ASIATIC SOCIETY AND THE AESTHETICS OF INDIGENOUS BENGALI PROSE: 1784-1904

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Certified that the Thesis entitled

ASIATIC SOCIETY AND THE AESTHETICS OF INDIGENOUS BENGALI PROSE: 1784-1904, submitted by me for the award of the Degree of Doctorate of Philosophy in Arts at Jadavpur University, is based upon my work carried out under the supervision of Professor Swapan Chakravorty and that neither this thesis nor any part of it has been submitted before for any degree or diploma anywhere/ elsewhere.

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NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION, ORTHOGRAPHY AND ABBREVIATION

Words in Sanskrit, Bengali, Hindi and other South Asian lects have been italicised (except proper names and proper nouns) and have been generally written without using diacritical marks. The names of texts and citations from them have been transliterated, following the International Alphabet of Sanskrit Transliteration. Thus, while referring to the institution in general, I have used ‘Bangiya Sahitya Parishat’, but, while citing the institutional name within the name of a text, I have transliterated ‘Vangiya-sāhitya-pariṣad’. The use of IAST might incite vexed questions about adhering to a sanskritised orthographic scheme, as spellings of Bengali and Hindi words would often be deemed as non-phonetic. For example, ‘lakṣaṇ’ in the standard dialect of Bengali would be pronounced as ‘lakkhan’. However, following a standardised scheme was necessary, as there is considerable variation in the spellings of Bengali and Hindi words and it was important that the spellings of the cited words are correctly represented. Thus the transliterated text is a graphic, rather, than a phonetic representation. Diacritical marks have been used while referring to characters of *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* as spellings differ from one recension to the other. Names of places have been standardised: thus ‘Kolkata’ rather than ‘Calcutta’. When citing from other sources, the author’s usage has been retained. Abbreviations have been rarely used; the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* has been often abbreviated as *JASB*.

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Introduction and Methodological Considerations

The evolution of indigenous prose traditions in South Asia during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries embodies a fascinating sociolinguistic and cultural phenomenon. This was especially true for Bengali prose traditions, which is said to have experienced 'mighty revolutions'[1] in its literary arena, along with the corresponding paradigm shifts in the political and social spheres. Peter J. Marshall, in his study of the establishment of colonial rule in Bengal, discounts the fact that it was merely the colonial encounter which shaped the transformation of the 'mental landscape' in the region.[2] Marshall states that 'the fall of the Mughals and the coming of the British are episodes in a much longer play whose principal actors inevitably remain anonymous: pioneers who settled new lands, merchants who organised handicrafts, *vaishnava* teachers, guardians of the Muslim shrines and even the rivers and the *Anopheles* mosquito.' Yet, the idea that the colonial encounter brought about a *renaissance* (David Kopf insists on the use of the lower case 'r') in Bengal has been predominant in the explorations of cultural and literary history.[3] This is reaffirmed by an Eisenstenian understanding[4] of the impact of print culture and its subsequent sculpting of Indian nationalism(s) and modernities.[5] Orientalism in Bengal is hence conceived as largely unidirectional (though in certain instances benevolently corroborative) colonial project which is accepted as the *primus motor* in the inception of indigenous Bengali prose.

Such an understanding evidently simplifies the inherently complex process of linguistic change and sociolinguistic transformation(s) of registers and genres. It naively adopts the

Saidian paradigm[6] to the South Asian exchanges of knowledge and power. Besides, it establishes a universalist perspective and negates the local idiosyncrasies of Bengal's myriad histories. The fact that Bengal had witnessed a parallel and partly overlapping period of agricultural expansion, commercialisation and state-formation by Islamic rulers and Sufi missionaries[7] should immediately make us aware of the complexities of the situation. Besides, modernisation in South Asia in general and Bengal in particular was a multidimensional process and many recent historians have focused on the continuity between pre-colonial and colonial socio-economic systems. Christopher A. Bayly, among others, upholds that rapid commercialisation and modernisation in India had been a continuous process and the post-Mughal 'age of decline' is largely a myth.[8] South Asian local traditions not only interacted with the colonial powers but also with the broader tropes of Sanskritic, Islamic and indigenous aesthetic, linguistic and philosophical traditions. The specific ideological perspectives of the British administrators, merchants, missionaries, printers, Orientalists and indigenous clerks, writers, *sanskritist*s and *maulvi*s cannot be categorised in terms of seamless, binary opposition of the 'clash of cultures' perspective. Rather, it was a richly embedded nexus of textual and linguistic figurations and refigurations – complex, multidimensional and overdetermined.[9]

Taking into consideration the above-mentioned points, the phenomenon of Orientalism in Bengal must be envisioned. This envisioning, as Peter Heehs insists, should be acutely aware of the 'shades of Orientalism' in Indian colonial discourse.[10] Heehs identifies six different strands of Oriental discourse in the Indian colonial and post-colonial context. Discarding Said's view of a 'more or less constant' Oriental discourse, he focuses on the paradoxes that shaped the contours of South Asian Oriental traditions. The pioneering efforts of the Asiatic Society in the *discovery* and understanding of South Asian traditions in Bengal, needs to be analysed from this critical perspective. It must be understood that not only scholar-administrators such as William Jones, Henry Thomas Colebrooke, Jonathan Duncan, John Beames, Horace Hayman Wilson or George Abraham Grierson but also missionaries such as William Carey, adventurer-explorers like William Moorcroft and natives including Rajendralal Mitra and Haraprasad Shastri were members of the Society. Besides, the ideologies that shaped the explorations of the Society changed throughout the course of the nineteenth century. Jones and Colebrooke differed considerably about the relative status of Sanskrit and the Indian vernaculars; Carey and Henry Pitts Forster differed in their views about an ideal Bengali register; Beames and S.W. Fallon debated on merits of retaining Perso-Arabic words in Hindustani. Duncan and Forster would supervise translations of legal tracts in Bengali using considerably variant registers; Grierson and Beames would revise many of Wilson's assertions about Indic languages. The efforts of the Orientalists to understand literary and aesthetic traditions in Bengal (and India) were also necessarily corroborative exercises. This brought into play a heterogeneous mélange of clerks, secretaries, local sources of intelligence, itinerant bards, bilingual interpreters, foundry workers and printers. These individuals had varying religious, ethnic and socio-political affiliations, hence enabling polyphonic interactions and discursive assertions. The British in Bengal could not rely upon 'affective knowledge' as the levels of interbreeding, acculturation and conversion had been limited. This always made them aware of the 'superficiality of colonial rule'[11] in South Asia and any understanding of the transformation of linguistic and prose traditions must be aware of the deep, inherent sense of insecurity and mutual mistrust which often shaped colonial encounter(s) in South Asia.[12]

The present study wants to focus on the changes in the socio-linguistic registers in Bengal[13] during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the evolution of Bengali prose traditions. It wants to discuss the theorisations and figurations on South Asian linguistic, historical and literary traditions which had been initiated by the members of the Asiatic Society of Bengal and the discursive interaction(s) of these with the changing aesthetics of indigenous prose/ literary traditions. While earlier studies have focused upon the influence of the missionaries and the Fort William educators, the Orientalist endeavour to unravel India’s linguistic treasure-hoard has been considered as merely a marginal influence on the development of vernacular literary aesthetics. This is chiefly because the studies of the Orientalists were often broad and diverse --- they were often detached from the actual, material agents of change. Hence, such studies are visualised as abstract theorisations which were only indirectly associated with the transformation of indigenous prose aesthetics. However, it must be conceded, that the transformation in aesthetics is a complex process which requires not only specific material changes but a broad change in outlook and conceptualisation. Often, the Orientalists laid down the primary conceptual framework for such transformations. The members of the Asiatic Society described various South Asian languages, the native literary traditions, the literary genres and forms, the prosodic and rhetorical embellishments and the historical development of syntax, diction and script. They also shaped glossaries and lexicons, commented on orthography and actively imagined an Indian linguistic structure. The development of indigenous prose, particularly Bengali prose, is interesting because there is a marked transformation in prose traditions after the colonial encounter. The Orientalist definition of native literary canon, their surveys of spoken languages and their valorization of different South Asian literary genres had a considerable influence on the perception of prose as a distinct Indic literary form. The research would be primarily concerned with the various aspects of Orientalist theorizations about vernacular prose (especially Bengali and Hindusthani/ Hindi prose), as reflected in their writings in the *Asiatic Researches* (1788- 1849) and the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* (1832-1904) and other books and unpublished manuscripts.

The scarcity of socio-linguistic studies on Bengali language and its various dialects is noted by the few theorists who have endeavoured to provide such an analysis.[14] Scholars such as Pabitra Sarkar or Rajib Humayun have sometimes tried to adopt classical socio-linguistic paradigms to analyse Bengali speech-acts and literary traditions.[15] Other scholars have framed their studies of literary texts as ‘stylistics’ and have offered socially-aware discussions on literary and aesthetic practices.[16] Yet, most of these studies are either synchronic or focus on specific literary figures rather than on historical epochs and broader cultural trends. The diachronic study of Bengali registers and genres is often mired in the deterministic probes and ideological preferences of the linguists. James M. Wilce, while elaborating on the complexities of Bengali diglossia, notices that while historians are critically aware of the communalisation of Bengali language, the linguists seem to focus on social stratification and literacy and neglect the historical events which modify these structures[17]:

> Historians portray the Bengali language as a communal-political football and sociolinguists as one language riven by class and literacy. Language planners, viz. the East Bengal Language Committee, tried to shape the evolution of the Bengali language. Unfortunately, these planners were not alone in confusing facts with goals, history with hagiography, and the chimera of linguistic purity with the ravenous god of communal purity. It seems exceedingly difficult for any given scholar or bureaucrat who has weighed in on the Bengali linguistic situation to consider both religio-cultural and social-stratificational factors. Yet when the three traditions are examined together, insights arise which are missed by any one of them alone.

Wilce critiques several influential histories of Bengali literature and reveals the ideological devices which inevitably shaped these works. He discusses Sunitikumar Chattopadhyay's exhaustive study of the language and compares it with Muhammad Enamul Haque's study of *musalmani* Bengali literature and Qazi Abdul Mannan's study of *dobhashi* literature.[18] He also analyses Kopf's study of the early Orientalist enterprise. He observes that while Chattopadhyay's notion of the language was inexorably linked with purist assertions and supposed 'defiling' of Bengali in *musalmani* Bangla, Haq served as an apologist and Islamic revisionist of the language. Kopf's study, according to Wilce, reveals his espousal of the relative virtues of early Fort William Orientalists (esp. Clive, Hastings and Wellesley) in contradistinction to post-Macaulayan administrators. Wilce notes that these studies often reify modern communal and social identities and reflect them back into our understanding of the past. Hence, a diachronic socio-linguistic analysis of the Orientalist encounter in Bengal is necessary in order to properly understand the complex processes of linguistic and genre variations.

Diachronism in socio-linguistics is in itself a problematic issue. Suzanne Romaine has discussed the problems encountered in accommodating sociolinguistic methods to historical data. The most obvious factor is that such an analysis deals with 'extant written records of a language no longer spoken.'[19] Literary works are generally self-conscious and often artificial constructs which can differ remarkably from the spoken-word. The exclusive use of written texts in diachronic sociolinguistics might provide a skewed view about linguistic and literary situation, as texts which survive might not be comprehensively representative of the variation of that particular historical epoch. Besides, the survival of certain texts might (and the erosion of others) might be conditioned by socio-political factors. Besides, the early sociolinguistic studies (like Labov's 1966 study of the varieties of English spoken in New York City [20]) generally focused on phonological variability which naturally prefered spoken data. It was much later that sociolinguistic data had been used to study syntactic variation.[21]

In the Indian context, John J. Gumperz's classic study of language variation in a north Indian village or Charles Ferguson's study of South Asia as a sociolinguistic area had been primarily synchronic explorations.[22] William Bright and A.K. Ramanujan's study of Dravidian languages (Tamil and Tulu) juxtaposes present differences in rate of literacy with the historical differentiation of social dialects.[23] By assimilating the notions of areal features famously put forward by M.B. Emeneau, [24] Bright and Ramanujan established the foundations of diachronic sociolinguistics of South Asian languages. Yet, such explorations seem to be rare in Bengali and in the reconstructions of the Orientalist encounter in Bengal.

A rare study by T.W. Clark deals with the languages of Kolkata between 1760 and 1840.[25] Clark discusses about the vicissitudes in fortunes of the different linguistic communities living in Kolkata during this period and endeavors to chart the relative fortunes of their respective languages. Though Clark does not focus on linguistic data *per se*, neither does he exclusively deal with registers – his efforts to reconstruct the linguistic situation during the early Colonial period is of considerable help in ascertaining the stages of growth of the Bengali prose genre. Sisir Kumar Das's *Early Bengali Prose* (1966) also discusses about certain socio-linguistic factors and most importantly, includes a discussion about phonological change and the status of Sanskrit loan words in Bengali.[26] Das posits that the so-called *pandit style* of early Bengali prose is difficult to ascertain as it cannot be distinguished by a mere counting of Sanskrit loan words. By the nineteenth century, many of these words were indistinguishable part of Bengali lexicon. Besides, many of the *tatsama* words (words with unchanged Sanskrit spelling) had considerably changed in pronunciation with the change being reflected in the spelling. This recognition of words as speech acts and not merely lexical forms is of extreme importance. Das also makes use of a limited quantitative approach by counting the use of Sanskrit and Perso-arabic loan words in early Bengali prose texts.[27]

A sociolinguistic analysis of registers of the literary prose works must also take into account non-literary prose pieces. This is especially helpful in the conceptualisation of genres. Shivratan Mitra edited a compilation of early prose pieces from eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This collection not only consists of early literary works but also of letters and non-literary prose. Sunitikumar Chattopadhyay published early Bengali documents which had been collected by Nathaniel Brassey Halhed and which had been preserved in the British Library. Surendranath Sen and Panchanan Mandal have both published collections of early Bengali letters. Shudhanshushekhar Tunga published letters and documental evidence which had been preserved in Assam. Debesh Roy published a collection of letters and legal documents which had been originally compiled by Augustine Aussant, who had been the official interpreter in the French colony of Chandernagore from 1779-1785. Anisuzzaman published some of the East India Company's early factory correspondences and other Bengali documents, which had been preserved in the India Office Library, London. Ghulam Murshid has published documents from the Mayor's Court of Kolkata and early advertisements from the *Calcutta Gazette*. He has also published specimens from the George Vogle and Verlee Collections of the India Office Library. All these specimens might prove to be useful in the diachronic analysis of the early Bengali prose, especially because of the lack of an assembled archeological corpora.[28]

The sociolinguistic analysis of early Bengali prose and its overlapping with Orientalist discourse in Bengal must take into consideration not only the essays and dissertations of the Orientalists but also the administrative work they participated in. Often, it was their administrative work which provided the spur for their scholastic pursuits. For example, it was Jones's activities as the Puisne Judge in the Supreme Court of Bengal which urged him to translate the Manu Smṛiti and actively participate in the compilation of Hindu Legal Code. Colebrooke would not only pursue his study of Indian language and customs but also help, especially after Jones's death, in the completion of this legal compilation.

He would also translate it into English, the new compilation would supersede the earlier code translated by Nathaniel Brassey Halhed.[29]

For the early Orientalists, Indian vernaculars proved to be immensely difficult to study, master and discipline. Bengali, which at first glance seemed to be more structured than the protean *Hindoostanic*, was eventually encountered as a plethora of dialects— an unredeemable bunch of divergent cultural and linguistic practices which lacked a standardized core. The initial constructions of Bengali grammar[30] hence anticipated an ideal speaker, a *lack* which signified by its very absence. The ideal speaker did not converse in the popular regional forms but in a distinctly sanskritised arche-Bengali that is *written* as code. It is hence symptomatic of these Orientalist constructions that a structuring of linguistic legitimacy was intimately associated with the efforts to formulate a standardised legal framework for the Indian subjects. These legal codes were subsequently translated into vernaculars. Jonathan Duncan's Bengali translations of the Company Laws of 1782 (published in 1784, 1785), Henry Pitts Forster's translations of the Cornwallis Code (1795) and N.B. Edmonstone's Bengali and Persian translations of the laws for the Criminal Courts (1791,1792) were all efforts to formulate a normative, vernacular discourse.[31] Propelled by the paradoxical dilemma of *ruling liberally*, the Orientalist imagination of vernacular languages and literary forms was projected as a *discovery* of past structures. Jones's eclectic discourses on Oriental literary traditions, Colebrooke's seminal essays on Indian literature, Beames's philological studies, Wilson's essays on Indic sects, Grierson's elaborate categorisations of lects – were conceived as mediations with *already existent* structures. While distancing their discoveries from earlier European encounters with the Orient, the Asiatic researchers claimed a continuity/contiguity with the Indian linguistic theorisations. The research would focus upon these binary claims of difference and semblance and how these influenced the development of vernacular prose.

The claims of continuity with *already existent* structure/s would have legitimised Company's authority, but it also gave rise to other problems and apprehensions. If the structures had existed already, how would they justify the submission of the natives to the Company's rule? This necessitated a vindication of the present code and a corresponding analysis of the drawbacks of previous structure/s.[32] While there was a tacit recognition of the Mughal or Brahminical hegemony and a desire to sculpt the Company's linguistic codes in those pre-existent moulds, there was also a vigorous effort to subject these structures to the critical gaze of history and lay bare their deficiencies. The aesthetics of native prose was hence shaped by an evident tension between repetition and revision. The sociolinguistic analysis of registers in Bengali prose would strive to identify the faultlines of this paradoxical relationship.

The presence of stylistic variability in Bengali prose has been emphasied in early studies, such as Dineshchandra Sen's *Bengali Prose Style* (1921). Sen asserts that it is precisely the 'foreign influences' which stamped a 'grotesque air' to the contemporary prose style. Sen remarks on the archaisms in early Bengali prose and yet claims that these are all 'genuinely Bengali Prose' and hence infinitely preferable to their deformed linguistic descendants.[33] Yet, Dineshchandra goes on to conclude that it is these half-mangled descendants of early Bangla Prose that eventually ‘shook off their borrowed feathers’ and reinvigorated the native prose traditions by adopting ‘foreign elements’ and influences. Dineshchandra, like Nagendranath Basu before him, stressed on the fact that Bangla prose had a long tradition which stretched back into the tenth/ eleventh centuries.[34] Basu, in his descriptive catalogue in the *Viśvakoṣ*, approximately dates some of these compositions. Dineshchandra provides a list of thirty-six *sahajiya vaishnava* compositions, seventeen of which are in prose and the rest are composed in verse interspersed with prose. Although some of these texts had been written before the publication of the Fort-William works, there is some uncertainty about dating them.[35] On the other hand, the early Bengali works by Portuguese missionaries have survived and they provide a unique, if isolated view, of the pre-colonial Bengali prose.[36] The debates about archaism are also inextricably linked with the efforts to define Bengali (and Indian) nationhood. For scholars like Nagendranath Basu and Dineshchandra Sen, the claims for antiquity of Bengali prose traditions became a vantage point to inscribe the discourse of Bengali nationalism. These tendencies reflect a more extensive trope in early twentieth century Indian scholastic practices.[37] In the present study, ‘genuine prose style’ would be treated as an ideological rather than a linguistic category.

