlocked with the company. But the pressure exerted by the British economy cut the connecting thread between the small, indigenous economic and political organization and power structures. This weakening or breaking down of power structures paved the path for the nationalistic discourse to permeate the Indian administrative system.

In the Indian context, the relation between modernity and the rise of nationalism is problematic because of the British colonialist project mediating the two. The development of nationalism in India can be seen as an amalgamation of various responses and reactions, if not opposition - as will be seen later in this essay, to the various influences of western modernity and colonialist project forming a socio-cultural, economic and political hegemony over the natives in India. The different anti-colonialist movements worked with certain particular ideological frameworks by taking up the anti-colonial interests of the entire colonized people by unifying and adjusting the interests of various classes, races, groups and strata. The gradual growth of the nationalistic consciousness was flexible enough to accommodate the changes within the relative balances among different classes, races and groups of people. The Indian national movement is one of the best examples of the creation of an extremely wide movement with a common aim in which diverse political and ideological currents co-existed and functioned. At the same time, these different positions contended for an overall cultural and political hegemony over the colonialists. One of the major purposes behind the formation of the Indian National Congress was to destroy two basic forms of hegemony - firstly, "the belief system through which the British secured acquiescence of Indian people in their rule" and secondly, the idea that "the British rule was benevolent for the good of the Indians and that it was invincible and incapable of being overthrown." (Chandra, 24). As a strategy to disrupt the colonial structure and ideology, the nineteenth century India experienced attempts to reinvigorate the past and traditional institutions and realise the potentials of traditional cultures.

It would not be proper to comment that the nationalistic discourse in India was entirely in opposition to the economic, social, ideological changes brought up by Western modernity. Modern technology and industrialization were sought to be the primary media to check the growing economic problem in the name of poverty in the nineteenth century India. The problem of increasing food and energy production was perceived to be intimately related with the problem of national development. Dadabhai Naoraji was seen to draw attention of both Indians and the British towards the "continuous impoverishment and exhaustion of the country... the wretched,

heart-rending, blood-boiling condition of India." (Chandra, 93) The early nationalists "accepted with remarkable unanimity" (Chandra, 93) that the complete economic transformation of the country was possible through the adoption of modern technology and capitalist enterprise. Mahadev Govind Ranade observed that factories could "far more effectively than schools and colleges give a new birth to the activities of the nation." (Chandra, 93) Lala Lajpat Rai observes, "The East must imbibe something of the aggressive spirit of the West and must also adopt and assimilate the intellectual achievements of the West if she wants to regain her self-respect, ..." (Friedman, 18) The exponents of western modernity like foreign trade, railways, currencies, finance, labour legislation had been perceived in connection with the paramount goal of national development.

The intellectual exchanges between Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore are important in the context of India's struggle for independence in the sense that their debate over the ideas of nation-state, modernity, civilization entirely changed the colour of Indian National Movement. Both Gandhi and Tagore shared a common philosophical ground based on the inward spiritual awareness in their debate that included questions of society, politics, economy, civilization and diverse interconnected topics. *Dharma* was looked up by Tagore as a means to overpower the western colonialist oppression and cultural hegemony, "It is regrettable that the terror and upheavals of Europe are the only models before us. But the Christian saints who, by the strength of their faith, withstood the oppression of the Roman Emperor triumphed in their death over the Emperor.... *dharmā* can help us suppress oppression..."¹¹ This attitude of Tagore appropriates Gandhi's philosophical approach towards political and socio-cultural questions.

In his essay "Nationalism in the West" Tagore observes a basic difference between the western structure of nation and Indian social life. Nation, as a political and economic union of people, is an organization which is formed for certain mechanical purposes. On the other hand, society does not have any other aim beyond being itself. The history of India is made up of numerous instances of continuous social adjustments among races, tribes and religious groups instead of formation of any organized power for defense and aggression. "To India has been given her problem from the beginning of history - it is the race problem. Races ethnologically different have come in this country in close contact. This fact has been and still continues to be the most important one in our history." (Tagore, "Nationalism in the West", 420) Amidst these differences, India has been functioning since long with the 'spiritual recognition of unity.' Tagore further argues that "... our history has not been the rise and fall of kingdoms, of fights for political supremacy... For they in no way represent the true history of our people. Our history is that of our social life and attainment of spiritual ideals." (Tagore, "Nationalism in the West", 420) He further accuses the western construct of nation of being overtly materialistic and power hungry that reduces men to 'war-making and money-making puppets'.

In his "Swadeshi Samaj" published in *Atmashakti* (1905), Tagore made two important observations on the European idea of the State in relation to the Indian condition. His first argument was that in Indian societies, the State had never been as intimate to the life of the nation as can be seen in the European context. Unlike the European societies, India has never designated the central space to the idea of the nation. Indian societies have been guided by *dharmā* since the beginning of civilization. Secondly, in modern times "the European State is founded upon the acquiescence of society as an essential part thereof - the State has evolved

from the inherent tendencies therein... In our country the State is no part of our Society, it is external to Society"² For this reason, Tagore opposed political struggle for acquiring state power. His motif was to reach a change beyond the mere replacement of one set of rulers by another. In his debates with Gandhi, he repeatedly stressed upon the necessity of elevating the political debate to a battle of the mind and the inner power or *atmashakti* of the nation.