The nature of the actual linguistic transformation is a matter of intense debate. It should also be kept in mind that South Asia had antecedent linguistic and aesthetic ideations (Sanskritic, Prakritic or otherwise). Many of these ideations were appropriation/s of the regional ‘little traditions’ – a vastly complex process which has been termed (perhaps incorrectly) as Sanskritisation.[38] It is worthwhile to explore the similarities and differences of the colonial scripting of the *linguistic code* with this indigenous process of cultural/ linguistic appropriation. This would enable us to comprehend how the indigenous agents dynamically reacted to the colonial/ Oriental definitions of language and culture and how this interaction brought about further transformations and subversions. The diversity of the lingual and colloquial forms in early Bengali prose reflects the overlapping of these processes of appropriation. For example, William Carey's *Kathopakathan* (1801) and *Itihāsmālā* (1812); Ramram Basu's *Rājā Pratāpāditya caritra* (1802) and *Lipimālā* (1802); Mrityunjay Vidyalankar's *Rājāvalī* (1808), *Prabodh candrikā* (1833) and *Vedānta candrikā* (1817); Rammohan Roy's *Vedāntasāra* (1817) and various dialogues and translations; Bhavanicharan Bandopadhyay's *Kalikātā kamalālay* (1823), *Nava-bābu vilās* (1823) and other satirical compositions – bear the traces of this fascinating encounter.[39]

The historical and comparative linguistics studies of Bengali language and its registers are inextricably linked with the Orientalist tradition in Bengal. Jones's Persian grammar[40], Halhed's Bengali Grammar, Forster's Bengali-English vocabulary, Colebrooke's unfinished Sanskrit grammar,[41] Carey's Sanskrit and Bengali grammars, Wilson's Sanskrit-English dictionary and Sanskrit grammar,[42] Graves Chamney Haughton's explanations of the rudiments of the language,[43] William Yates's introductory exhortations of Bengali linguistics[44] – were all linked with the Orientalist enterprise. The later part of twentieth century saw the advent of John Beames, Shyamacharan Sarkar, Duncan Forbes and a host of other linguists who stressed on the colloquial aspect of Bengali speech.[45] Beames would not only write his Bengali grammar but would also study other Indo-Aryan languages in the first compendious study of Indian linguistics.[46] Grierson would soon follow and his encyclopedic *Linguistic Survey of India* left an indelible mark on Bengali linguistics.[47] Sunitikumar Chattopadhyay's exhaustive *Origin and Development of Bengali Language* or Bijaychandra Majumder's *The History of the Bengali Language*[48] are inevitably influenced by the works of Beames and Grierson. A later generation of historical linguists (like Pareshchandra Majumder) or comparative philologists (like Sukumar Sen) were guided by Chattopadhyay's main assertions about the language.[49] This should warn us of being merely goaded by the conclusions and assumptions of the modern historical linguistic tradition in Bengal while analysing the Oriental influence on Bengali prose registers. This may lead to a reification of earlier assumptions and circularity in the present conclusions. Hence, the diachronic analysis must rest on a critical study of registers, conditioned by an acute awareness of the complexities of theorisations about language in the colonial/ post-colonial context.

This does not mean that study of registers cannot benefit from earlier, linguistic studies of prose. Sukumar Sen's study of Bengali language and its early prose forms,[50] Pareshchandra Majumder's survey of phonological, morphemic and syntactical transformations,[51] Pranabesh Singha Ray's linguistic study of Ramram Basu's prose,[52] Pareshchandra Majumder's essays on Ramram Basu and Mrityunjay Vidyalankar's prose compositions,[53] Uma Majhi Mukhopadhyay's socio-linguistic review of Bhavanicharan Bandyopadhyay's writings[54] and Bhudevchandra Ghosh's linguistic analysis of Mrityunjay Vidyalankar's prose works[55] are all immensely helpful. However, these analyses must be given a broader socio-linguistic base, linking them Oriental and indigenous ideations of Bengali language and the various metaphysical and aesthetic ideations about language which were prevalent during the transformation. A potent method of socio-linguistic analysis, which would avoid the pitfalls of essentialist assertions, must also be devised.

The adoption of a suitable method for sociolinguistic analysis of written registers poses its own problems. Dell Hymes and John J. Gumperz had developed nuanced understandings of the 'ethnography of communication.'[56] Yet, the qualitative approach towards socio-linguistic analysis which they had conceptualized is suitable for the study of non-lexical communication. As Thomas R. Lindof and Brian C. Taylor assert, 'Ethnography of communication conceptualizes communication as a continuous flow of information, rather than as a segmented exchange of messages.'[57] Such a method may not yield significant results when applied to diachronic study of literary registers. On the other hand, William Labov's employment of the 'quantitative paradigm' was primarily limited to phonological variation and to speech data.[58]

Douglas Biber and Edward Finegan have edited a compilation of critical essays which has produced new data and has conceptualised an integrative framework of sociolinguistic analysis of registers.[59] Other sociolinguists including Nikolas Coupland and Penelope Eckert express their doubts about whether Biber's approach is indeed integrative at all. As Nikolas Coupland states[60]:

> Finegan and Biber are certainly right in claiming that sociolinguistics has lacked an integrated theory to locate its analyses of style. But their view of what such a theory should be, and even of what the scope of a relevant theory should be, is controversial … I attempt a reappraisal,

> specifically outside of Labov's initial two-dimensional and quantitative model of sociolinguistic variation. My contention is that sociolinguistic approaches to style can and should engage with current social theorizing about language, discourse, social relationships and selfhood, rather than be contained within one corner (variationist, descriptive, distributional) of one disciplinary treatment (linguistics) of language. To some extent, then, the paper is about the theoretical limitations inherent in an autonomous sociolinguistics.

Coupland states that style needs to be located within a model of human communicative purposes, practices and achievements, and as one aspect of the manipulation of semiotic resources in social contexts. Hence, variation in 'dialect style' must be distinguished from variation within and across ways of speaking. Interpretations of style at the level of dialect variation must also refer to stylistic processes at other levels. Thus analysis of style cannot be restricted to a single 'empirical or interpretive procedure'. Dialect stylistics must look into the influence of style in fashioning speakers' complex-identities. It must also define social relationships and explain the contextual significance of communication. Coupland feels that this would sculpt out socio-linguistics as an inter-disciplinary pursuit and would enable its engagement with other discourses. Coupland's elaboration of his position not only offers an extensive analytical method but also challenges the 'apparent innocence of the original variationist account'. Coupland emphasises that socio-linguistic structures are not simply the describable statistical patterns of speech co-varying with class and situation. They are 'ideological structures that imbue language variation with social meaning.'[61]

The present study does not simply aim to study merely the linguistic attributes in prose texts but it wants to remain critically aware of the sociolinguistic issues involved in the study of registers. The study wants to explore the endeavours of Orientalists, the members of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, in actively imagining the genre of South Asian (especially Bengali) prose. These Orientalist conceptualisations and their interactions with indigenous aesthetic/ philosophical/ pragmatic traditions would serve as situational factors for the linguistic analysis of Bengali prose registers. Incidentally, this may also demand a cross-linguistic approach as most of the Orientalist theorisations are in English. Peter Trudgill discusses certain apparent anomalies in the linguistic development of English language and explains them from the cross-linguistic perspective of language contact. Trudgill's socio-historical studies are especially relevant to our present concern as he discusses these changes from the perspective of colonial contact.[62] Earlier studies of bilingualism and multilingualism by Joshua A. Fishman and Charles Ferguson are also relevant.[63]

The question of style is especially pertinent as there has been a vital tradition of stylistic analysis of Bengali prose.[64] However, not all of these references to 'style' were sociolinguistic. 'Style' as a theoretical construct is often vaguely used to signify overlapping yet different concepts. Coupland, who discusses about style extensively, expresses the ambiguity about conceptualising it[65]:

> It is difficult to assess the place of "style" in sociolinguistics. On the one hand, style is everything and everywhere – to the extent that we define styles as context-related varieties, and contextuality as the rationale for sociolinguistics. At this level of generalization, it would seem futile to try to

> theorize style, since a theory of style would be a theory of everything. On the other hand, style was operationalized as a single quantifiable dimension of sociolinguistic variation in Labovian surveys, and it is still with this focus that sociolinguists tend to address the issue of stylistic variation. From this standpoint, style may not have appeared to merit theorizing; it was (and for many still is) a patterning principle in numerical arrays, an axis on a graph. Sociolinguists have found the consequences of stylistic mapping to be informative, but style itself has needed no more explanatory effort than, at one time, did class or sex or age, as correlates of or as supposed determinants of language variation.

This ambiguity is perhaps an awareness of both the limitations of a reductive, quantitative paradigm and a vague, qualitative approach. Coupland, as has been earlier asserted, wants to establish the inscription of selfhood as one of the major objectives of sociolinguistic style. For our present purposes, Coupland's unravelling of 'ideological structures' might prove to be helpful. The Orientalist engagement with linguistics has often been pointed out as an ideological exercise. Joseph Errington, in his *Linguistics in a Colonial World*, asserts that the Orientalists engaged in linguistics as technicians who transposed variant writing systems, semantic and cognitive worlds into the language of the coloniser. This transposition was also an effort to define who the colonised are, and their inevitable relationship with the coloniser. Thus, the intellectual work of writing about language was never disjunct from the *ideological* work of 'devising images of people in zones of colonial contact'.[66] If these inscriptions of identity are constituents of sociolinguistic style, as Coupland claims they are, these need to be sufficiently elaborated upon in any effective understanding of early Bengali prose registers/ styles and their transformation/s. For this, the ideological origins of the Empire must be explored.[67] The necessary connections of these ideological tropes with the intellectual pursuits of Orientalists like

Jones or Colebrooke must be comprehended, in order to fully appreciate their engagements in the evolution of Bengali prose registers.

The question of ideology can be approached in different ways. Basil Bernstein introduced the theory of language codes in his influential studies of communication. Bernstein wanted to account for the relatively poor performance of working class students in language-based subjects, whereas they scored as high as the middle class students in mathematical subjects. This made him theorise that forms of language initiate, generalise and reinforce special types of relationship.

Restricted codes function where there is a considerable amount of shared knowledge in the group of speakers. Hence, restricted codes are economical and convey a vast amount of meaning using a few words. They use words as hyperlinks to more information. Elaborated codes, on the other hand, focus on elaboration and hence are used in situations where the speaker cannot condense his speech. It works in situations where there is no prior or shared understanding and knowledge, hence required a more thorough explanation for effective communication. The elaborate code can stand on its own, while the restricted code needs background knowledge for effective comprehension. For Bernstein, both the codes reflect their own aesthetics. Society, however, differentially valorises the orders of experience which rise from these different coding systems. The restricted codes generally develop from well-defined and structured social circumstances. The elaborated codes evolve in circumstances were openness and mobility are stressed and where social structures are malleable and fluid. Bernstein suggests a correlation between social class and the use of either elaborated or restricted code. He argues that in the working class one is likely to find the use of the restricted code, whereas in the middle class one more frequently discovers the use of both the restricted and elaborated codes. His research suggests that the working class individuals have access only to restricted codes because of the nature of the specific environments in which they have acquired and maintained the codes. The middle class, on the other hand is geographically, socially and culturally mobile has access to both the restricted codes and elaborated codes. Bernstein's codes are important to our present concern, as the class relationships of a colonial society would suggest not only cultural schisms but also divisions along class lines. Certain dialectical forms and registers would be preferred than the others – hence, leading to a transformation in prose aesthetics. For Bernstein, the situation reflects 'wider question of relationships between symbolic order and social structures'.[68] Bernstein, however, stops short of base-superstructure determinism. He qualifies[69]:

> Because the speech form is initially a function of a given social arrangement, it does not mean that the speech form does not in turn modify or even change that social structure which initially evolved the speech form.

Ideological preferences are not merely stylistic preferences; they are also determinants of linguistic meaning. In fact, using sociolinguistic devices to engage with Orientalist linguistics and analysing its topography has its own ideological ramifications. Michael Halliday explains some of these implications when he delineates the ideological conflict at the heart of Western linguistic pursuits. Halliday states that there are two distinct strands of linguistic tradition in the West. One stems from Aristotle and is 'analogist' is character. It is based on the concept of language as a norm, hence encapsulating the study of language in philosophy and logic. The other tradition can be traced back to Protagoras and the Sophists and has subsequently influenced Stoic thought. It sunders grammar from logic and philosophy and is descriptive and 'anomalist' in character. In recent times, according to Halliday, the 'analogist' tradition has expressed itself as the set of rules of structural linguistics and the Chomskyan transformational grammar. On the other hand, the 'anomalist' tradition has developed through anthropological and ethnographic studies and in the pursuit of sociolinguistics. Ideologically, philosophical linguists tend to be absolutists, while ethnographic linguists uphold the virtues of relativism.[70] It must be understood that Oriental linguistics evolved out of dialectical tension of these conflicting attitudes towards linguistic meaning. On one hand, the Orientalists defined 'subject' languages in terms of 'our' language, the master discourse of the coloniser. On the other hand, they encountered, what Errington terms as the 'founding conundrum of the human condition'[71] – linguistic diversity. Any sociolinguistic study of Orientalist linguistics inevitably gets engaged in the unveiling of this critical ideological schism. Halliday voices this with acerbic vigor[72]:

> Modern philosophical linguistics is distressingly ethnocentric. It presents all languages as peculiar versions of English. In this situation it is not enough for the ethnographers simply to go on with their own work, of describing each language in its own terms. This cuts no ice at all. What they need to do perhaps is to turn the tables - to describe English in terms of categories derived from other languages, to interpret it as a peculiar version of Chinese, or Hopi, or Pitjantjatjara. With an effort of this kind universal linguistics might come to be freed from ethnocentricity and begin to make a serious contribution to the understanding of human cultures.

Yet, Orientalists in Bengal were not working in a vacuum. They were, in many ways, responding to previous ideological and linguistic structures which have existed in South Asia. The Orientalist ideas were not unilinear assertions, they were dynamic responses to alternative linguistic/ aesthetic/ epistemological systems. William Jones had interacted with Jagannath Tarkapanchanan, the famed Navya-nyaya scholar.[73] The early Hindu legal compilations made by Company patronage had been overseen by Jagannath. Colebrooke had discussed extensively about Sanskrit and Prakrit grammatical traditions in his essays[74] and even in the introduction to his treatise on Sanskrit grammar. Colebrooke read an exposition on Nyaya, based on his account of Gautama's *Nyāyasūtra*, at a Public Meeting of the Royal Asiatic Society in 1824. His exposition has been vastly influential. Like Jones, he focused on a parallel syllogistic tradition which could be favourably compared with the European Classical tradition. This 'discovery' of Indian syllogism was perhaps unfortunate, because it led to significant misinterpretations of South Asian epistemological traditions. Colebrooke's revelations were considered as a challenge to the European belief in its rational superiority.[75] Colebrooke also translated the *Sānkhya kārikā* while Horace Hayman Wilson translated Gaudapada's commentary on the treatise and appended it to Colebrooke's translation. [76] The *sankhyan* philosophy is considered as one of the primary spurs for the rise of epistemological traditions of *tantra* and *yoga*.[77] Thus the Orientalist conceptions of language and linguistic registers were formulated with an awareness of South Asian linguistic/ epistemological paradigms.

The broader influence of these epistemological paradigms has been highlighted in recent research. Hugh B. Urban suggests how the subversive theological/ mystical beliefs and epistemological conceptions threatened the code of comprehension of the Orientalist discourse.[78] Such a radicalising of the Other resulted in the *imagination* of the category of *tantra*s as a unified construct to describe certain forms of Indian religious experience. This characterisation of the ‘mystic East’ and eventual ‘pollution of pristine Indian culture’ must have had implications in the ideological delineation of linguistic registers. Coupland’s definition of style as assertion of selfhood is especially relevant in this context. The ‘self-fashioning’ brought about by Oriental encounter inevitably demarcated domains of *constraint* and *mobility*.[79] These domains would be reflected back in the province of indigenous literature, hence elevating certain genres while denigrating others. Thus, an awareness of the domains of ideology and subversion and the ‘indeterminateness’ of language – as discussed in the writings of post-structuralist literary critics like Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler – would contribute to the present study of literary aesthetics.

The introduction of print culture in Bengal during the last decades of the eighteenth century considerably transformed literary practices. Influential periodicals like *Digdarśan*, *Samācār darpaṇ, Samvād kaumudī* and *Samācār candrikā* (to name a few) shaped a dialogic public sphere.[80] These polyphonic, printed discourses interacted with the normative *code* of the Company’s rule. The *Journal of the Asiatic Society* (as well as the *Asiatic Researches*) was also a printed periodical whose varied evolution was buffeted by changes in government policies, printing costs and methods, circulation and political practices. The Orientalist writings about vernacular languages were also shaped by these changes. Often the material processes of production shaped the characteristics of these publications. The unavailability of fonts, the problems relating to the printing of images and reproductions, the shifts in editorial practices are often reflected in these articles. The research would endeavour to describe these transformations and interactions and their implications for the development of native (primarily Bengali) prose.

The members of the Asiatic Society wrote about the different Indian dialects — the different forms of Prakrit and the development of the modern Indian languages. Such descriptions also necessitated an understanding of South Asian history as a unity (an understanding problematic in itself) and involved contrary views about the development of syntax, vocabulary and grammar. This paper would deal with these issues; it would try to ascertain the possible reasons for the development of schismatic prose aesthetics and divergent lingual registers (Persianised Bengali, Sanskritised Bengali and Anglicised Bengali). The rise of sectarianism among Bhadraloki elites and Islamic agrarian parties in the early decades of the twentieth century was paralleled by an assertion of distinct linguistic identities. Prose became the medium for the dialectic discourse of these nationalisms. The research would analyse the development of identities through critical study of the Orientalist explorations.

Notes

1. Sushilkumar De, *History of Bengali Literature in the Nineteenth Century, 1800-1825* (Kolkata: University of Calcutta, 1919), 1.

2. Peter J. Marshall, *Bengal: The British Bridgehead* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 2.

3. Notable among these are the works of David Kopf, Sisirkumar Das, Sushilkumar De, Amitava Mukherjee, Srikumar Acharya and Apurvakumar Roy. David Kopf's *British Orientalism and Bengal Renaissance: The Dynamics of Indian Modernization, 1773-1835* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969) offers not only an account of early Orientalism in Bengal but also offers a theoretical understanding of 'renaissance' as a process of modernisation and revitalisation; Amitava Mukherjee's *Reform and Regeneration in Bengal, 1774- 1823* (Kolkata: Rabindra Bharati University, 1968) and Srikumar Acharya's *The Changing Pattern of Education in Early Nineteenth Century Bengal* (Kolkata: Punthi-Pustak, 1992), reconstruct the socio-cultural shift as a process of political and education reform; Sisirkumar Das's *Early Bengali Prose* (Kolkata: Bookland, 1966) delineates the transformation in the literary terrain, brought about by the statesman-Orientalists, missionaries and *munshi*s working under the auspices of Company's rule. Apurva Kumar Roy's *Uniś śataker bāṅglā gadya sāhitya: iṅgreji prabhāv* (Kolkata: Jignasha, 1976) details the changes in educational curriculum,

the translations of English literary works and their subsequent influences on Bengali literature.

4. See Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change,* 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) for the classic statement of this point of view in the European context. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983) discusses the impact of print culture on incipient nationalism(s) in Europe.

5. The early, normative histories of Bengali prose follow this basic pattern. See Dineshchandra Sen, *Baṅgabhāṣā o sāhitya*, 3rd ed. (Kolkata: Indian Publishing House, 1908); Sukumar Sen, *Bāṅgālā sāhitye gadya*, rev. ed. (Kolkata: Modern Book Agency, 1949); Jawaharlal Basu, *Bāṅglā gadya sāhityer itihās* (Kolkata: Ideal Press, 1936) Sajanikanta Das, *Bāṅglā gadya sāhityer itihās*, rev. ed. (Kolkata: Dey's, 1988).

6. See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge, 1978). However, see Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) for a nuanced rephrasing of the Saidian position in the Indian perspective.

7. For a detailed account of Islamic state formation and socio-religious transformation in Bengal, see Richard M. Eaton, *The Rise of Islam on the Bengal Frontier, 1204- 1760* (Berkeley:University of California Press, 1993) and Rajat Dutta, *Society, Economy and*

the Market: Commercialization in Rural Bengal, 1760-1800 (New Delhi: Manohar, 2000).

8. See Christopher A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univesity Press, 1983); Peter J. Marshall, ed., *The Eighteenth Century in Indian History, Evolution or Revolution* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003).

9. For an understanding of the rich ideological transactions which were defined the boundaries of early colonial culture, see Robert Travers, *Ideology and Empire in Eighteenth Century India: The British Bengal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

10. See Peter Heehs, "Shades of Orientalism: Paradoxes and Problems in Indian Historiography," *History and Theory* 42 (May 2003), 169- 195.

11. Christopher A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 7.

12. Nicolas B. Dirks, 'Colonial Histories and Narrative Informants: Biography of an Archive', in *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia*,

ed. Carol, A. Breckenbridge and Peter van der Veer (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), 297.

13. By 'Bengal,' I refer to the protean geographical and political entity of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The *nawabs* of Bengal annexed Bihar in the 1730s and Medinipur (an erstwhile part of the Oriya state) was attached to Bengal. The company's acquisitions were hence defined as 'Bengal, Bihar and Orissa'. Coastal Orissa was ceded to the Maratha Confederacy in 1740s and was reconquered by the British in 1803. The coastal sections of Orissa and Bihar were later separated from the province of Bengal and 'The Province of Bihar and Odisha' was formed in 1912.

14. For example, see Mrinal Nath, *Bhāṣā o samāj* (Kolkata: Naya Udyog, 1999), 13

15. See Pabitra Sarkar, *Bhāṣā-deś-kāl* (Kolkata: G.A. Publishers, 1985); Pabitra Sarkar, "Bāṅglā gadya: rītigata anudhāvan," in *Bāṅglā gadyajigñāsā*, edited by Arunkumar Basu (Kolkata: Samatat, 1981), 55-102. Rajib Humayun, "Bhāṣā o pariveś," *Bhāṣā sāhitya patrikā* 8, no.1 (1980): 23-136.

16. For example, Abhijit Majumder, *Śailīvigñān o ādhunik sāhityatattwa* (Kolkata: Dey's, 2007); Apurva Kumar Roy, *Śailīvigñān* (Kolkata: Modern Book Agency); Abhijit Majumder and Pareshchandra Majumder, *Bāṅglā sāhityapāṭh: śailīgata anudhāvan* (Kolkata: Dey's, 2010).

17. James M. Wilce, “Diglossia, religion, and ideology: On the mystification of cross-cutting aspects of Bengali language variation” (paper, *Bengal Studies Conference*, University of Chicago, May 1995).

18. See Sunitikumar Chattopadhyay, *The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language*, vol.1(Kolkata: Calcutta University Press, 1924); Muhammad Enamul Haq, *Muslim Bengali Literature* (Karachi: Pakistan Publications, 1957); Qazi Abdul Mannan, *The Origin and Development of Dobhasi Literature in Bengal* (University of Dacca, 1966).

19. Suzaine Romaine, *Socio-Historical Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 4.

20. William Labov, *The Social Stratification of English in the New York City*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

21. For example, David Sankoff, “Above and Beyond Phonology in Variable Rules,” in *New Ways of Analyzing Variation in English*, ed. C.J. Bailey and R. Shuy (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1975), 44-62.

22. See John J. Gumperz, “Dialect Differences and Social Stratification in a North Indian Village,” *American Anthropologist* 60:4 (1958): 668- 682; Charles Ferguson, “South Asia as a Sociolinguistic Area,” in *Socio-linguistic Perspectives: Papers on*

Language in Society, 1959- 1994, ed. Thom Huebner (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 84- 102. Also see John J. Gumperz and Charles Ferguson, eds., *Linguistic Diversity in South Asia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1960).

23. William Bright and Attipate K. Ramanujan, “Sociolinguistic Variation and Language Change,” in *Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress of Linguists*, ed. Horace Hunt (The Hague: Mouton, 1964), 1107-13.

24. Murray B. Emeneau, “India as a Linguistic Area,” *Language* 32 (1956): 3-16.

25. Thomas W. Clark, “The Languages of Calcutta, 1760-1840,” *Bulletin of the SOAS* 18, no.3 (1956): 453 – 74.

26. Sisirkumar Das, *Early Bengali Prose*, 27-34.

27. Ibid., 43.

28. Shivratan Mitra, ed., *Types of Early Modern Prose* (Kolkata: University of Calcutta, 1922); Suniti Kumar Chattopadhyay, ‘British museumer bāṅglā kāgaj-patra,’ *Sāhitya parisat patrikā* 29 (1922); Panchanan Mandal, ed., *Ciṭhipatre samājcitra*, 2 vols. (Santiniketan: Vishwabharati, 1953); Shubhendushekhar Tunga, *Bāṅglār bāire bāṅglā gadyer carcā* (Kolkata:University of Calcutta, 1965); Debesh Roy, ed., *Āṭharo śataker bāṅglā gadya* (Kolkata: Papyrus, 1987); Anisuzzaman, ed., *Factory Correspondence and*

Other Bengali Documents in the India Office Library and Records (London: India Office Library and Records, 1981); Ghulam Murshid, *Āṭhāro śataker gadya: itihās o saṃkalan* (Dhaka: Anyaprakash, 2009).

29.Henry Thomas Colebrooke, *A Digest on Hindu Laws*, 3 vols. (London: Wilson and Co. Oriental Press,1801); *Two Treatises on the Hindu Law of Inheritance* (Kolkata: Hindoostani Press, 1810). Also see, Nathaniel Brassey Halhed, *A Code of Gentoo Laws* (London: n.p., 1776).

30 See Nathaniel Brassey Halhed, *A Grammar of the Bengal Language* (1778; Kolkata: Ananda, 1980); William Carey, *A Treatise on Bengali Grammar* (Srirampur: Serampore Mission Press, 1818). Also see, Henry Pitts Forster, *A Vocabulary in Two Parts, English and Bengalee, and Vice-versa*, 2 vols. (Kolkata: P.Ferris Post Press, 1799-1802).

31. For a discussion of the early translations of the legal codes, see Ghulam Murshid, *Kālāntare bāṅglā gadya* (Kolkata: Ananda, 1992).

32. A detailed study of the inscribing such a structure of legal sanction can be found in Nandini Bhattacharya-Panda, *Appropriation and Invention of Tradition* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008).

33. Dineshchandra Sen, *Bengali Prose Style* (Kolkata: University of Calcutta, 1921), 30.

34. Dineshchandra Sen, Dinesh Chandra Sen, *History of Bengali Language and Literature* (Kolkata: University of Calcutta, 1911), 834-35; Nagendranath Basu, ed., *Viśvakoṣ*, vol. 18 (Kolkata: Vishvakosh Press, 1907), 188- 194.

35. Sukumar Sen, *Bāṅgālā sāhitye gadya*, 5.

36. An argumentative treatise on Christianity was written by Dome Antonio de Rosario in the early eighteenth century. See Surendranath Sen, ed., *Brahman-Roman Catholic Sambad* (Kolkata: University of Calcutta, 1939). Manuel da Assumpção wrote *Vocabulario em Idioma Bengalla E Portuguez*, a Portuguese-Bangla grammar and lexicon. The grammar consists of two sections, the first is a brief grammar of the Bangla language and the second a Bangla-Portuguese and Portuguese-Bangla dictionary. He also wrote dialogue apology of Christianity known as *Crepar Xaxtrer Orth, Bhed*, which had been published, along with *Vocabulario* in Lisbon in 1743. See Sunitikumar Chattopadhyay and Sajanikanta Das, eds., *Kripār śāstrer arthabhed* (Kolkata: University of Calcutta, 1939); Sunitikumar Chattopadhyay and Priyaranjan Sen, eds., *Monoel Da Assumpcam's Bengali Grammar* (Kolkata: University of Calcutta, 1931). For a general understanding of Portuguese contribution on bengali prose, see Abdul R. Khondkar, *The Portuguese Contribution to Bengali Prose, Grammar and Lexicography* (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1976).

37. For an extensive discussion of historiographical implications of these tendencies, see Kumkum Chatterjee, "The King of Controversy: History and Nation-Making in Late Colonial India," *The American Historical Review* 110, no.5 (2005):1454-75.

38. For the initial use of the term, see Mysore N. Srinivas, *Caste in Modern India and Other Essays* (Mumbai: Asia Publishing House, 1962). For discussion on the complexities and ambiguities of the term, see Johan F. Staal, “Sanskrit and Sanskritization,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 22, no.3 (1963): 261-75.

39. For most of the texts published by Fort-William educators and those written by Bhavanicharan Bandyopadhyay, I have referred to Asitkumar Bandyopadhyay, ed., *Purātan bāṅglā gadyagrantha saṅkalan* (Kolkata: Bangla Academy, 2003). For Mrityunjay Vidyalankar’s *Rājāvalī* (1808), I have referred to the edition published by Serampore Mission Press in 1838. For Rammohan’s prose works and Mrityunjay’s *Vedānta candrikā* (1817), I have referred to Ajitkumar Ghosh et al., eds., *Rāmmohan racanāvalī* (Kolkata: Haraf, 1973).

40. William Jones, *A Grammar of the Persian Language* (1771; London: W.Bulmer, 1804).

41. Henry Thomas Colebrooke, *A Grammar of the Sanscrit Language* (Kolkata: Company’s Press, 1805).

42. Henry Horace Wilson, *An Introduction to the Grammar of the Sanskrit Language* (London: Madden, 1841).

43. Graves C. Haughton, *Rudiments of Bengali Grammar* (London: Cox and Baylis, 1821).

44. William Yates, *Introduction to the Bengali Language*, 2 vols. (Kolkata: Baptist Mission Press, 1847).

45. John Beames, *Grammar of the Bengali Language: Literary and Colloquial* (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1891); Shyamacharan Sarkar, *Introduction to the Bengalee Language* (1850; repr., Kolkata: D'Rozario, 1861); Duncan Forbes, *A Grammar of the Bengali Language* (London: W.H. Allen, 1862).

46. John Beames, *A Comparative Grammar of the Modern Aryan Languages of India*, 3 vols. (1872-1879; Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1966).

47. George A. Grierson, *Linguistic Survey of India*, vol. 5.1 (1903; Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1968).

48. Bijoychandra Majumder, *History of Bengali Language* (Kolkata, 1927).

49. See Pareshchandra Majumder, *Bāṅglā bhāṣā parikrama*, 2 vols.(1977; Kolkata: Dey's, 2008).

50. Sukumar Sen, *Bhāṣār itibṛitta* (Kolkata: Ananda, 1996[1932]).

51. Pareshchandra Majumder, "Ādhunik bāṅglā: gadyaracanār unmeś parva," in *Bāṅglā bhāṣā parikrama*, vol.1 (1977; Kolkata:Dey's, 2008), 120-153.

52. Pranabesh Singha Ray, "Ramram Basu: A Linguistic Study," *Bulletin* of the Department of Comparative Philology and Linguistics, University of Calcutta 2 (1977).

53. Pareshchandra Majumder, "Rāmrām Basu o gadya bhāvnā" in *Bāṅglā sāhityapaṭh: śailīgata anudhāban* (Kolkata: Dey's, 2010), 49-66; "Mṛityunjay Vidyālānkār: gadyabhāvanā o vakyaśailī viśleṣaṇ" in *Bāṅglā sāhityapaṭh*, 69-78.

54. Uma Majhi Mukhopadhyay, *Uniś śataker pratham pāde baṅgasamāj o sāhitye bhāv-saṅgharṣa* (Kolkata: Dey's, 1997).

55. Bhudevchandra Ghosh, *Mṛityunjay Vidyālānkār o bāṅglā gadyabhāṣā* (Kolkata: Dey's, 2001).

56. John J.Gumperz and Dell Hymes, eds., *Directions in Sociolinguistics* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972); Dell Hymes, *Foundations of Sociolinguistics: An Ethnographic Approach* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1974).

57. Thomas R.Lindlof & Brian C. Taylor, *Qualitative Communication Research Methods* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2002), 44.

58. See William Labov, *Sociolinguistic Patterns* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972).

59. Douglas Biber and Edward Finegan, eds., *Sociolinguistic Perspectives on Register* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

60. Nikolas Coupland, "Language, Situation and the Relational Self: Theorizing Dialect-Style in Sociolinguistics," in *Style and Sociolinguistic Variation*, eds. Penelope Eckert and John R. Rickford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 186.

61. Nikolas Coupland, *Style: Language Variation and Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 86.

62. Peter Trudgill, *Investigations in Sociohistorical Linguistics: Stories of Colonisation and Contact* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

63. Joshua A. Fishman, "The Sociology of Language," in *Language and Social Context*, edited by Pier P. Giglioli (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972); Joshua A. Fishman, ed., *Readings in the Sociology of Language* (The Hague: Mouton, 1968); Charles Ferguson, "South Asia as a Sociolinguistic Area," in *Socio-linguistic Perspectives: Papers on Language in Society, 1959- 1994*, edited by Thom Huebner (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 84- 102.

64. Arunkumar Mukhopadhyay, *Bāṅglā gadyarītir itihās*, rev. ed. (Kolkata: Dey's, 2000); Sisirkumar Das, *Kabitār mil o amil* (Kolkata: Dey's, 1987); Subhas Bhattacharya, *Bhāṣā sāhitya śailī* (Kolkata: Prama, 1997).

65. Nikolas Coupland, "Language, Situation and the Relational Self: Theorizing Dialect-Style in Sociolinguistics," 185.

66. Joseph Errington, *Linguistics in a Colonial World: A Story of Language, Meaning, and Power* (Blackwell: Oxford and Malden, 2008), 16.

67. See David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge, 2004); Nicholas B. Dirks, *The Scandal of Empire: India and the Creation of Imperial Britain* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 2008[2006]). For letters and narratives of early Englishmen in India, see J. Courtenay Locke, ed., *The First Englishmen in India* (1930; repr., London and New York: Routledge Curzon, 2005).

68. Basil Berstein, *Class, Codes and Control*, vol.i (1971; London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 132.

69. Ibid., 135.

70. Michael A. K. Halliday, “Ideas about Language,” in *Collected Works of M.A.K. Halliday,* vol iii, edited by Jonathan Webster (London and New York: Continuum, 2003), 99-101.

71. Joseph Errington, *Linguistics in a Colonial World*, vii.

72. Michael A. K. Halliday, “Ideas about Language,”102.

73. Garland Cannon, *The Life and Mind of Oriental Jones* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 287.

74. For example, see Henry Thomas Colebrooke, ‘On the Sanscrit and Pracrit Languages,’ *Asiatic Researches* 7 (1801): 199-231.

75. Jonardon Ganeri, introduction to *Indian Logic: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 2001), 5.

76. Henry Thomas Colebrooke, trans., *The Sankhya Karika* (London: Oxford University Press, 1837).

77. Mike Burley, *Classical Samkhya and Yoga: An Indian Metaphysics of Experience* (Oxford: Routledge, 2007), 32.

78. Hugh B. Urban, “The Golden Age of the Vedas and the Dark Age of Kali: Tantrism, Orientalism, and the Bengal Renaissance,” in *Tantra: Sex, Secrecy, Politics, and Power in the Study of Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 44-72.

79. I borrow the terms *constraint* and *mobility* from Stephen Greenblatt’s famous discussion on the interrelatedness of culture and literature. See Stephen Greenblatt, “Culture,” in *The Greenblatt Reader*, ed. Michael Payne (Malden: Blackwell, 2005), 11.

80. Discussion about early print culture in Kolkata might be found in Graham Shaw, *Printing in Calcutta to 1800: A Description and Checklist of Printing in Late 18th Century Calcutta* (London: Bibliographical Society, 1981). Descriptive accounts, along with excerpts, from periodicals might be found in Brajendranath Bandyopadhyay, ed., *Bāṅglā sāmayik patra*, 2 vols. (Kolkata: Bangiya Sahitya Parisat, 1935-1952). A detailed discussion of the myriad facets of Bengali social-life reflected in periodicals and newspapers is available in Brajendranath Bandyopadhyay, ed., *Samvādpatre sekāler kathā*, 2 vols. (Kolkata: Bangiya Sahitya Parisat, 1949); Benoy Ghosh, ed., *Sāmayik patre*

bāṅglār samājcitra (Kolkata: Viksan, 1963). General discussions about various socio-cultural aspects of history of periodicals in Bengal might be found in Swapan Basu and Muntasir Mamun, eds., *Dui ṣataker bāṅglā samvād sāmayikpatra* (Kolkata: Pustak Vipani, 2005). For elaborations on various aspects of print-culture in Bengal, see Swapan Chakravorty, ed., *Mudraner saṅskṛiti o bāṅglā bai* (Kolkata: Ababhash, 2007).

William Jones and the *Imagination* of Vernacular Prose

Bengali Prose sculpted its distinct literary identity in the nineteenth century. As in several other linguistic traditions, the discovery of this ‘other harmony’ [1] happened long after the development of a remarkable poetic canon. Like Molière’s Jourdain[2], the Bengalis were largely unaware that they were conversing in prose while writing in verse. However, Bengalis were not merely composing poetry that was ambiguous, lyrical and evocative. They were also writing poems which had a ‘utilitarian function’[3]. The *mangalkavya* tradition, the several hagiographies of Chaitanya and *vaishnava nibandha*-s were often conversing in a language that was nearly indistinguishable from prose. Most of these compositions were in *payar* metre. The 8/6 structure of the *payār* can accommodate a prosaic counterpoint, hence adapting itself to social narratives, historical and pseudo-historical descriptions, doctrinal disputations and analytical theorisations[4]. What are the factors that eventually led to the development of Bengali prose? What role did the early Orientalists play in the genesis of this form?

To comprehend the contribution of the Orientalists in the development of Bengali Prose, it is important to realise the specific connotations that were attached to prose compositions in pre-colonial Bengal. A substantial portion of early Bengali prose consists of *vaishnava sahajiya* treatises[5]. The *sahajiya*s were heterodox in their religious practices, and were often considered to be heretical and immoral by their orthodox counterparts. Dineshchandra Sen, in his seminal study of Bengali literature, provides us with a list of thirty-six *sahajiya* compositions[6]. As noted earlier, seventeen of these treatises are in prose while the rest are composed in verse interspersed with prose. Nagendranath Basu's descriptive catalogue of Bengali prose compositions in the *Viśvakoṣ* also describes some of these works[7]. While the dates of composition of many of these works are uncertain (and there are reasons to doubt some of Basu's pre-colonial dating), it is certain that at least a portion of these works antedate the efforts of Carey and the Pundits of Fort William. The language of these texts is laconic and terse. They are often formulaic and delve in the idiosyncratic doctrinal ideas of the s*ahajiya*s. Most of them are also in a dialogic form and consist of a series of questions and answers. The text of *Rāgātmikā tatva* provides us with a suitable example [8]:

> āśray ki|| śrīgūrucaran|| ālamban ki|| sādhu saṅga|| uddīpan ki|| hari nām|| kon āśray|| nām āśray|| mantra āśray || bhāv āśray || prem āśray || rasa āśray ||
>
> [What is the refuge? The holy feet of the Guru. What is the support? Companionship of holy men. What acts as the stimulant? The name of the Lord. What is the refuge? The Name is the refuge. Mantra is the refuge. Sacred passion is the refuge. Love is the refuge. The Essence is the refuge.]

Why would the *sahajiya*-s write these compositions in prose and not in verse? What is the relationship between writing in prose and challenging the boundaries of the normative in pre-colonial vernacular discourse?

Medieval vernacular aesthetics in Bengal would often consider prose to be transgressive, heterodox, unmannerly and indecent. As Anisuzzaman states in his *Purāno bāṅglā gadya*[9]:

> Expressive and comprehensible language and the easy restraint of *payār* were the essential qualities of the Accepted Standard of literature. On the other hand, prose (*gadya*) was considered as harsh, sarcastic or ambiguous code.

Prose (*gadya*) was associated with the Other in normative discourse. When Jayananda would write in *Caitanyamangala* (16th century): 'Dekhiyā Murāri vaidya, nija acarane gadya', he was not referring to prose composition, but to behavioral harshness. Similarly, in Mukundaram's *Candīmangala* (c.1579), 'Hena bujhi gadya more karilā yuvatī' alludes to the speaker's realisation of being ridiculed by a damsel. In Rameshwar Bhattacharya's *Śivāyan* (c.1710), 'gadya kari pāṭhāyeche ganesh jananī' evidently does not talk about written prose [10]. Hence, in pre-colonial literary imagination, *gadya* refers to specific uses of language – subversion, literary innuendo, sarcasm, intentional ambiguity. Perhaps, this is the reason for the abundance of prose in *sahajiya* treatises. In order to be comprehensible, the theological heretics had to converse in the subversive tongue.

Much of this encryption of prose (*gadya*) as the voice of the fringe/Other originates from classical Indian drama. In such compositions, the dialogues of the protagonists were always in Sanskrit verse; while those of the lower ranked characters (women/ jesters/ servants) were in Prakrit prose. Often dialects were associated with particular classes. Sauraseni was used by women from respectable families and men of the middle class.

Prachya was assigned to the Jester in Bharata's *Nātyaśastra*, but in reality he generally conversed in Sauraseni. Avanti, a sub-dialect of Sauraseni popular in Ujjain, was spoken by gamblers and rogues. Ardha-magadhi was prescribed for the slaves. Magadhi was used by all men who 'lived in women's apartments, diggers of underground passages, keepers of drink shops, watchers, and [was] used in time of danger by the hero…'[11]. Besides, the dialects also demarcated the region from which a character had originated, hence engendering a complex matrix of his/her identity. In all these compositions, prose and verse would often complement each other – sustaining their legibility in the normative/ transgressive discourse(s).

William Jones would encounter this immensely complex form of linguistic identities while translating Kalidasa's *Abhijñanaśakuntalaṃ.* We would discuss about his interactions with the dramatic tradition and his translation of Kalidasa's play in a later chapter.