Both Gandhi and Tagore shared the realization that the struggle against the political and cultural hegemony of the colonizers and the endeavour for *swaraj* (self-rule) was a battle of the mind of the nation rather than some mere political practices and stratagems. Both designated high responsibility to the intellectuals (or poets) in motivating and guiding the mind of the nation. The mind of the scholar is important for the sake of *swaraj* for "its (*swaraj*'s) foundation is in the mind, which, with its diverse powers and its confidence in those powers, goes on all the time creating *swaraj* for itself."³ In Tagore, there can be seen a strain of individualism founded in the belief that it is the destiny of the human mind to 'create *swaraj* for itself'. It was not so easy for a political movement to attain and accommodate individualism to this extent. Gandhi, being more involved in practical politics, adopted a different approach - Non-cooperation - to the attainment of "*swaraj* of the soul".

Gandhi's idea of Non-cooperation was, in a way, a form of rejection of the way through which the Western nation-state worked. In his "The Poet's Anxiety" published in *Young India*, (1st June, 1921), he clarifies that "Non-cooperation is intended to pave the way to real, honourable and voluntary cooperation based on mutual respect and trust. ... Non-cooperation is a protest against an unwitting and unwilling participation in the evil." (Bhattacharya, 65-66) Gandhi's position is not directly against western modernity. He is against the methods and ideologies that enabled the European nation to exploit, dominate others and masquerade under the name of civilization. Gandhi regards this tendency of the European nation as a necessary evil. Non-cooperation with this evil should be regarded as a duty as religious as the duty to cooperate with the good. Referring to non-cooperation as the "harmless, natural and religious doctrine", Gandhi views it as "an invitation to the Government to cooperate with it on its own terms as is every nation's right and every good government's duty." (Bhattacharya, 67) Non-cooperation is a means through which India can attain *swaraj* - "... if India is ever to attain its *swaraj* of the poet's (Tagore) dream, she will do so only by Non-violent Non-cooperation." (Bhattacharya, 67-68)

Gandhi's take on the idea of *swaraj* is illustrative of his attitude towards Western modernity. His idea of *swaraj* carried a necessary distinction, as Anthony J Parel observes, between the anglicized idea of *swaraj* as "self-government or the quest for home rule or the good state" and *swaraj* as "self-rule or the quest for self-improvement." (Majumdar, 215) For Gandhi *swaraj* was related to self-improvement and self-rule which can be achieved by inward spiritual awareness. Involvement with the materialistic and the mechanical processes could dissuade one from this self-improvement. For him it was not the Englishmen but the modern civilization that had been at the root of the exploitation of India. As an alternative model, Gandhi would prefer agriculture to industry, cottage and small enterprise to large, heavy and mechanized entrepreneurship. Referring to industries and machines as the *yantra-danava* or the machine-monster, Gandhi idealized the *charkha* or the spinning wheel as a step to reject the western cultural and economic hegemony.

Both Gandhi and Tagore cherished in their debates the development of a nation that will not be based on the mechanical and materialistic exponents of modernity but rather be bound by spiritual unity. The role of the exponents of modernity, which are highly useful in meeting the material needs of a society, was never negated in the nationalistic discourse of Gandhi and Tagore. But no scope was given to it for entering into the binding force of society and nation. Tagore saw the application of science as a means of liberating men from poverty, from the outrages of nature as well as for moulding the natural energies for man's use. "One thing is certain, that the all-embracing poverty, which has overwhelmed our country, cannot be removed by working with our hands to the neglect of science.... If the cultivation of science has any moral significance it is in its rescue of man from outrage by nature, not its use of man as a machine but its use of machine to harness the forces of nature in man's service."⁴Gandhi, in the same way, was never utterly dismissive of the machines, railways, industries and other exponents of modernity though his position was to some extent uncompromisingly stricter than Tagore. Gandhi welcomed them only till the limit to which they can be useful to one and all.

The debate over nationalism and modernity can never be experienced at the expense of any of the two. The relation between modernity and nationalism in India is not as direct as can be observed in the European condition. In the Indian context, modernity is related to the formation of nationalism through a complex web of intellectual debates, practical experiences and power equations. Nationalism in India can never be perceived as a rejection of modernity. Rather, it can be said that, modernity has constant participation at various ideological levels, either directly and indirectly, in the development of various phases of nationalism in India.

Notes:

1. Tagore, Pravasee, 16 April, 1908; cited from *The Mahatma and the Poet: Letters and Debates between Gandhi and Tagore*, pp 3.
2. Tagore, "The Call of Truth", cited from *The Mahatma and the Poet: Letters and Debates between Gandhi and Tagore*, pp 74.
3. Tagore, "The Call of Truth", cited from *The Mahatma and the Poet: Letters and Debates between Gandhi and Tagore*, pp 23
4. Tagore, "The Cult of the Charkha", cited from *The Mahatma and the Poet: Letters and Debates between Gandhi and Tagore*, pp 33.

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