The Orientalist ambivalence about studying the native prose traditions was shaped by the Enlightenment belief in the schismatic schema of literary production— prose/ verse — and the corresponding processes of mental functioning which could be related to these categorised literary forms. John Locke, in *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* (1690), would clearly delineate the contrast between figurative language and plain speech, and hence, between poetry and prose[12]:

> Since wit and fancy find easier entertainment in the world than dry truth and real knowledge, figurative speeches and allusion in language will hardly be admitted as an imperfection or abuse

> of it. I confess, in discourses where we seek rather pleasure or delight than information and improvement, such ornaments as are borrowed from them scarce pass for faults. But yet if we would speak of things as they are, we must allow that all art of rhetoric, besides order and clearness; all artificial and figurative expressions of words are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mislead the judgment; and so indeed are perfect cheats.

Influenced by Lockean empiricism, poetry was associated to the faculty of *wit* (which was believed to be ambiguous and hence, deceptive) while prose was aligned to *judgment* (which was believed to be analytical, and hence possessing empirical veracity). This dichotomy was perhaps reflective of an earlier Platonic schism between rhetoric and philosophy. The Enlightenment dichotomy was vastly influential in structuring the contours of colonial identity. As European colonisers increasingly identified themselves as the harbingers of rationality, the banished realm of poetry was inscribed as the Colonial Other. It is perhaps symptomatic of the period under discussion (late eighteenth-early nineteenth century), that the aesthetics of European Romanticism and Oriental Enlightenment tried to achieve a synthesis between these dyadic polarities of rational/ irrational, judgment/ wit, prose/ verse, self/ other. Yet such constructions eventually enabled the permeation of these stereotypic identities. The code of colonial comprehension was encrypted by the discursive legibility of these signifiers. The study the *native* prose traditions and their aesthetic idiosyncrasies, problematised the code itself. This would have implications in the normative authenticity of a translation – not merely translation of one language into another, but also translation of one culture into another.

The Asiatic Society, established in 1784, played a critical role in initiating colonial explorations in the sub-continent, often etching out vastly influential, *definitive* delineations of the native literary canon. Trying to define the purpose of the newly formed Society, Jones declared in his “Preliminary Discourse”[13]:

> If now it may be asked, what are the intended objects of our inquiries, within these spacious limits, we answer, MAN and NATURE; whatever is performed by the one or produced by the other. Human knowledge has been elegantly analysed according to the three great faculties of the mind, *memory*, *reason*, and *imagination*… hence the three main branches of learning are *history*, *science*, and *art*. The first comprehends either an account of natural productions, or the genuine records of empires and states; the second embraces the whole circle of pure and mixed mathematics, together with ethicks and law, as far as they depend on the reasoning faculty; and the third includes all the beauties of imagery, and the charms of invention, displayed in modulated language, or represented by colour, figure, or sound.

It is interesting to note Jones’ triadic categorisation. The category of *reason/ science* dialectically complements the category of *imagination/ art*. It is in the domains of the former that ‘ethicks and law’, Jones’ professional area of interest, decidedly lies. One can suitably compare Jones’ schismatic division between reason and imagination with Locke’s dialectical opposition between *wit* and *judgment*. Yet, Jones provides this with a zone of mediation – *memory* / *history*. *History*’s protean capabilities can often transform *art* or *science* into a province of *memory*. It is here that boundaries would overlap, that schisms might be appropriately bridged and transformations might be achieved. It is in the wombs of history that *art* can be *remembered* as *reason*; *reason* can be imagined as *art*.

In his long list of subjects to be studied, Jones does not include language. He adds a brief remark to justify this exclusion[14]:

> You may observe that I have omitted their languages, the diversity and difficulty of which are a sad obstacle to the progress of useful knowledge; but I have ever considered languages as mere instruments of real learning, and think them improperly confounded with learning itself: the attainment of them is, however, indispensably necessary; and if to the *Persian*, *Armenian*, *Turkish*, and *Arabick*, could be added not only the *Sanscrit*, the treasures of which we may now hope to see unlocked, but even the *Chiense*, *Tartarian*, *Japanese*, and various insular dialects, an immense mine would then be open, in which we might labour with equal delight and advantage.

In other words, language would have a utilitarian function. Even the 'charms of invention, displayed in modulated language' would not be studied for their own sake but for the *real learning* that can be churned out of them. For example, *Sacontala* is not translated for aesthetic appreciation but out of an 'eager desire to know the real state of this empire before the conquest of it by the Savages of the North'[15]. Art would have to subject itself to the gaze of reason.

It is revealing that Jones had not listed Bengali as a language to be studied. His old acquaintance from Oxford, Nathaniel Brassey Halhed (1751- 1830), would differ with him. Halhed, who had joined as a writer of the East India Company, had acquired proficiency in Persian and Arabic while studying in Oxford. He had also translated

Vivādārṇavasindhu, a *sastric* text compiled by eleven pundits, into *A Code of Gentoo Laws* (1776). Like Jones' translation of *Sacontala*, this translation also involved an intermediary language. The Sanskrit text had been first translated into Persian by the pundits, and Halhed subsequently translated it into English. Halhed would eventually publish a grammar on Bengali language in 1778. This book was one of the earliest Bengali grammars and the first book to be printed using Bengali movable type. In the Preface to his book, Halhed remarked[16]:

> Much however still remains for the completion of this grand work; and we may reasonably presume, that one of its most important desiderata is the cultivation of a right understanding and of a general medium of intercourse between the Government and its Subjects; between the Natives of Europe who are to rule, and the Inhabitants of India who are to obey… The English, who have made so capital a progress in Polite Arts, and who are the masters of Bengal, may, with more ease and greater propriety, add its language to their acquisitions: that they may explain the benevolent principles of that legislation whose decrees they inforce; that they may convince while they command; and be at once dispensers of Laws and of Science to an extensive nation.

Halhed seems to have shared Jones's views about language having a utilitarian function; for him, it was a device which would enable the English rulers to comprehend 'the uneducated [natives], or eight parts in ten of the whole nation'[17]. He acknowledges that Bengali had been till then 'utterly disregarded in Europe'. Europeans, according to Halhed, scarcely believed that Bengal possesses a native language of its own and imagined that 'Moors' prevailed over all of India. He declares that in order to remove these prejudices he had attempted the grammatical explanation of 'the vernacular language of Bengal'. In order to establish the functional utility of studying native language and culture, Halhed alludes to the Roman appropriation of colonised culture and languages. Halhed recounts that 'Romans – a people of little learning and less taste, had no sooner conquered Greece than they applied themselves to the study of Greek.'[18] In the Preface to *A Code of Gentoo Laws*, he writes[19]:

> To a steady Pursuance of this great Maxim [i.e. adoption of legal codes], much of the Success of the Romans may be attributed, who not only allowed to their foreign Subjects the free Exercise of their own Religion, and the Administration of their own civil Jurisdiction, but sometimes by a Policy still more flattering, even naturalized such Parts of the Mythology of the Conquered, as were in any respect compatible with their own System.

Hence, the overarching theme of this colonial encounter has been appropriation in the normative discourse of the colonisers. This has been necessarily mediated through language. Language hence becomes a bearer of law, a confirmation of accepted authority, a code for encryption of the colonial signified.

It is fascinating to unravel the Oriental ambiguity about vernacular prose. Much of it stemmed from the fact that South Asian aesthetics viewed the legality of *verse* and *prose* in a diametrically opposite way in comparison to Enlightenment Europe. Hence, to converse in vernacular prose (to translate and study it) would challenge British pretensions to legal authority. However, it is Jones's *memory / history* which would successfully initiate a metamorphosis.

One of Jones' early addresses to the Society as the President would be "A Dissertation on the Orthography of Asiatick Words in Roman Letters". He wanted to arrive at a consistent system which would enable the 'original sounds' of Asiatic words to be 'rendered invariably by one appropriated symbol'[20]. He accused the Greeks of moulding 'foreign names to a Grecian form'. He accused the Grecian poets of embellishing their works with 'new images, distinguishing regions and fortresses by properties which existed only in imagination.'[21]

He remarks that this poetic obfuscation and confusion must be sorted out[22]:

> If we have less liveliness of fancy than the ancients, we have more accuracy, more love of truth, and perhaps more solidity of judgment: and if our works shall afford less delight to those in respect of whom we shall be ancients, it may be said, without presumption, that we shall give them more correct information on the history and geography of this eastern world; since no man can perfectly describe a country who is unacquainted with the language of it…

Jones states that there are two systems of orthography – one that faithfully reproduces the pronunciation while the other reproduces the spelling of the foreign words. Jones criticises the first system as 'new sounds are very inadequately presented to a system not formed to receive them.'[23] He offers his readers an almost phonetic transcription of Malherbe's poem and rhetorically questions his English readers[24]:

> Would he then express these eight verses, in Roman character, exactly as the French themselves in fact express them; or would he decorate his composition with a passage more resembling the dialect of savages, than that of a polished nation?

Jones prefers the second system, which would consist of ‘scrupulously rendering letter for letter, without any particular care to preserve the pronunciation’. He then goes on to state that the second method had found two of the ablest supporters in Nathaniel Halhed and Charles Wilkins, ‘to the first of whom the publick is indebted for a perspicuous and ample grammar of the Bengal language.’[25] Halhed’s study of Bengali pronunciation had its own predicaments and he was, according to Jones, ‘exceedingly embarrassed in the choice of letters to express the sound of the Bengal vowels, and was at last by no means satisfied with his own selection.’[26] What dissatisfied Jones in Halhed’s system was the use of *double letters* for long vowels and the frequent intermixture of the *Italick* with Roman letters in the same word. Jones also discussed Wilkins’ system, which Halhed had earlier used in his *Code*. Jones praised Wilkins’ method but thought the use of ‘prosodial marks’ (to indicate the length of vowels) would convey an ‘idea of metre’. He considered his system to be appropriate for Sanskrit words, but sought a ‘more universally expressive’ system for other Asiatic languages. Jones’s analysis of prevalent orthographies and his delineation of a system had a considerable impact on how Bengali and vernacular prose would be formulated. Bengali manuscripts of the pre-colonial period were largely inconsistent in orthographical representation. There was not any standardised register of spellings, and the same scribe would often write two different spellings of the same word.[27] This would be reflected even in early Bengali prose. The roman transcription of Bengali words in *Crepar Xaxtrer Orth Bhed* (1743) by Manoel Da

Assumpcam bears witness to the irregularity of Bengali spellings. The early books published by Serampore Mission Press also reflect an inconsistent orthography. Jones's efforts in standardising would ultimately be achieved in the middle of the nineteenth century. This would result in the prioritisation of a single dialect (that of the Kolkata region) as a suitable means for writing *rational* prose.[28] Other dialectical spellings/ pronunciations would be treated as deviations and would be marginalised. Subsequently, Jones discusses the pronunciations of the letters of the Bengali alphabet and provides a comparison with Arabic, Sanskrit, Greek and Persian pronunciations.

A typical example would illustrate what Jones sought to achieve. This is an extract from the entry 'ফ'[29]:

> When this character corresponds, as it sometimes does in *Sanscrit*, with our *wa*, it is, in fact our *fifth short* vowel preceding another in forming a diphthong, and might easily be spared in our system of letters; but, when it has the sound of *va*, it is a labial, formed by striking the lower lip against the upper teeth, and might thus be arranged in a series of proportionals, *pa, fa, ba, va*. It cannot easily be pronounced in this manner by the inhabitants of *Bengal*, and some other provinces, who confound it with *ba*, from which it ought carefully to be distinguished; since we cannot conceive that, in so perfect a system as the *Sanscrit*, there could ever have been two symbols for the same sound.

Bangla script was used for this multilingual description; yet, the Sanskrit pronunciation was prioritised as it was engendered by a 'perfect' system. This serves as an initiating spark for the subsequent Sanskritisation of Bengali spelling and prose.

It is important to realise that Orientalists were not the initiators of Sanskritisation in South Asia. Sanskritisation is not merely a linguistic process, but has a wider anthropological significance. Sanskritisation seems to be a complex, recurrent, multilayered process in which *varna*s placed lower in the caste hierarchy seek upward mobility by emulating the rituals and practices of upper and dominant *varna*s.[30] A part of this process is the gradual appropriation of Sanskrit literary terms and Brahminical theological concepts.[31] The process also serves as an archetype for similar assimilatory processes in other spheres of Indian society. For example, when the *sahajiya vaishnava*s were challenged by the orthodoxy, their response was to externally adopt the outer trappings of orthodox v*aishnavas* and even claim that all the major *gaudiya vaishnava acharya*-s had practiced *sahaja-sadhana*. The *Vivarta-vilāsa* of Akinchanadas claims that Chaitanya, Ramananda and some of the orthodox *goswami*-s of Vrindavan were *sahajiya* exponents.[32] They even translated the Sanskrit works of the *goswami*-s into Bengali.[33] Hence, they sought legitimisation through language, but at the same time, maintained their distinct cultural identity by composing many of their original treatises in prose. Perhaps, the early Orientalists also sought a similar legitimisation of their discursive study of South Asian literature through the appropriation of Sanskritic ideals of orthography, pronunciation and aesthetics. Often, they would trace the origin of vernacular words to their Sanskrit roots, emphasising their dependence on Sanskrit and consciously ignoring the syncretic nature of their present syntax and vocabulary. Halhed would explicitly state this in his *Grammar*[34]:

> I wish to obviate the recurrence of such erroneous opinions as may have been formed by the few Europeans who have hitherto studied the Bengalese: none of them have traced its connexion with

> the Shanscrit, and therefore I conclude their systems must be imperfect. For if the Arabic language(as Mr. Jones has excellently observed) be so intimately blended with the Persian as to render it impossible for the one to be accurately understood without a moderate knowledge of the other; with still more propriety may we urge the impossibility of learning the Bengal dialect without general and comprehensive idea of the Shanscrit…

Halhed obviously realised that the language which he had thus described in his book could not be completely identified with the language which was actually spoken in Bengal. Hence he said[35]:

> It may be superfluous in this place to remark that a grammar of pure Bengal dialect cannot be expected to convey a thorough idea of the modern jargon of the kingdom. The many political revolutions it has sustained, have greatly impaired the simplicity of its language; and a long communication with men of different Religions, countries and manners has rendered foreign words in some degree familiar to a Bengal ear.

The idea of innately 'pure Bengali', free from the Islamic and Portuguese influences, was hence conceptualised. Halhed confesses that he had dispensed with words which were used by 'the natives of the country'. He had selected all his examples from the 'most authentic and antient [*sic*] compositions'. Inscribing the Islamic and Portuguese influences as 'foreign' aberrations, Halhed laid down a genealogy of Bengali, which would be vastly influential. He, however, advises a person who wants to be an 'accurate translator' of Bengali, 'to pay some attention to both the Persian and Hindostanic dialects'. He recognises that in commercial interactions, 'as managed by the present illiterate generation', the translator would find all his letters, representations and accounts 'interspersed with a variety of borrowed phrases or unauthorized expressions'[36].

Halhed's comment about 'unauthorized expressions' reveals the syncretic nature of Bengali compositions in the eighteenth century. Bharatchandra, in early eighteenth century, would recognise the *yavanī miśāl* (Islamic creole) to be the 'working language'; though it did not, according to Bharatchandra, possess considerable literary merit – it was understood by all.[37] He himself had studied Persian[38], and would use considerable number of Persian words in some of his compositions. Besides, letters and communications of the eighteenth century often exhibit a significant presence of Persian and Arabic words. For example, Maharaja Nandakumar's letter to his friend, written in 1748[39], contains words like 'fajīhat', 'rofā', 'khosbāge', 'parwānā'. It is interesting to note that the letter starts with customary sanskritised greetings and salutations. In the earlier part of the letter Sanskrit words abound. However, as soon as Nandakumar starts discussing about legal issues and gives specific instructions, he starts using Arabic and Persian words. The language reflects the *yavanī miśāl* of *nawabi* Bengal. It must also be noted that the Perso-Arabic register was especially popular in the pre-colonial law-courts and in business transactions. Hence, it assumed the role of a normative standard, representing legally sanctioned discourse. Nor were such letters merely limited to the elite circle. *Bhāṣ*, or letters requesting pundits to offer *dharmic* settlement of issues also consisted of a considerable number of Persian and Arabic words. Specimens of letters from the eighteenth and early nineteenth century show how Persian/ Arabic legal terms were used, even by villagers.[40] It might be assumed that it was largely against this trend of mixing lingual registers that Jones and Halhed conceptualised the ‘pure Bengal dialect’.

Jones, in his “Second Anniversary Discourse”, tends to proclaim the superiority of European literature to its Asiatic counterparts[41]:

> Whoever travels in *Asia*, especially if he be conversant with the literature of the coutries through which he passes, must naturally remark the superiority of the *European* talents. The observation, indeed, is at least as old as *Alexander*: And though we cannot agree with the sage preceptor of the ambitious Prince, that “the *Asiaticks* are born to be slaves,” yet the *Athenian* poet seems perfectly in the right, when he represents *Europe as a sovereign Princess*, and Asia *as her Handmaid*: But, if the mistress be transcendently majestick, it cannot be denied that the attendant has many beauties, and some advantages peculiar to herself.

However, the proclamation concedes that Oriental literature has certain distinct ‘advantages’. He reminds the Society that it craves for Truth ‘unadorned by rhetorick’ and should not overenthusiastically praise European literature. Jones contends that the initial function of such self-praise was largely political. While the Society should be conscious about the superiority of European Literature and culture, it should not fail to appreciate Asian literature. What are the peculiarities that Jones saw in Oriental literature? Jones states this in the form of a contrast between European and Oriental worlds[42]:

> To form an exact parrallel [*sic*] between the works and actions of the Western and Eastern Worlds, would require a tract of no inconsiderable length; but we may decide, on the whole, that reason

> and taste are the grand prerogatives of *European* minds, while the *Asiaticks* have soared to loftier heights in the sphere of imagination.

Jones quotes Abul Fazl, who had pronounced that although the *Mahābhārata* contains 'many extravagant images and descriptions, they are in the highest degree entertaining and attractive.' Jones claims that even European poets like Aeschylus, Pindar, Dante, Shakespeare, Petrarch and Spenser had used 'images not far from the brink of absurdity', yet, they are pleasurable. Such a pleasure might also be derived from the works of their Oriental counterparts, and would suitably compensate for their lack of rationality. Jones praises Mahābhārata and the 'softer and less elevated strain' of the bards of Mathura. He advises that the tales of love and romance in 'the Bhasha, the *vernacular idiom* of *Vraja* … should not be neglected.' Jones sums up his views about Oriental literature with this ambiguous assertion[43]:

> No specimens of genuine *oratory* can be expected from nations, among whom the form of government precludes even the idea of *popular eloquence*; but the art of writing, in elegant and modulated periods, has been cultivated in *Asia* from the earliest ages; the *Vedas*, as well as the *Alkoran*, are written in measured prose; and the compositions of *Isocrates* are nor more highly polished than those of the best *Arabian* and *Persian* authors.

Let us summarise Jones's views about Oriental literature in "The Second Anniversary Discourse". He initially affirms that Oriental literature is characterised by imaginative absurdity and is, on the whole, inferior to Western literature. Yet, if these excesses are 'amputed', much of the pleasure derived from the texts would be lost. Also, although

Eastern literature lacks ‘genuine oratory’, it has writings using ‘elegant and modulated periods’ or in ‘measured prose’. Hence, the apparently absurd literature has its own justification – pleasure. This metamorphosis of Oriental literature into ‘measured prose’ is rendered *useful* by its incorporation as *history*. The literature would help the coloniser to know ‘all former modes of ruling *these inestimable provinces*’ on whose prosperity much of their national and commercial welfare inevitably depended.

“The Third Anniversary Discourse” of Jones (delivered in 1786) is famous for its influential assertion of the tenets of comparative philology and mythology. Jones initially warns his readers about the limitations of etymology which ‘is a medium of proof so very fallacious, that, where it elucidates one fact, it obscures a thousand.’[44] Jones also states that synthesis, though acceptable in science (‘where the principles are undeniable’), is not appropriate for historical disquisitions. Hence, he upholds the analytical method for studying of history and mythology. This would begin with undisputed facts and would eventually ‘investigate such truths as are at first unknown, or very imperfectly discerned.’[45]

Jones defines India as the land ‘in which the Nagari letters are still used with more or less deviation from their original form.’ Later, Jones states[46]:

> The characters, in which the languages of India were originally written, are called Nagari, from Nagara, a city, with the word Deva sometimes prefixed, because they are belived to have been taught by the Divinity himself, who prescribed the artificial order of them in a voice from Heaven.

He quotes Robert Orme to suggest that Indians, though invaded from time to time, ‘have lost very little of their original character.’[47] Both these conceptions are problematic—Nagari letters are not original letters, but merely one of the many variant scripts that evolved out of Ashokan and Gupta scripts. In fact, the Kutila script, from which the modern Bengali script has developed, is a variant of Eastern Nagari script and its development has paralleled the evolution of Devanagari.[48] The idea of an original character of the Indian is also an abstract generalisation. These conclusions try to imagine central loci of origin, which would enable the colonisers to read the signifier through the discourse of power and mediation.

Jones imagined that Indians were in some remote antiquity ‘splendid in arts and arms, happy in government, wise in legislation, and eminent in various knowledge’[49]. As the early civil history of India is a cloud of fables, only four approaches to its past are existant: Languages and Letters, Philosophy and Religion, Sculpture and Architecture and Science and Arts. According to Jones, invading Muslims heard the *native* Indians conversing in a language ‘of a very singular construction’, the purest unmaligned form of which can be found in the districts round Agra, especially in the vicinities of Mathura. The words of this language called Hindustani are mostly derived from Sanskrit. Yet, Jones considers Sanskrit itself to have replaced an earlier unpolished dialect[50]:

> [T]he pure Hindi, whether of Tartarian or Chaldean origin, was primeval in Upper India, into which Sanscrit was introduced by conquerors from other kingdoms in some very remote age.

The famous praise of Sanskrit which follows associates it with European languages and praises its ‘wonderful structure’ as being introduced by foreigners over the native substratum of ‘pure Hindi.’ Hence, Sanskrit is recovered from the dungeons of irrationality by being a language akin to the European tongue. Yet, though ‘pure Hindi’ is older than Sanskrit, it is now irretrievable. The Hindusthani that is prevalent derives ‘five out of six’ words from Sanskrit. Hindusthani differs from both the languages (‘pure Hindi’ and Sanskrit) in its inflections and forms of verbs, just as Arabic differs from Persian, or German from Greek.

It is interesting to note that Jones confesses that Nagari is perhaps not as old as ‘the monumental characters in the caverns of Jarasandha.’ Yet, he considers it to be the *original* Indian alphabet and links it with Chaldean (i.e. Syriac) alphabet. Just as in the case of Sanskrit, despite being not the oldest, the alphabet exclusively embodies the qualities that are distinctly *Indian*. These qualities are then traced back to Europe and ultimately to a ‘central country’ from which the Europeans, Semites and Indians migrated.

Another of Jones’s contribution to the *Asiatic Researches* was his article “On the Chronology of the Hindus”. Written in 1788, the article tries to etch out a structure of Indian past, mostly by interpreting Sanskrit texts. Jones tries to rationalise and hence sculpt an innovative space for discussion. What is important is the fact that Jones discusses these texts not in Sanskrit, but in English. Although he confesses that the absurdity of the Indian chronological systems is *monstrous*, he endeavours to reconcile

Mosaic history with these systems. He also initiates the discussion with a question, which he ambiguously leaves unanswered[51]:

> Whether it (i.e. the Indian Chronology) is not in fact the same with our own, but embellished and obscured by the fancy of their poets and the riddles of their astronomers?

This is not merely a discussion about Time; it is a conversation which tries to establish the possibility of discovering rational order out of the *monstrous* chaos of Indian chronological systems. Also, the language of mediation would not be Sanskrit, but the language of everyday speech of the coloniser. When Rammohan Roy, Mrityunjay Vidyalankar and later, Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay would try to establish a rational basis for the Indian myths, it would enable the development of Bengali prose. An example from the text would further illustrate this point. Jones tries to prove that there were two different Buddha-s and in support of his assertion, looks into *Amarkośa* to find out the different meanings of the word *Buddha*. He finds that there are two distinct connotations of the word. It might either suggest 'Buddha-in-general', or it might allude to 'particular-Buddha-Muni-who-descended-in-the-family-of-Sacya.' There are eighteen epithets which suggest the first meaning. Jones writes[52]:

> When I pointed out this curious passage to *Radhacant*, he contended that the first eighteen names were *general* epithets, and the following seven *proper names,* or *patronymics*, of one of the same person; but *Ramalochan*, my own teacher, who though not a *Brahman*, is an excellent scholar and a very sensible unprejudiced man, assured me that *Buddha* was a generic word, like *Deva*… he added, that *Buddha* might mean a *Sage* or *Philosopher*…

What is fascinating is the fact that Jones becomes the medium of a rational discourse between *Radhacant* and *Ramalochan* – and this is not scripted in Sanskrit, but written in English. It is easy to comprehend the immense importance of such a possibility for a man like Rammohan. In the "Ānuṣṭhān" preceding his translation in Bengali (1815) of the *Vedant: or the Resolution of all the Veds* (which in turn had been a translation of *Vedāntasūtra*), Rammohan would remark[53]:

> In order to find an excuse to discourage the study of the Shastra, some would say that it is sin to deliberate and listen to a description of Veda in the *Bhasha* and Shudras would be condemned to hell for listening to this [.] It is a duty to ask them whether they give a description of their Shastric texts to their students in the Bhasha and whether the students listen to them…

Associated to the dichotomy of verse / prose, is the difference in conception of what constitutes prose itself (and what does not). Much of Sanskrit prose literature is embedded in versified texts. This interconnectedness of verse and prose is further enhanced by the use of mixed metre, by the use of lengthy verse-forms and by the highly inflectional nature of the language itself. Jones would realise this interconnectedness when he would encounter a corrupt text of the *Varahi Samhita*. In "A Supplement to the Essay on Indian Chronology", he writes[54]:

> The copy of the *Varahisanhita*… is unhappily so incorrect (if the transcript itself was not hastily made) that every line of it must be disfigured by some gross error; and my *Pandit*, who examined the passage carefully at his own house, gave it up as inexplicable; so that, if I had not studied the system of *Sanscrit* prosody, I should have laid it aside in despair: but though it was written as prose, without any sort of distinction or punctuation, yet, when I read it aloud, my ear caught, in

> some sentences, the cadence of verse, and of a particular metre called *Arya*, which is regulated (not by the number of syllables, like other *Indian* measures, but) by the proportion of *times*, or *syllabic moments*, in the four divisions of which every stanza consists. By numbering those moments and fixing their proportion, I was enabled to restore the text of *Varaha*, with the perfect assent of the learned *Brahman* who attends me…

Hence what had been ‘written in prose’, was ultimately *discovered* as *verse*. Such a discovery was problematic as it blurred the distinction between verse and prose and challenged the schismatic assertions of European Enlightenment.

This reverential recognition of the ambiguous nature of the Indic genres was vested with an additional recognition of its mystical quality – something which Jones affirmed to be distinctly Indian. This would influence Jones’s translation of Jayadeva’s *Gītagovinda*, which would be discussed in the next chapter. However, it was this very ambiguity in Indian traditions which made Jones suspect his own native legal advisors.

Jones suspected that the native legal advisors might have their own interests in misleading the court. He also was aware of the alleged inconsistency of *dharmashatra*s. In his letter to Lord Cornwallis, the Governor General of India, Jones states that a native lawyer might mislead by quoting an obscure text as ‘express authority’, while perhaps in the same book ‘it might be differently explained, or introduced only for the purpose of it being exploded.’ In the same letter, Jones expressed his reservations about Halhed’s translation of the *Code* and recommended a compilation of a better code. Governor-General, with the concurrence of other Members of the Council, accepted the offer.[55] It was decided that two separate treatises, *Vivādasārārṇava* and *Vivādabhaṅgārṇava* would be composed, by 'Sarvorn Trivedi, a lawyer of Mithila,' and Jagannatha Tarkapanchanana respectively. Jones would oversee both the compilations and would translate the latter.[56] A minute to the Governor-General, proposing that Jagannath Tarkapanchanan might be appointed to assist Jones in compiling the *Digest of Hindu and Mahammadan Laws* for a salary of Rs.300/- per month displays the involvement of the early Society members in the compilation of the new code.[57] Jones had already prepared considerable material for the translation and in his discourse "On the Philosophy of the Asiaticks", he elaborates on certain broad characteristics of Oriental law.[58] The scripting of a legal code was also an act of imagination, because *dharmashastra*s were not legal codes. J.D.M. Derrett explains that colonial rulers mistook the 'Sastras for a system akin to canon law'. The colonial jurists expected to find a fully consistent legal code constructed, 'on European lines'. What they actually discovered was a chaotic mass of advisory codes, often contradictory to each other.[59] As Richard Lariviere succinctly states: 'Thus, until the British invented it, there was no such thing as Hindu law.'[60] Jones would respond to this chaotic uncertainty by translating *Manu saṃhitā* in 1794. Jones believed that the laws expounded in *Manu saṃhitā* and other *dharmaśāstra*s were 'laws of the Hindus'. He had translated *Manu saṃhitā* because he considered it to be the oldest of the *dharmaśāstric* texts. He thought that an effective appropriation of the injunctions of Manu in the legal system would legitimise the British rule. In the Preface to the translation, Jones establishes the antiquity of the text by a study of its literary style[61]:

> The style, however, and the metre of this work (which there is not the smallest reason to think affectedly obsolete) are widely different from the language and metrical rules of CALIDAS, who

> unquestionably wrote before the beginning of our era; and the dialect of Menu is even observed in many passages to resemble that of the *Veda*, particularly in a departure from the more modern grammatical forms.

The antiquity of *Manu saṃhitā* was established by its obsolete linguistic style. Jones realises that his text supports a 'system of despotism and priestcraft'. He further adds[62]:

> [I]t is filled with strange conceits in metaphysicks and natural philosophy, with idle superstitions, and with a scheme of theology most obscurely figurative, and consequently liable to dangerous misconception; it abounds with minute and childish formalities, with ceremonies generally absurd and often ridiculous…

In other words, the Jonesian ambivalence about Indian Literature extends from mystical poetry to moral injunctions. He considers both varieties of Indian Literature to be absurd, yet, appreciates their value. These texts would hence require mediation, a translation – but more importantly a prosaic reinterpretation, in order to be applicable to the contemporary colonial reality. Such a reinterpretation is practically necessary as it would spur 'well directed industry' in the millions of Hindu subjects, and 'would add largely to the wealth of *Britain*.'

Jones's efforts to formulate a legal text for Indian society were further assisted by translations of the Company's codes in vernacular languages. Several of the members of the Asiatic Society indulged in such translations.

The Mayor's Court was established in 1727. [63] After obtaining the *dewani* in 1765, the British administrators became increasingly involved in the juridical processes in the colony. Hastings' appointment as the Governor of Bengal had quickened the process of judicial reform. Hastings realised that the earlier treatises on Indian affairs, authored by William Bolts and Alexander Dow among others, were filled with 'abominable untruths, base aspersions and absurdities'[64]. Hastings's reforms in Bengal was an act of political legitimisation, as well as financial rationalisation. He earnestly believed that laws required to be codified, ensuring the preservation of individual rights and would encourage a 'spirit of property' [65] among the people. His focus on personal property was quite unique, as it rarely had any precedent in Hindu tradition. The Plan of 1772, subsequent compilation of *Vivādārṇavasetu* and the publication of Halhed's translation as the *Code* were all related to this overarching process of codifying Indian Law for its own native inhabitants and apparently from its own native sources.

However, as Hastings soon realised, these laws also had to be translated into Indian vernacular languages in order to make them comprehensible to common people. One of the first translators of the Company's laws in Bengali was Jonathan Duncan. Born in Scotland in 1756, Duncan came to Kolkata in 1772. He became the Preparer of Reports in 1782. As Halhed had already returned to London, Duncan was entrusted with the translation of the Company Laws in Bengali in the same year.[66] Duncan completed the translation in February, 1783. The book was published in 1784. An abridged edition (1784) and a revised, bi-lingual edition of the same (1785) were subsequently published. Besides, a *Supplement to the Judicial Regulations* was also published.[67]

Duncan was also one of the earliest members of the Asiatic Society. As the resident of Benares, he would later inform the society, through a communication in the fifith volume of the *Asiatic Researches*, about the discovery of ruins in Sarnath. Duncan's translations are not literal renderings but rather reinterpretations. He had often simplified the original sentence structure and would sometimes omit unnecessary phraseology. An example from his 1784 translation would enable us to assess his characteristic style[68]:

> sāhebdiger ucit je āpan āpan simābandir madhye pradhān lok ye thāke tāhārdigake sālis haibār kāraṇ yathocit dilāsā kariben kintu ihār kāraṇ kāhāro par ākramaṇ nākariben… munsif byatireke ār keha sālis haite nāpāriben…
>
> [The administrators should try to persuade important people in their respective realms to be arbitrators but they should not forcibly compel someone for this… except *munsif*s (indigenous judges), no one else would be able to arbitrate….]

Duncan's translation is quite easily comprehensible. It uses the characteristic inversion of the negatives in the first edition ('nāpāriben,' 'nākariben' etc.) but resorted to the more common word order in the abridged edition. The use of long sentences by the early translators is an effect of translating English statements in Bengali prose, often using several clauses. However, the naturalness of Duncan's translation makes him easier to comprehend. His use of a considerable number of Perso-Arabic words reveals the popularity of Persian legal terms. Yet, when compared with his contemporaries, he seems to be quite restrained in his use of such words. The actual process of translation perhaps involved Persian as an intermediate language, which was used by the *munshi*s to translate the English text into Bengali. The percentage of Persian words is considerably higher in the *Supplement*.[69] The bi-lingual edition often revises the spellings of words, indicating a change in spelling conventions.[70]

Another important translator of the late eighteenth century is Henry Pitts Forster. Forster had joined the Asiatic Society in 1796. He had been working as a Registrar in the Sadar Diwani Adalat of the 24 Parganas in 1794. He had translated about fourteen legal codes between 1795 and 1808. He had also published *A Vocabulary in Two Parts, English and Bongalee, and Vice Versa* in 1799 and 1802. Besides, he had also translated legal codes in Persian and Hindusthani and published *An Essay on the Principle of Shonskrit Grammar, Part 1*(1810).[71] Forster had translated the famous Cornwallis Code in Bengali. According to a biographical sketch published by the Society, it was 'largely through his efforts, Bengali became the Official as well as literary language of Bengal.' [72]

Neil Benjamin Edmonstone had translated the English codes, between 1790 and 1792, into both Persian and Bengali. His translation had been remarkably different from his predecessors, Duncan and Meyer. He dispensed with Duncan's restrained use of Perso-Arabic words, and used them opulently in his translations.[73]

In the Regulation 41 of the *Cornwallis Code* (1793), it was stated that the Company Laws would have to be translated into Persian and Bengali.[74] As Edmonstone was engaged in translating this voluminous code into Persian, Forster was appointed for translating the

Code into Bengali in 1794. It is assumed that Forster had engaged upto five *munshi*s in his assignment.[75] Forster's translation was published in 1795. Forster also suggested that a Hindustani translation should be made as the inhabitants of Bihar would find it difficult to understand Bengali. This was acceded to by the Governor-General.[76] Later he was also engaged in Persian translation of the English Legal Codes. In 1797, Forster informed the Governor-General that he had collected over thirty thousand words. If he would be given sufficient remuneration, he would endeavour to write a Bengali Vocabulary. He also informed that as it is difficult to learn Bengali without a prior knowledge of Sanskrit, he has planned to script a short treatise on Sanskrit grammar. [77] Forster became Master of the Calcutta Mint in 1804.[78]

In the Preface to his *Vocabulary* (1799), Forster pointed out that Bengali was spoken and written in two distinct styles – polite and vulgar. He considered the polite style to be potent, while the vulgar style was, according to him, too weak for subtle expression and disputation.[79] Forster thought that Sanskrit was the 'pure' dialect of the Indian people, while the regional dialects were all distortions of the normative language. Bengali had suffered fewer distortions than other regional languages, and hence was purer. Yet, he said that his conclusions do not apply to the urbane dialects spoken in cities like Kolkata, Murshidabad and Dhaka.[80] It is evident that Forster hints at the greater use of Arabic and Persian words by the urban elites and considers this as distortion of the 'pure' dialect. This is reminiscent of Halhed, who had concluded similarly in the Preface to his *Grammar*. This separation of the colloquial language from the 'pure' standard dialect (which alone is worthy to be studied) would be vastly influential in the nineteenth century. Forster’s assertion of the essential difference of Bengali from Persian also lies at the root of *imagining* a new language of the colonised. This also enabled the British to sever administrative links with the Persianate culture of the *nawabi* court. They sculpted a distinct identity for their own rule. Forster defended this assertion by claiming that people from the lower classes often encounter problems to comprehend court proceedings.[81] Often they were unjustly accused and punished, but they were helpless as they knew neither Persian nor English. He claimed that his sixteen years of residence in Bengal, he never had to use Persian in daily conversations with a native. Hence, he proclaimed that Bengali should be declared as the official language in Bengal. [82]

In his *Vocabulary*, Forster had often left out words which were used colloquially, most probably because they could be traced to Arabic or Persian. Words like ‘āin’, ‘jinis’ or ‘kārbār’ were not listed. It is interesting to note that Carey would later list these words in his *Dictionary*. Forster would avoid words which could be associated with Islamic culture.[84] Forster listed plenty of *tatbhava* words in his *Vocabulary*. Many of these words were rustic uses, like ‘pNodehātā’[84] or ‘pNodpatkā’. In his translations, Forster gradually sanskritised his language, reducing the number of Arabic and Persian words. An extract from his first translated code (1793 Cornwallis Code, the translation was published in 1795) reveals the presence of Arabic-Persian vocabulary and construction.[85] However, the language suffered a considerable change in a later translation[86].

Forster epitomised the tendencies of the late eighteenth century translators and often shared their prejudices and convictions. Like Jones, he was involved in a process of tracing the Sanskrit roots of the vernaculars. Like Halhed, he knew that Company's rule could be sufficiently legitimised only through an establishment of a distinct, sanskritised identity of the Bengali language. The initial scripting of the legal codes, the grammar and the vocabulary constructed a space for rational, prosaic compositions in Bengali. Yet, it was also threatened by the ambiguity of the indigenous genres and the ambivalent nature of native religious and cultural practices. The next generation of Orientalists would be engrossed in charting a path through these vales of uncertainty, dynamically contributing to the first flourishing of urbane, literary prose compositions in Bengali. The writings of the Fort William pundits, the compositions and translations of William Carey and the legal and literary studies of Henry Thomas Colebrooke would eventually usher in the Bengal Renaissance.

Notes

1. John Dryden, "Preface Prefixed to the Fables," in *The Works of John Dryden*, vol.1, ed. John Mitford (New York: Harper and Bros., 1837), 194.

2. Jean-Baptiste P. Molière, *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*, II.vi.

3. Marjorie Boulton, *The Anatomy of Prose* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968), 2.

4. Gopal Halder, *Bāṅglā sāhityer rūparekhā*, vol.2 (Kolkata: S. Mukherjee and Co. Pvt. Ltd, 1958), 66.

5. See Kailashchandra Ghosh, “Baṅgīya-vaiṣnav-kavi-sampradāy”, *Bāndhav* 7 (1882):357-69, for an early study of the *sahajiya vaishnava* works.

6. Dineshchandra Sen, *History of Bengali Language and Literature* (Kolkata: University of Calcutta, 1911), 834-35.

7. Nagendranath Basu, ed., *Viśvakoṣ*, vol. 18 (Kolkata: Visvakosh Press. 1907), 188-194.

8. Sivaratan Mitra, *Types of Early Bengali Prose* (Kolkata: University of Calcutta, 1922), 6

9. Anisuzzaman, *Purāno bāṅglā gadya* (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1984), 49.

10. The examples have been quoted in Anisuzzaman, ibid.

11. Arthur B. Keith, *Sanskrit Drama in its Origin, Development, Theory and Practice* (1928; repr., New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1993), 336.

12. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, vol.2 (1689; New York: Dover Publications, 1959), 146.

13. William Jones, “A Discourse on the Institution of a Society for Inquiring into the History, Civil and Natural, the Antiquities, Arts and Sciences, and Literature of Asia”, *Asiatic Researches* 1 (1788): xii-xiii.

14. Ibid., xiv.

15. William Jones, *The Works of William Jones*, Vol. 9 (London: Stockdale and Walker, 1807), 365.

16. Nathaniel Brassey Halhed, *A Grammar of the Bengal Language* (1778; Kolkata: Ananda, 1980), i-ii.

17. Ibid., xiv.

18. Ibid., i.

19. Nathaniel Brassey Halhed, *A Code of Gentoo Laws* (London: n.p., 1776), ix-x.

20. William Jones, “A Dissertation on the Orthography of Asiatick Words in Roman Letters,” *Asiatic Researches 1*(1788): 1.

21. Ibid., 2.

22. Ibid., 3.

23. Ibid., 5.

24. Ibid., 6.

25. Ibid., 7.

26. Ibid., 7-8.

27. See Achinta Biswas, *Bāṅglā pNuthir kathā* (Kolkata: Ratnabali, 2003), 103ff.

28. See George A. Grierson, *Linguistic Survey of India*, vol. 5.1 (1903; Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1968), 43 ff. for a discussion on Bengali dialects and regional variants.

29. Jones, "A Dissertation on the Orthography of Asiatick Words," 30.

30. Simon Charsley, "Sanskritization: The Career of an Anthropological Theory," *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 32, no.2 (1998), 527.

31. Mysore N. Srinivas, *Caste in Modern India and Other Essays* (Mumbai: Asia Publishing House, 1962), 48.

32. Shashibhushan Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious Cults*, 3rd ed. (Kolkata: Firma KLM, 1995), 115.

33. Edward C. Dimock, *The Place of the Hidden Moon* (Chicago & NY: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 83.

34. Halhed, *Code of Gentoo Laws*, xix- xx.

35. Ibid., xx.

36. Ibid., xxii.

37. Wakil Ahmed, “Puthi Literature”, Banglapedia, accessed on October 10, 2014, http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Puthi_Literature.

38. Ashutosh Bhattacharya, *Bāṅglā mangalkavyer itihās* (Kolkata: A. Mukherjee and Co., 1975), 792.

39. Sivaratan Mitra, *Types of Early Bengali Prose*, 115-16.

40. For examples, see Panchanan Mandal, ed., *Ciṭhipatre samājcitra*, vol. 2 (Shantiniketan: Viswabharati, 1953), 163-200.

41. William Jones, “The Second Anniversary Discourse,” *Asiatic Researches* 1(1788): 407.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid., 411.

44. William Jones, “The Third Anniversary Discourse,” *Asiatic Researches* 1(1788): 416.

45. Ibid., 417.

46. Ibid., 423.

47. Ibid., 420.

48. Rameshchandra Majumder, *Bāṅglā deśer itihās*, vol. 1 (Kolkata: General Printers and Publishers, 1981), 200-3.

49. Jones, “The Third Anniversary Discourse,” 421.

50. Ibid., 422.

51. William Jones, “On the Chronology of the Hindus,” *Asiatic Researches* 2 (1790): 111.

52. Ibid., 124.

53. Rammohan Roy, *Rāmmohan racanāvalī*, ed. Ajit Kumar Ghosh *et al* (Kolkata: Haraf, 1973), 7.

54. William Jones, “A Supplement to the Essay on Indian Chronology,” *Asiatic Researches* 2 (1790): 389-90.

55. Cited in Anil Chandra Banerjee, *English Law in India* (Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1984), 31.

56. Shyamacharan Sarkar, *Vyavasthā darpaṇa: A Digest of the Hindu Law*, 2nd ed. (Kolkata: Girish Vidyaratna Press, 1867), xxi ff.

57. AR/L-4 dated August 22, cited in Amalendu De, *Introduction to the Early Correspondence of the Asiatic Society* (Kolkata: Asiatic Society, 2003), 46.

58. See William Jones, “Discourse the Eleventh. On the Philosophy of the Asiaticks,” *Asiatic Researches* 4 (1795):176-9.

59. John D.M. Derrett, *Dharmasastra and Juridical Literature,* vol.4.1 of *A History of Indian Literature,* ed. Jan Gonda (Weisbaden: Otto Harrasowitz, 1975), 3.

60. Richard Lariviere, “Justices and Panditas. Some Ironies in Contemporary Readings of the Hindu Legal Past,” Journal *of Asian Studies* 48(1989): 775.

61. William Jones, *The Works of William Jones*, vol. 7 (London: Stockdale & Walker, 1807), 78.

62. Ibid., 88.

63. Mina Choudhuri, *Glimpses of the Justice System of Presidency Towns, 1687-1973*(Delhi: Daya Books, 2006), 118.

64. Cited in Robert Travers, *Ideology and Empire in Eighteenth Century India: The British in Bengal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 103.

65. Nandini Bhattacharyya-Panda, *Appropriation and Invention of Tradition* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008), 71.

66. Rosane Rocher, *Orientalism, Poetry, and the Millennium* (Delhi: Matilal Banarsidass, 1983), 97ff.

67. Ghulam Murshid, *Kālāntare bāṅglā gadya* (Kolkata: Ananda, 1992), 47-48.

68. Cited in Ibid., 55-6.

69. Ibid., 62.

70. Ibid., 60.

71. Ibid., 131.

72. P. Thankappan Nair, ed., *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1801-1816*, vol. 2 (Kolkata: Asiatic Society, 1995), 594.

73. For examples, see Arunkumar Mukhopadhyay, *Bāṅglā gadya rītir itihās* (Kolkata: Dey's Publishing, 2000), 52; Murshid, *Kālāntare bāṅglā gadya*, 87.

74. M.S. Rama Rau, *Studies in the Legal History and Indian Constitutional Theory*, (Hyderabad: J.S. Pillay, 1970), 126.

75. Murshid, *Kālāntare bāṅglā gadya*, 108

76. *Bengal Judicial Consultations*, P/128/19, 10R, 1May 1795, Resolution 15.

77. Murshid, *Kālāntare bāṅglā gadya*, 114.

78. Nair, *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society,* 594.

79. Henry Pitts Forster, *A Vocabulary in Two Parts, English and Bongalee*, vol.1(Kolkata: P. Ferris, 1799), 1.

80. Ibid.

81. Ibid., 4-5.

82. Ibid., 4.

83. Murshid, *Kālāntare bāṅglā gadya*, 119.

84. Henry Pitts Forster, *A Vocabulary in Two Parts, English and Bongalee*, vol.2 (Kolkata: P.Ferris, 1802), 265.

85. Murshid, *Kālāntare bāṅglā gadya*, 123.

86. Ibid., 124.

Gītagovinda: Orientalism and the Erotics of Colonial Exchange

In a short essay in which he tried to define the dominant traits of Bengali lyric poetry, Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay (the famed novelist, editor and the crafter of India's national song) would say[1]:

> Bengali lyric poets can be classed into two groups. One of the groups tries to situate and visualise man amongst the beauties of the natural world; the other group endeavours to distance itself from external nature and concentrates on the human heart. One, venturing to search for the human heart, uses physical nature as its guiding lamp and enlightens all objects by Nature's radiant glow; the other, enlightens all by the glow of its inner spirit… The foremost exponent of the first group is Jayadeva, the spokesperson of the second group is Vidyapati.

Bankimchandra's essay, published in 1886, reveals various curious strands of thought. The dichotomy of inner/outer nature, a veritable 'Cartesian rupture', is perhaps symptomatic of the late phase of Bengali Renaissance. Bankimchandra suggests that the first group of poets use external nature (*vājya prakṛiti*) to reveal and enlighten objects (*vastu*). Jayadeva was the twelfth century poet of the Sanskrit poem, *Gītagovinda*, a pastoral poem in which he uses lush and erotic imagery to depict the amatory exchanges between Krishna and his cowherdess-consort, Radha. Earlier in the essay, Bankimchandra connects this worldliness with the verdurous plenty of Bengal. He states that Jayadeva's poetry always describes 'sweet-scented nights, soft mountain winds, trailing vines, lotus stalks, the blossomed flower …the murmur of bees and cuckoos' and along with it 'brows, vine-like arms, full lips, languid eyes' of women. He surmised that as Aryans settled in Bengal, its hot and humid climate and its fertile lowlands made Aryans lose their *tejas* (vigor) and adopt a docile, indolent, sedentary lifestyle. Their poems reveal inertia of spirit and an inclination for the amorous, obscene and physical world. In his *Kriṣṇa-caritra*, his effort to establish Krishna as a historical figure, Bankimchandra scoffs at the narratives which depict Krishna's amatory dalliance with the *gopi*s, the cowherd-maidens of Vrindavan.[2] Bankimchandra would emphasise that Jayadeva is an archetype for a group of poets, especially Bharatchandra. 'Whatever I have said about Jayadeva, is applicable to Bharatchandra…,' he declared.[3] Bharatchandra, the eighteenth century Bengali poet, famous for his euphonic and erotic verses, was thus considered by Bankimchandra to be a successor of Jayadeva. Jayadeva's poem was hence not merely a remnant of the middle ages, it was for Bankimchandra emblematic of a trend which had later parallels. And he would add, it was this inertia of spirit and indulgence in eroticism that had led to Bengal's (and India's) degradation— its enslavement by British imperialism.

Dipesh Chakrabarty has discussed how the dialectical tensions between the realist (*bastab*) and idealist ideations of Bengal and its social reality informed much of Tagore's poetry and prose.[4] Chakrabarty, and Tagore as well, sees this as not merely a matter of representation but also as a question of genre and ultimately, the purpose of art itself. Tagore would depict the socio-cultural realities of nineteenth century Bengal in many of his short stories – the rampant illiteracy, caste oppression, child marriages and poverty. On the other hand, he would celebrate the eternal, unmaligned beauty of his 'Golden Bengal'. Bankimchandra's writing was a precursor to this trend. In fact, his "Vande mātaram”(which went on to be the national song of India) praises the very traits of Bengal which he blames in the essay as the cause for moral degradation: ‘richly-watered, richly-fruited, cooled by the vernal breeze, verdurous with harvested crops.’[5] Bankimchandra’s criticism of Jayadeva hence has far more extensive roots – it reflects ambiguity about representing the materiality of existence which pervaded much of the colonial discourse in Bengal. The British arrived as traders in Bengal and ended up being its rulers. As traders, they could have indulged in unabashed commercial exchange; however, as rulers, they had to redefine their quest for commodity as an ethical enterprise-- a project to establish order and participate in a cultural exchange of ideas. Their efforts to realign their objectives also demanded a reappraisal of what they thought of as ‘commodity’ – a sublimation which parallels Bankimchandra’s efforts to redefine the legitimate domains of mundane materiality and aesthetic transcendence. William Jones (the famed philologist and the founder of Asiatic Society in Bengal) would claim that Bengal, ‘fertile in the productions of human genius’, could not better be explored but by his fellow countrymen in Bengal. He said in his inaugural discourse on the Institution of the Asiatic Society : ‘if in any country or community such an union could be effected, it was among my countrymen in Bengal.’[6] This necessarily involved ambiguity about the erotics of exchange – the colonial / commercial exchange was often metaphorically equated with conjugal / erotic exchange between two cultures. No wonder, then, that Jayadeva’s *Gītagovinda* would be one of the first texts to be translated by the Orientalists in Bengal.

Gītagovinda has been a remarkable achievement of post-classical Sanskrit literature. The cultic worship of Krishna as an incarnation of Vishnu had already been initiated centuries before the Common Era and had struck deep roots in the collective consciousness of the South Asians through the narrative yarns of the *Mahābhārata*, *Harivaṃśa*, the *Bhāgavat purāṇa* and several other *pauranic* texts.[7] *Gītagovinda*, was however, an innovative rendition as it expanded certain themes merely hinted in the earlier narratives and imbibed stray elements from later poetry and criticism(*Sattasāi* of Hala, *Gaudavāho* of Vakpati, *Dhvanyālokālocanā* by Abhinavagupta, *Kāvyamimāṃsā* by Rajashekhara among others).[8] Many of these innovations were imbibed from folk narratives and non-Sanskrit/ Prakrit poetry. Jayadeva brought about a synthesis of not only Sanskrit and Prakrit narratives but also experimented with moraic meters of Prakrit poetry.[9] Jayadeva's Krishna is hardly an incarnation, he is predominantly a cowherd in the idyllic land of *vraja*. Jayadeva described how Krishna's amorous encounters with the other cowherdesses in the Spring-time had displeased Radha and made her spurn Krishna. This led to a period of separation, during which they pined for each other's love. The companion of Radha, acted as a messenger (*dūtī*) and described to each how much the other suffered from the beloved's absence. Ultimately, Krishna surrendered himself at Radha's feet and asked for forgiveness. This led to reconciliation and a climactic union between the lovers. *Gītagovinda* represents erotic discourse by using metaphoric formalisations which evoke and allude to earlier Sanskrit poetry (esp. Kalidasa's *Kumārasambhava*). It had served as a devotional text for the *vaishnava*s. It is the source of ritual dance and music, which has been performed over the centuries in many South Asian temples. It is also a major subject of medieval Rajput painting. By deciding to translate such an influential text into English, and recreate its euphonic Sanskrit poetry into English prose, William Jones was not merely bringing about a cultural exchange; he was also strategically entrenching Orientalist discourse in the ambiguous terrains of erotic/colonial communion.

William Jones had translated *Gītagovinda* as a translation exercise[10] while endeavoring to master Sanskrit. Already famed as a linguist and a polyglot, Jones had been appointed lower judge to the Supreme Court of Bengal on 4th March,1783. Jones's primary aim had been to compile a set of legal tracts of the Indians, in order to facilitate a more efficient judicial system. Jones suspected that the native jurists, who helped the British judges in the disposition of cases concerning native subjects, distorted scriptural texts and corrupted judgment. In a letter dated 17th March, 1788 to Lord Cornwallis, the Governor-General of India, Jones would declare: '…if we give judgment only from the opinions of the native lawyers and scholars, we can never be sure we have not been deceived by them.'[11] As we have already discussed, it is this deep mistrust which ultimately led Jones to master Sanskrit and brought about the compilation of *Vivādabhaṅgārṇava* and its subsequent translation into English (completed in 1796-98 after Jones's death, by Henry Thomas Colebrooke). Yet, the mistrust itself is a more ambiguous figurative trope; it extends and often mingles with Jones's interactions with the Sanskrit scholars, especially Radhakanta Tarkavagisha and Ramlochan, who assisted him in his Sanskrit studies. Ramlochan was more of a personal instructor – it was under his tutelage that Jones starts exploring *Gītagovinda*, in the early months of 1789. Radhakanta – a student of the famed Jagannatha Tarkapanchanana – helped him in the study, compilation and translations of the legal code. Abhijit Mukherji and Rosane Rocher's studies of the scholars who collaborated with Jones chart out a fascinating discourse of collaboration and evasion, mistrust and influence.[12] Brian A. Hatcher reminds us that Jones 'harbored deep suspicions about the veracity and reliability of his pandit interlocutors.'[13] Yet, he also praised their erudition and would go on to say: 'Need I say what exquisite pleasure I receive from conversing easily with that class of men, who conversed with Pythagoras, Thales and Solon…'[14] This ambiguity about the scholars was also reflected in Jones's treatment of texts like *Gītagovinda*. In the ambiguity of Jayadeva's treatment of love, Jones saw a reflection of his ambiguous relationship with his instructors. Jones, the miner who had 'just opened' the 'Sanscrit mine' simultaneously aims to 'out-pandit the pandits'[15] as well as affirm 'that Pythagoras and Plato derived their sublime theories from the same fountain.'[16] Colonial exchange can hence be sublimated as exchange of wisdom, paralleling the polyvalence of Jayadeva's erotic discourse.

In his essay "On the Mystical Poetry of the Persians and Hindus", Jones admits of presence of eroticism in Indian poetry. He states[17]:

> [N]ow, admitting the danger of a poetical style, in which the limits between vice and enthusiasm are so minute as to be hardly distinguishable, we must beware of censuring it severely, and must allow it to be natural, though a warm imagination may carry it to a culpable excess; for an ardently grateful piety is congenial to the undepraved nature of man, whose mind, sinking under the magnitude of the subject, and struggling to express its emotions, has recourse to metaphors and

> allegories, which it sometimes extends beyond the bounds of cool reason, and often to the brink of absurdity.

Jones elaborates that language has a mystical function and states that in poetry there is often an allegorical failure of utterance. Jones discovers such language in the odes of Spenser – *On Divine Love* and *Beauty* and ‘in a higher key with richer embellishments’ in the songs of Jayadeva and Hafiz, in *Masnavi* of Rumi and the *Śrīmad bhāgavatam*. He establishes the link between the ‘nuptial contract’ of Radha and Krishna and the *Songs of Solomon*. He confesses that the songs of Jayadeva and Hafiz are likely to be misinterpreted, yet, he is reluctant to lay down exact boundaries between sacred and profane love. Jones’s reluctance stems from a decided hesitance in arriving at a conclusion about the function of language, and about the precarious evocation of the ‘language of command’[18]. He realises the perilous nature of his enterprise, the possibility of it to lapse into the realm of subversion, the eruption of the obscene and the figuration of love as ‘voluptuous libertinism’. What he ensures his readers is hence, mediation, yet, he also vouches his faithfulness to the original. This ambivalence is characteristically Jonesian. He translates verse into prose, omitting passages that are ‘luxuriant’ and ‘bold’ for ‘European taste’– and yet pretends that this metamorphosis has not resulted in any essential change. ‘[Y]ou may be assured, that not a single image or idea has been added by the translator,’[19] he claims.

Jones does convey a generous note of sensuality in many of his passages. He recreates much of the reference to spring-time fecundity in the Third Song of *Gītagovinda* (the very passage to which Bankimchandra refers to in his 1886 essay)[20] :

> The gale, that has wantoned round the beautiful clove-plants breathes now from the hills of Maylaya; the circling arbours resound with the notes of the Cocil and the murmers of honey-making swarms. Now the hearts of damsels, whose lovers travel at a distance, are pierced with anguish.

Some of his images are also frankly erotic. Here is a passage in which the *dūtī* describes to Radha the dalliance of Krishna with the milk-maids[21]:

> One of them presses him with her swelling breast, while she warbles with exquisite melody. Another, affected by a glance from his eye, stands meditating on the lotos of his face. A third, on pretence of whispering a secret in his ear, approaches his temples, and kisses them with ardour.

Jones's omissions are also significant. In the Eleventh Song (Fifth Canto), the *dutee* urges Radha to hasten off to the Jamuna-bank, where Krishna awaits her. She tells Radha as she would lie on Krishna's dark chest during communion (an evident reference to the woman-on-top, '*rati viparīte'*), she would be luminous like lightning in the dark sky. Jones uses the simile, 'The reward of thy speed, O thou, who sparklest like lightning, will be to shine on the blue bosom of Murari.' He, however, leaves out references to '*rati viparīte'* which obviously bears subversive undertones and hints at a reversal of the gendered discourse of power. He does not refer to the subsequent advice of the messenger: 'Loosen your clothes, untie your belt, open your loins!'[22] In the Fourteenth Song (Seventh Canto), Radha – anguished by Krishna's absence, imagines that he must be reveling with another 'voluptuous beauty'. Jones is quite articulate in this passage: '…she floats on the waves of desire, and closes her eyes dazzled with the blaze of approaching Cama: and now this heroine in love's warfare falls exhausted…' Interestingly, Jones leaves out the references to the 'drops of sweat' (*śramajalakaṇabhara*) that appear on her body. This bit of elision is indeed symptomatic of how Jones's revisioning of the images of *Gītagovinda* endeavours to maintain the allegorical veil of lovemaking as spiritual communion – and sanitise it of the mundanity of sweat and grime. 'Love's war', as a metaphor, should be able to sustain the paradoxical ambivalence of the colonial exchange.

Jones's translations would initially result in quite a stir in Europe. There would be several German translations (F.H. Dalberg, 1802; Fr. von Majer, 1802; A.W. Riemenschneider, 1818).[23] Dalberg's translation, which recreates Jones's English translation into German, was the version that Goethe read and remarked, 'what strikes me as remarkable are the extremely varied motives by which an extremely simple subject is made endless.'[24] Christianus Lassen located original Sanskrit manuscripts, producing an annotated Sanskrit text, textual interpretation and a Latin translation in 1836. A French version was also produced in 1850 by Hippolyte Fauche.[25]

As print culture spread in Kolkata in the early decades of the nineteenth century, *Gītagovinda* and its myriad adaptations became quite popular in Bengali. A Bengali edition of the text was prepared by Rasamaya Das and published by the Baptist missionaries of the Serampore Mission in 1817. Rasamaya Das translated the poem in rhymed, *payār* metre– the most popular Bengali metrical form. He also incorporated Chaitanyadasa's late 16th century commentary on the poem, *Bālabodhinī*, which interprets the poem as a *vaishnava* allegory of sacred, spiritual love.[26] Rasamaya Das's translation would run into several editions and would later be published in cheaper adaptations in Battala, Kolkata's Grub Street.[27] The Battala printing presses produced a huge corpus of cheap books, often producing texts which were considered to be subversive and obscene by the enlightened Renaissance intelligentsia, Hindu and Christain reformers, and later by the government itself. The growth in number of readers led to a democratisation of readership and a redefinition of public taste. The marginalised lower-middle class urban and rural populace identified with the polyvalence of Battala, often to the scandalised disapproval of the elite, Renaissance counterparts.[28] It is here that Jayadeva's poem carved out its own niche, selling quite protibably and spawning several imitations— derivative and associated narratives of sacred and profane love.[29] The dialectical strands of *prem* (spiritual, sublimated love) and *kām* (erotic love) inscribed and reinscribed each other as *Gītagovinda*, perhaps for the first time in its eventful textual history, sold as a commodity in the alleys of North Kolkata.

It is important to understand that this ambivalence about the nature of love described in *Gītagovinda* was not a colonial innovation. It was often at the centre of the debates about the nature of the text, about the variants of its two main recensions and ultimately, about the interpretations of *vaishnava* theology of love. As Barbara Stoller Miller had elucidated in her study of the text and its variants, the larger recension of the *Gītagovinda* evolved later and was mostly influenced by the *vaishnava* theistic interpretation of the text as an allegory of spiritual love. The influential commentaries of the Larger Recension, especially Kumbhakarna's *Rasikapriyā* (15th century) and Chaitanyadasa's

Bālabodhinī (c. late 16th- early 17th century) had been the cornerstones of *vaishnava* revivalism, upholding the orthodox interpretations of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's *gaudiya* vaishnavism. Yet, the earliest texts found by Stoler Miller are shorter recensions of the text. The shorter recensions do not have the *mangalaśloka* verses at the end of each canto. She surmises that the *mangalaśloka* verses enable the sublimation of the erotic encounters that the text describes. These were later added to the text with an intention to emphasise its sacrality and imbibe it in the traditions of devotional vaishnavism.[30] Yet, heterodox interpretations made their presence felt throughout the history of Gaudiya vaishnavism. These traditions of *sahajiya* vaishnavism would grow in stature in and after the seventeenth century, [31] especially in specific centres in Bengal like Shrikhanda and Khardaha. The *sahajiya*s thought of men and women to be representatives of Krishna and Radha and hence earthly communion, was also considered as the re-enactment of Krishna's cosmic play— the union of the male and female principles. Such a communion, engaged in with an awareness of its cosmic significance, leads to divine joy. Edward Dimock, in his study of these traditions,[32] pointed out that for these heterodox vaishnavas ' [t]he distinctions between spiritual and carnal love and poetic and doctrinal expression are wiped away. Accordingly, *sahajiya*s adopted the poetic paraphernalia of the orthodox *vaishnava* and read the basic image the other way.' Many of the *sahajiya* adherents claimed Jayadeva to be their progenitor. It is evident, that they would have definitely read the erotic exchanges of *Gītagovinda* in quite a different way than, say, Chaitanyadasa. In other words, Jones did not create a new discursive space – he and his contemporaries merely situated their discourse of power within the conflicting registers and inflections of pre-colonial era.

The urban re-settlement of these migrating, subversive voices in Kolkata engendered a re-evaluation of Krishna-Radha romance. Jones's pandit, Radhakanta Tarkavagisa, had written a digest in 1783 named *Purāṇārthaprakāśa* (Revelation of the Puranas), at the behest of Warren Hastings, the Governor of Bengal.[33] Radhakanta was a member of the *sabhā* (scholarly gathering) of Nabakrishna Deb, scion of the Shobhabazar Raj Family and an important supporter of Company's rule in Kolkata. Radhakanta's exegesis of the Puranas can be seen as an effort to reassert the allegorical significance of the *pauranic* narratives. As popular culture evolved in Kolkata, however, the mundane interpretations of Krishna-Radha romance became increasingly popular. These surfaced as subversive narrative songs (*pNācālī*), extempore poetic renditions (*kavigān*) and devotional songs (*kīrtan*).[34] These popular urban discourses often challenged the orthodox ideations of the divine and reformulated them according to the new, urban experience. These urbane forms often incorporated ritual obscenity – sometimes displacing earlier rural forms to urbane settings, which acquired newer meanings in a new environment.[35] *Kabiyāl*-poets like Lakshmikanta, Horu Thakur (1738-1808), Ram Basu (1787-1829), Nitai Bairagi (1751-1818), Nilmani Patani; *pNācālī* composers like Dasharathi Ray (1805-57) and *kīrtan* composers like Madhusudan Kan (1818-1868) became quite popular. Many of these narratives about Krishna-Radha were published by the Battala printing press and became quite popular. At the same time, the so-called libidinous excesses in many of these and related texts also made them infamous. Propelled by generous patronage from the local zamindars and the *nouveau riche* and adored by the masses, these narratives became veritable commodities in the popular book market.

The proliferation of erotic narratives in the popular book market became a matter of concern for the administration and the social reformers – both indigenous and European – who endeavoured to put a leash on this growing trend. James Long, renowned educator and an Anglo-Irish priest, prepared two descriptive catalogues of Bengali books and pamphlets (in 1853 and 1855). In his second catalogue, which lists fourteen hundred Bengali books and pamphlets published in the previous sixty years, Long would remark that *Gītagovinda* was a work which had been 'very popular and very indecent'[36]. Long also lists other derivative texts. His brief descriptions of these texts enable us to identify a common theme – *Anaṅgamañjarī* ('loves of Krishna and Radha'), *Kṛiṣṇa keli*('sports of Krishna'), *Kṛiṣṇa līla rasodaya* ('Krishna's Courtship'), *Mān bhañjan*('Krishna's removing of his wife's jealousy'), *Rās vilās* ('Krishna and the Gopis'), *Duti samvād* ('Krishna's message to his spouse Radha'), *Radha Kṛiṣṇa vilās* ('gives Krishna and Radha's life').

An 1850 edition of *Kṛiṣṇa keli* describes how Radha's companion visits Krishna at Mathura and compels him to return to Vrindavan for a while. Radha is initially reticent to meet Krishna, as estrangement had given rise to apprehension. She suspects that Krishna has been unfaithful, indulging in amorous trysts with Kubja, her maid in Mathura. She mockingly welcomes Krishna as 'Kubja's Lord' ('*Kubjār nāth*') Dwija Vishvanath describes: 'Softly Krishna approaches her/ And tied her locks with his lotus-hands.'[37] In *Kalankabhanjan*, Krishna assures Radha that wherever he might stay, he always thinks of Radha.[38] The proliferation of these texts signalled a subversive counterpointing of the dominant allegorical interpretation of the text (the colonial as well as *gaudiya vaishnava*).

It also indicates the influence of *shakta* revivalism in eighteenth century Bengal, with an increased focus on the feminine principle.[39] Texts like *Rādhātantram* (post 1777), *Ānandabhairav* (1832), *Amṛitaratnāvalī*, *Amṛitarasāvalī* had synthesised the Krishna-Radha narrative with the Tantric structure of Shiva-Parvati dialogue. In *Rādhātantram*, Krishna prays to the Devi for *siddhi* (yogic potencies). The Devi appears before him and asks him to practice *kulachara* (ritual sexual rites). Krishna incarnates as a mortal in order to obey her command while the Devi herself reincarnated in the form of Radha-Padmini. The Krishna-Radha communion hence achieves a newer significance. Radha becomes the Goddess Supreme who helps Krishna to achieve liberation and bliss. Krishna prays to the Devi: 'I am Mahāviṣṇu Vāsudeva, I have incarnated as Kṛiṣṇa. O Beauty, in this mortal form I am practicing austerities in order to commune with you.'[40] This heterodox envisioning of the Radha-Krishna story became popular and appeared in print. In Dasarathi Ray's *Ṣri Kṛiṣṇer mathurā līla varṇan* (1850), Radha prays to Kali for Krishna's companionship.[41] The thematic device of lovers praying to Kali for accomplishing a communion has been quite common in the eighteenth century in the *Kalikāmangal*/ *Vidyāsundar* tradition. Bharatchandra Ray's adaptation of the *Vidyāsundar* narrative, in the second part of his religio-historical verse narrative (*mangalkavya*), *Annadāmangal*, also depicts such a prayer to the Goddess. Bankimchandra's linking of Jayadeva with Bharatchandra hence reflects thematic and structural association of these texts.

Bharatchandra's *Annadāmangal*, and especially *Vidyāsundar*, would become one of the most popular Bengali poetic compositions of the eighteenth century. Bharatchandra had composed *Annadāmangal* at the behest of Raja Krishnachandra Ray of Nadia. *Vidyāsundar* depicts the love affair between Vidya, the princess of Burdwan, and Sundar, the prince of Kanchi. Moved by the descriptions of Vidya by a bard, Sundar travels to Burdwan under the guise of a student in order to meet Vidya. He prays to Kali, who guides him, thus enabling his entry into Vidya's bedroom. Their love is consummated, and soon, Vidya becomes pregnant. When this becomes known, Sundar is caught and imprisoned by the King of Burdwan, Vidya's father. However, Sundar's poetic acumen (this part of the narrative is influenced by Dandin's *Caura pañcāśikā*) wins the King's heart and he eventually grants him life. Ashutosh Bhattacharya links the text with Jayadeva and other *vaishnava* poets who had written erotic verses as well as with the tradition of Sanskrit poetics which focuses on *rasa*-s (sentiments or emotions).[42] Like *Gītagovinda*, *Vidyāsundar* is thought to be an exposition on the various emotions associated with love. Like Jayadeva's poem, Bharatchandra's piece also involves a *dūtī* or a messenger, the florist of the royal court (*mālinī*). It is the *mālinī* who acts as the medium between the young lovers. Several other poets, like Kanka, Krishnaram Das, Balaram Chakraborti had composed their versions of the romance, since the sixteenth century. In the eighteenth century, besides Bharatchandra, Ramprasad Sen (the famous *shakta*) and Kabindra had composed their versions of the tale.

Bharatchandra's text would be immensely popular in Battala, and a famous illustrated edition of *Annadāmangal* would be published by Gangakishore Bhattacharya in 1816. Vishvanath Deb would publish several editions of *Vidyāsundar*, along with other erotic pieces like *Rasamañjarī* (also by Bharatchandra), *Ratimañjarī* and *Ādirās*. In 1829, three different editions of Vidyasundar would be released in the same year.[43] Long, in his Descriptive Catalogue recapitulates[44]:

> Of Erotic subjects there are various books which have passed through many editions of prose and poetry and have a wide circulation, as the Adi Ras, Beshea Rahasyea, Charu Chita Rahasea, Hemlata Ratikanta, Kam Shastra 1920, Kunjari bilas, Lakshmi Janarda Bilas. Prem Ashtok; Prem Bilas; Prem Natak, Prem Taranga; Pulakan Dipika; Prem Rahasyea; Shringar Tiluk; 1st ed. 1817. Ratibilas; Sambhog Ratnakar; with 16 filthy plates. Ramani ranjan; Ras manjari; Ras sagar; Rasrasamrita; Rasatarangini; Rasomanjari; Rassin'du Prem Bilas; Rati Kali, 1st ed.1820, Rati Shastra, Ras ratnakar; Shringar Ras, Shringar tilak; Stri Charitra; Stri Pulakhon Dipika; These works are beastly equal to the worst of the French school.

Many of these books were feeble imitations of Bharatchandra's tale. Long's 1855 catalogue of '515 persons connected with Bengali Literature' names many of the publishers of these books. Panchanan Banerjee composed four of these books, his *Rasik taranginī* (1855) became extremely popular. Members of the elite mainstream occasionally composed and published erotic works – Madanmohan Tarkalankar, who taught in the Sanskrit college, wrote *Rasa taranginī*. Bhavanicharan Bandyopadhyay, the upholder of conservative Hindu values, wrote *Dūtīvilās*. Even Akshaykumar Datta, the editor of the *Tattvabodhinī Patrikā*, had composed *Anaṅgamohan*.[45] Long's list of books published in 1857 reveals a huge popularity of many of these pieces.

Following is a list of associated works and their circulation numbers according to Long's data[46]:

Name of the Press	Name of the Book, Author	Size	Pages	Price Rs. As.	Copies*	Long's Comments
Anglo Indian Union Press	*Annadamangal* by Bharat Chandra	16 mo.	432	0 8	2000	Mythological history of Durga and Siva
Anglo Indian Union Press	Adi Ras, by Kali Das	16 mo.	16	0 1/4	1000	Slokas on different kinds of women. Indecent.
Bangala Press	*Chapalachitchapala* Natak, by Yadu Chatturjyea	18 mo.	62	0 8	500	An indecent drama
Bisvaprakash Press	*Ramani Lila*, by Shib Chandra Banerjy	12 mo.	47	0 4	500	An indecent poem
Chaitanya Chandrodoy Press	*ManBhanjan*, by Kali Krishna Das	8vo.	66	0 4	1000	On the quarrels between Krishna and Radha
Chaitanya Chandrodoy Press	*Jiban Tara*, by Rasik Chandra Roy	8vo.	90	0 4	1000	A tale of the loves of Jiban and Tara
Chaitanya Chandrodoy Press	*Gitagovinda*, by Jayadeva	16mo.	163	0 8	1000	A poem in praise of Krishna
Harihar Press	*Jiban Tara*, by Rasik Chandra Roy	8vo.	90	0 4	1000	An indecent tale of two lovers, their travels etc.
Harihar Press	*Muktalatabali*, by Durgaparsad Bhattacharjyea	8 vo.	136	0 5	1000	Krishna and his wife's ascent – account of a jeweled tree
Kamalaloy Press	*Krishna Kela*, by Bishvanath Tarkalangkar	8 vo.	192	0 3	1200	The sports of Krishna

Name of the Press	**Name of the Book, Author**	**Size**	**Pages**	**Price**		**Copies***	**Long's Comments**
				Rs.	**As.**		
Lakhmibilas Press	*Videa Sundar* by Bharut Chandra	18 mo.	122	0	2½	3750	In four months nearly the whole sold; a most popular tale; clever but obscene
Purnachandrodoy Press	*Annada Mangal*	18 mo.	450	1	0	1000	With ten illustrations
Shastra Prakash Press	*Duti Sambad*, tr. by Krishna Lal	12 mo.	40	0	1	1500	Extracts from Brahma Vaivarta Purana relating to Krishna
Videa Ratna Press	*Man bhanjan* by Kali Krishna Das	12 mo.	60	0	3	1000	Krishna removing his wife's jealousy
Videa Ratna Press	*Panchali Part 2*, by Dasharath Roy of Burdwan	12 mo.	230	0	4	1000	Popular Songs on the adventures and history of Krishna – filthy.

* Price is given in Rupees and Annas. Sixteen Annas make a Rupee. Anna is no longer in use.

[I have retained Long's spellings of the names of authors, publishers, printers and books. The list is not exhaustive. I have left out various editions of the *pNācālīs*, except one, which specifically mentions Krishna.]

The list suitably illustrates that the erotic signifiers in *Gītagovinda*, *Vidyāsundar* and other derivative works had served as profitable commodities in the Battala book market. Long's returns for the books published in 1853-54 in Kolkata, mentions the number of copies sold along with the number of copies printed. For example, Chaitanya

Chandrodaya Press had printed thousand copies of *Annadāmangal* in that year. According to the report, nine hundred of those copies had been already sold.[47] Radhabazar's Hindu Patriot Press had published an edition of *Rasamanjarī* (1600 copies) while Kamalalay Press had already sold the entire set of 1200 copies of *Vidyāsundar* that it had printed.[48] Banstola's Khirodh Sindhu Press had already sold 900 copies of the 1000 copies that it had published of *Mān bhañjan*, which (Long tells us) had been '[i]n great request among Vaishnabs.'[49] Long voiced out his concerns about the rampant 'obscenity' in Bengali books and demanded laws for curbing these trends. In December 1853, he made an appeal to the Chief Magistrate of Calcutta. Later, in 1855, he appealed to the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, Fredric James Halliday. In fact, in 1855, the Government imprisoned Mahesh, Vishambhar and Madhusudan Sil on the charge of printing obscene material and they were subsequently fined. Due to the initiative of the Chief Magistrate, G.F. Cockburn, the Obscene Books and Pictures Act was passed on 21st January, 1856.[50] In the subsequent development of institutional censorship and nationalist surveillance, several indigenous organisations participated in the drives to cleanse the printed discourse of any vestiges of erstwhile obscenity. Keshavchandra Sen established *Ashlilata Nivarani Sabha* on 20th September, 1870.[51] The Sabha members kept a watch on the material printed by the Battala publishers. If anything was found to be obscene, the police was requested to issue warrants. Books like *Vidyāsundar* and *Rasamanjarī* were thought to be obscene, and publishers who sold them were penalised. The subsequent editions of *Gītagovinda* would evidently respond to these changes.

Edwin Arnold's translation of *Gītagovinda*, titled *The Indian Song of Songs* was published in London in 1875. Trained as a Sanskritist, Arnold had served as the Principal of the Government Sanskrit College in Poona from 1856 to 1861. Translating *Gītagovinda* in the post-mutiny years, Arnold, like Jones before him, stresses on the allegorical content of the poem. '…[B]eing so exotic, the poem demands a word or two of introduction,' he emphasises. Arnold interprets Krishna as symbolic representation of the human soul which is displayed in the poem 'in its relations alternately with earthly and celestial beauty.'[52] Krishna is initially attached to the sensual world. Radha, representative of intellectual and moral beauty, comes as a liberating force and frees Krishna from his errors by 'enkindling in his heart a desire for her own surpassing loveliness'[53]. The poem, according to Arnold, charts out the liberation of Krishna from 'sensuous distractions' and his eventual union with Radha in 'a high and spiritualised happiness'[54]. Arnold concedes that certain 'authorities' do not subscribe to this interpretation but reassures that Jones and Lassen had unraveled similar connotations in the text. Arnold also notices that adopting this interpretation, there had been 'occasional difficulty' in his translation. To validate his interpretation, however, he translates Lassen and quotes from his prologmena. What he quotes, however, destabilises his own interpretation[55]:

> The Indian poet seems, indeed,to have spent rather more labour in depicting the phases of earthly passion than of that intellectual yearning by which the mind is lifted to the contemplation of divine things ; . . . but the fable of the loves of Govinda and Radha existing from antiquity, and being universally accepted, philosophy had to affix its doctrines to the story in such a way as that the vulgar amours of those popular deities might present themselves in a nobler aspect.

For Arnold, then, the allegorical device is not inherent in the text. Rather it is adopted in order to reinterpret the 'vulgar amours' as something noble. Besides, Arnold almost reverses the conventional narrative which sees Krishna as an enlightened Godhead and Radha as an ardent *bhakta*. This reversal had been presaged in the Tantra-influened Krishna-Radha narratives. However, Arnold's reevaluation seems to be over-determined – it is both an effort to emphasise the literary nature of the text (thus avoiding charges of obscenity) as well as a continuation of pre-colonial *shakta* infiltration in *vaishnava* texts. Arnold's rhyme often leads him into redundant constructions. For example, in the Third Song[56]:

> The third one of that dazzling band of dwellers in the wood
> Body and bosom panting with the pulse of youthful blood
> Leans over him, as in his ear a lightsome thing to speak.
> And then with leaf-soft lip imprints a kiss below his cheek;
> A kiss that thrills, and Krishna turns at the silken touch
> To give it back—ah, Radha ! forgetting thee too much.

Yet, elsewhere, Arnold's style effectively brings out Krishna's perturbed and guilt-ridden thoughts when Radha deserted him after seeing him dallying with the cowherdesses[57]:

> And if she heard, what would she do? What say?
> How could I make it good that I forgot?
> What profit was it to me, night and day.
> To live, love, dance, and dream, having her not ?

It is obviously not expected that Arnold would refer to '*rati viparīte*'. However, he introduces allusion to Indra in his translation of the Eleventh Song (Fifth Canto)[58]:

Swift and still as lightning's splendour
Let thy beauty come,
Sudden, gracious, dazzling, tender,
To his arms—its home :
Swift as Indra's yellow lightning,
Shining through the night,
Glide to Krishna's lonely bosom.
Take him love and light.

Radha becomes the one who takes 'love and light' to Krishna. Interestingly, in the Fourteenth Song (Seventh Canto), the 'voluptuous beauty' does not lie on Krishna's chest, but on his neck after her victory in 'love's war.' There are no 'drops of sweat' in Arnold as there had not been any in Jones[59]:

Till at length, a fatal victress,
Of her triumph vain.
On his neck she lies and smiles there :
Ah, my Joy !—my Pain

Arnold does not translate the Twelfth Canto at all, his translation ends with Radha entering the love-bower of Krishna. Evidently, for Arnold, the last canto is too frank in its eroticism to be sublimated as a discourse on spiritual communion.

Several years before Arnold's translation, a Bengali translation of the text had been printed in 1861 from Shahash Jantra in Kolkata. This text is unusual for two reasons – first,the name of the translator is not mentioned; secondly, it is the first Bengali translation of the text in prose. The anonymity of the author is perhaps because of the nature of the text. The author feared persecution and hides behind the sobriquet of 'a lover of poetry'. S⁄he also claims that the revered pandit, Yadunath Tarkapanchanan had revised his translation. The author provides a passionate argument why s⁄he has translated the piece[60]:

> Many would say ''Bengali language has not yet matured to express the intensity of moods induced by rasa (rasabhāva), how can even a fragment of Jayadeva's exquisite sweetness (rasamādhurī) be expressed in it?'' O readers, we are aware of this; yet we made this effort considering the fact that many people who do not know Sanskrit are deprived from enjoying (rasāsvāde) Jayadeva's poetry ... hence we took upon this difficult task.

What is noticeable in this is the engagement with the idea of *rasa*. The author realises the danger of being accused of printing obscenity. The concern for people who do not know Sanskrit, who (in nineteenth century Bengal) would be a majority, also shows strands of democratisation and commodification of the text. The translation does preserve references to *rati viparīte,* but does so in a language which is overtly sanskritised. The same might be said about another translation, published by the Town Press, in 1887. The translator, Harimohan Vidyabhushan, points out that the essence of Jayadeva's poetry 'sublimates like camphor' when it is translated. He seeks a compromise; a prose which is 'almost-like-poetry.'[61] Both the translators adopted an ornate, sanskritised register, in order to avoid charges of obscenity. The back cover of the 1861 edition bears an advertisement of *Vidyāsundar* (‘to be published shortly’) which again establishes the connection between these two texts.

Translations in Bengali would continue, but would suffer important changes. In 1888, Shyamlal Basak, assistant to the Director-General of General Post Office, Kolkata, published a translation of the text from Jorasanko’s Art Union Press. Basak claims that he has published his book based on Giridhar’s Bengali translation of *Gītagovinda*, which had existed in manuscript form. Basak refers to the several translations of *Gītagovinda*, especially those of William Jones and Edwin Arnold. He frequently quotes from both these translations in the footnote to his edited translation. He even refers to Lassen’s dating of Jayadeva and Grierson’s essay on Vidyapati and his contemporaries.[60] He considers whether *Rasamanjarī*[63] and *Sṛiṅgārpaddhtati* had been composed by Jayadeva, but decides against it. He refers to the translation of Rasamaya Das, and mentions that although it is generally ‘sold’ as a translation, it is more of a translation of Chaitanyadasa’s commentary, *Bālabodhinī*. Basak also expresses doubts about the veracity of the printed edition[64]:

> There is a handwritten manuscript of Rasamaya Dasa’s translation at my house. The verse-translation that is sold in the bazaar bearing Rasamaya Dasa’s name has several misprints and erroneous elision of verses.

This apprehension about the printed text was something that Basak shared with many of his nineteenth century Bengali contemporaries. Basak goes on to mention that his family also possesses another manuscript. This is Giridhar’s Bengali translation which had been completed in 1736 CE (1658 Saka).[65] Giridhar seems to be a contemporary of Bharatchandra, and the composition of his text precedes Bharatchandra's *Annadāmangal* by about fifteen years. According to Basak, Rasamaya's homogenous use of *payār* is quite inappropriate for a complex text like *Gitagovinda*, which employs a variety of Sanskrit meters, and also involves music (*rāga*) and rhythm (*tāla*). Giridhar had focuses on varying the meter according to the *rāga* and *tāla*, hence composing a more euphonious translation.[66] Basak clarifies that does not intend to criticise Rasamaya, but merely to state that Giridhar was a greater poet. He expresses succinctly[67]:

> Rasamaya Das's composition (racanā) is without aesthetic essence (nirasa), but Giridhar's composition is indeed aesthetically pleasant (rasamayī).

However, Basak did not merely translate the text. He remarks that Giridhar's text is incomplete at several places. He has himself translated those parts from the main text of *Gītagovinda*. It is interesting to note that at those places where Giridhar's text is missing and Basak is filling up the gap, he often quotes Jones's and Arnold's translations. This shows how the English texts influenced the additions to a Bengali translation. It is also interesting to note that Giridhar's translation predates Jones's by several decades. If this is true, then the pandits who assisted Jones might have already read a Bengali translation (Giridhar's) and this might have influenced Jones's version. Hence, the English and Bengali translations are bound by a certain amorous circularity of influence and cross-influence – sculpting out a rich discourse of gaze and reverse-gaze.

Basak also insists on the lyrical nature of *Gītagovinda* and the fact that Jones misses out this performative aspect of the text largely because he did not meet musicians, but merely pandits who had informed him about textual niceties rather than musical modes. Basak is aware of the cross-cultural exchanges that had shaped the present versions of the text. He says[68]:

> Those European savants who had favourably accepted our Jayadeva, we should be thankful to them, and we would ever remain obliged to them. However, it is quite sad that, *Gītagovinda* which should have been preserved in every Bengali household, has remained largely unknown to many.

Basak's comment is a revealing quip on the effects of the Obscenity Act on the Battala Market and the fortunes of *Gītagovinda* as a commodity However, within a space of a few years, several other editions and translations of *Gītagovinda* had been published. Sharatchandra Bandyopadhyay and Nagendranath Ghosh published a Bengali translation from the Barat Press in 1894.[69] In 1905, Prahladchandra Das published a Bengali translation by Parbaticharan Muhopadhyay.[70] In the same year, Vishveshwar Bhattacharya published his translation from the Vishvakosh Press[71] (the press had been famous for publishing Nagedranath Basu's *Viśvakoṣ*. Besides these, Pandit Jibananda Vidyasagar of the Sanskrit College published an edition of the Sanskrit text, along with his own commentary in Sanskrit.[72] The metaphoric nature of the colonial/ erotic exchange would be restructured in these editions and translations.

The translators of the Barat Press edition (1894) also mention the unsatisfactory nature of Rasamaya's translation. They claim, like Basak before them, that the text is the best lyrical poem written by a Bengali and hence deserves a proper Bengali verse translation. They provide an interesting apology for the obscenity in the text[73]:

> Some groups may think that Jayadeva's language and mode is obscene. Perhaps, this is the reason for some of our contemporaries to think that a Bengali translation of the poem would be improper. In different social conditions, the language and emotions of poetry differ. For this, if an ancient poem is deemed as obscene for the present times, that does not mean that it loses its stature as an ideal specimen of poetry. We think that just for the sake of transient social tastes, eternal poetry should not be derogated.

Thus the late nineteenth century translators provided a justification for the supposed obscenity in the text, by claiming that it should not be judged by contemporary social standards. Such a rationalisation is engendered by an acute historiographic imagination which situates one's own place in a tradition and relativises values as transient social constructs. Neither Basak nor the translators of the Barat Press edition claim that the erotic references are allegorical. Unlike Arnold, they were not sublimating the references – rather they stressed on the mundane nature of social values as materially determined constructs, which are buffeted by social transformation. Many of them were also responding to Bankimchandra's views about *Gītagovinda*. While Bankimchandra endeavored to reveal the text's eroticism as a product of Jayadeva's mundane imagination, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century translators emphasised the aesthetic dimension of the text, seeking no other justification for its structure and contents. They did not leave out passages from the poem (as Arnold and Jones did) nor did they add metaphorical and spiritual explanations to them (as was common in the earlier *vaishnava* commentaries). Rather, they focused on the modes and rhythms of the songs – often trying to replicate the variety of the Sanskrit meters by using a variety of Bengali meters.

Bandyopadhyay and Ghosh's (1894) translation of the Eleventh Canto uses the phrase 'rati viparīte', which had been absent in Jones, Rasamaya Das or Arnold. The translators however put it in brackets, suggesting an uncertainty about the propriety of the content[74]:

taḍiter sama śovibe go tumi
se śyām-sundar hridayer mājhe|
(pūrav janam sukriti phale)
(rati viparīte mātibe yave)
khuliyā mekhalā he kamal-mukhī…

[Like lightning you would shine
On the heart of the Dark-one.
(Past virtues would ensure)
(When you would revel in **reverse communion**)
Untying your belt O lotus-faced…]

Basak's translation uses a longer, more elaborate construction, retaining the comparison[75]:

tor urahār Kṛiṣṇa ure śobhita meghe bakapNāti hena māni|
viparīta ramaṇe Kṛiṣṇa ure sājata meghe jena sāje saudaminī||

[Your garland shines on Krishna, like white cranes amidst dark clouds
In **reverse communion** you bedeck Krishna, like lightning amidst clouds]

Both the translations retain the reference to the 'voluptuous beauty' (whom we had encountered earlier) and her 'drops of sweat.' For example, in the Barat Press Edition[76]:

keli-rana-śrānta hṛidaye patita,
śrama-jala-dhāre tanu suśobhita

[Exhausted by love's war fallen on his chest
Drops of sweat adorn her body]

Both the translations would retain the infamous Twelfth Canto. The subversive dynamics of sexual union, considered to be 'unfit for translation' by earlier translators, would find expression in these later translations. Bandyopadhyay and Ghosh translates[77]:

sāhase ārambhe Raai prāṇeśa-upare
vihār-samare ghor ābeger bhāre|

purusher kāj nārī pāre ki kakhana?
nispanda haila tNār nibiḍ jaghana…

[Enthused, Radha mounted her Beloved,
Propelled by passions, intense love's war ensued.
Can women perform what is meant for men?
Her broad hips would move no longer…]

Interestingly, Basak often adds to Giridhar's translation. Giridhar leaves aside the *mangalaśloka* verses at the end of each Canto. This would be quite unnatural, as Bengali poets generally followed the longer recension which retained these verses. Jones also leaves out the *mangalaśloka* verses, which shows the link between Jones's translation and Giridhar's version. Basak adds a footnote to Giridhar's translation, pointing out where Giridhar had left out a particular *mangalaśloka* verse. Then he gives the translation of the verse, in prose, in the footnote.[78]

Our study of *Gītagovinda* reveals how eroticism and its sublimation are intimately associated with discourses of colonial / imperial control and power.[79] As Bankimchandra's essay would testify, many of these tropes were also internalised, blurring the barriers of the coloniser / colonised discourses. Such differences reflect the diversity in the networks of 'native informants' which were recruited by the British to secure military, political and social information about their subjects. Christopher A. Bayly shows in his study[80], how the colonial authorities interpreted (and misinterpreted) the information they extracted from these networks. One of the major axes of interpretation was the question of eroticism. Ronald Inden points out that India had been characterised as a passionate, erotic, and irrational world – which could suitably serve as the Other of the Enlightened, rational Europe.[81] As the print culture in Kolkata expanded, the idea of erotic literature as veritable commodity to be procured and enjoyed subverted the very notion of these texts as mystic devices of power, or as allegorical tropes justifying the ideology of control.[82] However, accepting this is not adopting a Saidian paradigm[83] to the South Asian exchanges of knowledge and power. Rather, as David Gordon White points out, the literal/literary nature of the erotic references in South Asian texts is an older debate, which spans the history of Tantras in South Asia.[84] C.A. Bayly, among others, upholds that rapid commercialisation and modernisation in India had been a continuous process and the post-Mughal 'age of decline' is largely a myth.[85] Hence, the idea of commodity is not necessarily a term which is loaded with exclusively colonial signifiers.

Hugh B. Urban, in his study of the *kartabhaja*-s, points out that many of their practices were a 'rich admixture of capitalist and pre-capitalist forms.' Further, by their 'simultaneous subversive appropriation of mercantile discourse' (Urban names it as 'the Economics of Ecstasy') and in their imposition of new hierarchies, the *kartabhaja*-s reflect the ways in which the colonial discourse eludes simplistic Saidian binarism.[86] Similar conclusions can be drawn about the translators of *Gītagovinda* and their dynamic involvement in the colonial / erotic discourse. South Asian traditions not only interacted with the colonial powers but also with the broader tropes of Sanskritic, Islamic and indigenous aesthetic, linguistic and philosophical traditions. As our explorations of *Gītagovinda* testify, it was a richly embedded nexus of textual and linguistic figurations and refigurations.[87]

Notes

1. Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, *Bividha prabandha* (Kolkata: New Sanskrit Press, 1886), 85.

2. Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, *Kṛiṣṇa-caritra* (1886; repr., Kolkata: Bangiya Sahitya Parishat, 1946), 99.

3. Chattopadhyay, *Bividha prabandha*, 86.

4. Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Nation and Imagination," in *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000), 149-179.

5. If not stated otherwise, I myself have translated the Sanskrit and Bengali excerpts.

6. William Jones, "A Discourse on the Institution of a Society," in *Asiatic Researches* 1 (London: J. Swan and Co., 1801): x.

7. For readings from these texts, see Edwin F.Bryant, ed., *Krishna: A Sourcebook* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2007).

8. For discussions about these texts, see in Barbara Stoler Miller, *The Gitagovinda of Jayadeva: Love Song of the Dark Lord* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2007), 28-37.

9. For discussions about Jayadeva's use of meters, see Harekrishna Mukhopadhyay, *Kavijayadeva o Gītagovinda*, 5th ed. (Kolkata: Dey's, 2000), 149-55.

10. Garland Cannon, *The Life and Mind of Oriental Jones* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 304.

11. Cited in Anilchandra Banerjee, *English Law in India* (Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1984), 31.

12. Abhijit Mukherji,"European Jones and Asiatic Pandits," *Journal of the Asiatic Society* 27, no.1(1985): 43-58; Rosane Rocher, "The Career of Radhakanta Tarkavagisa, an Eighteenth Century Pandit in British Employ," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 109, no.4 (1989): 627-33.

13. Brian A. Hatcher , "What's Become of the Pandit? Rethinking the History of Sanskrit Scholars in Colonial Bengal," *Modern Asian Studies* 39, no.3 (2005): 691.

14. Garland Cannon, *The Letters of William Jones*, vol.2 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 756.

15. Kate Teltscher, *India Inscribed: European and British Writing on India 1600-1800* (1995; Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), 224.

16. Cannon, *The Life and Mind of Oriental Jones*, 246.

17. William Jones, “On the Mystical Poetry of the Persians and Hindus,” *Asiatic Researches* 3(1792): 364.

18. See Bernard Cohn, “The Command of Language and the Language of Command,” in *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 16-56.

19. Jones, “On the Mystical Poetry of the Persians and Hindus,” 375.

20. William Jones, “Gitagovinda; or, The Songs of Jayadeva,” *Asiatic Researches* 3(1792): 376.

21. Jones, “Gitagovinda; or, The Songs of Jayadeva,” 378.

22. *Gitagovinda* V.13, see Stoler Miller, *The Gitagovinda of Jayadeva*, 93.

23. Kapila Vatsyayan, “The *Gitagovinda*: A Twelfth Century Sanskrit Poem Travels West,” in *Study Transcultural Literary History,* ed. Gunilla Lindberg-Wada (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 228.

24. Note to Schiller dated 22 January 1802, quoted from *Correspondence between Goethe and Schiller,* translated by L.D. Schmitz, vol.2 (London, 1909), 395.

25. Christianus Lassen, *Gita Govinda Jayadevae Poetae Indici Drama Lyricum* (Bonnae ad Rhenum: Koenig et Van Borcharen, 1836); Hippolyte Fauche, *Le Gitagovinda et le Ritou Sanhara* (Paris: Chez tous les libraires assortis en ouvrages de litterature orientale, 1850).

26. Rasamaya Dasa, trans., *Gitagovinda* (Srirampur: Jyanakar Press, 1817).

27. Several of these versions were published from various printing presses. Two such editions are *Śrī Jayadeva gosvāmī kṛita śrī Gītagovinda mul grantha: payārādi chande viracita* (Kolkata: Kumartuli Shastraprakash Press, 1850) and *Jayadeva kaviraj gosvāmī kṛita śrī Gītagovinda mul grantha: taha Rasamaya Das katṛik payārādi chande virachita* (Kolkata: Kamalaya Press, 1851).

28. See Sumanta Banerjee, *The Parlour and the Streets: Elite and Popular Culture in Nineteenth Century Calcutta* (Kolkata: Seagull, 1989).

29. For an elaborate analysis of the sacred and profane dimensions of Love described in the *Gītagovinda,* see Lee Siegel, *Sacred and Profane Dimensions of Love in the Indian Traditions as Exemplified in the Gitagovinda of Jayadeva* (Delhi, London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).

30. Stoler Miller, *The Gitagovinda of Jayadeva*, 192.

31.Shashibhushan Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious Cults*, 3rd ed. (Kolkata: Firma KLM, 1995), 115.

32. Edward C. Dimock, *The Place of the Hidden Moon* (Chicago and New York: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 15.

33. Rocher, "The Case of Radhakanta Tarkavagisa," 628.

34. See Sumanta Mukherjee, "Radha and Krishna in a Colonial Metropolis", in *Logic in a Popular Form: Essays on Popular Religion in Bengal* (Kolkata: Seagull Books, 2002), 84-118.

35. Sumanta Mukherjee, "Kolkātār saṅskṛitir ādiparva", in *Uniś śataker Kolkata o Sarasvatīr itar santān* (Kolkata: Anushtup, 2008), 40.

36. James Long, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Bengali Works* (Kolkata: Sanders, Cones and Co., 1855), 100.

37. Dvija Vishwanath, *Kṛiṣṇa Keli* (Kolkata: n.p., 1850), 162. Kubja, according to the conventional accounts of *Harivaṃśa* and *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, had been a hedious, hunchback chambermaid in Mathura's palace. Krishna was pleased by her devotion for

him and had transformed her into a woman of exceptional grace. The nineteenth century Kolkata narratives project her as Krishna's mistress in Mathura – and models her as one of the contenders for Krishna's love, similar to Radha's 'voluptuous' adversary in *Gītagovinda*.

38. The author of this *pNācālī* is unknown. The National Library, Kolkata has a copy of this text which is bound with Rasamaya Das's translation of the *Gītagovinda* (1850 edition). The close association of these two texts is evident.

39. Satyabati Giri, *Bāṅglā sāhitye kṛiṣṇakathār kramavikās* (Kolkata: Dey's, 2007), 522-3.

40. Ibid., 524.

41. Dasarathi Ray, *Śrī Kṛiṣṇer mathurā līlā varṇan* (Kolkata: n.p., 1850), 73-4.

42. Ashutosh Bhattacharya, *Bāṅglā mangalkavyer itihās* (Kolkata: A. Mukherjee and Co., 1975), 817.

43. In 1829, Ramkrishna Mallick's Press at Chorabagan published *Vidyāsundar* and *Rasamanjarī*; Mathuranath Mitra's Press published *Vidyāsundar, Ādiras* and *Ratimanjarī*; Pitambar Sen's Press at Sealdah published *Vidyāsundar*. The figures are refered to in Swapan Basu, "Ādiraser bai: āiner śāsan," *Anuṣtup* 45, no.4 (2011), 144.

44. James Long, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Bengali Works* (Kolkata: Sanders, Cones and Co., 1855), 73-74.

45. Basu, "Ādiraser bai," 145.

46. James Long, *Returns Relating to the Publications in Bengali Language, in 1857* , Selections from the Records of the Bengal Government vol.xxxii (Kolkata: John Gray, 1859). I have retained Long's spellings of the names of authors, publishers/ printers and books.

47. James Long, *Returns Relating to Native Printing Presses and Publications in Bengal*, Selections from the Records of the Bengal Government vol. xxii (Kolkata: Calcutta Gazette Office, 1855), 90-91.

48. Ibid., 92-3.

49. Ibid., 94-5.

50. For an extensive discussion on the implications of the Obscene Books and Picture Act on printing in Kolkata, see Tapti Roy, "Disciplining the Printed Text: Colonial and Nationalist Surveillance of Bengali Literature," *Texts of Power: Emerging Disciplines in Colonial Bengal*, ed. Partha Chatterjee (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 30-62.

51. Basu, “Ādiraser bai,”152-153.

52. Edwin Arnold, *The Indian Song of Songs: From the Sanskrit of the Gitagovinda of Jayadeva* (London: Trubner and Co., 1875), v.

53. Ibid., v-vi.

54. Ibid., vi.

55. Ibid., viii.

56. Ibid., 18.

57. Ibid., 34.

58. Ibid., 52.

59. Ibid., 68.

60. *Gītagovinda* (Kolkata: Shahash Jantra, 1861), ii.

61. Harimohan Vidyabhushan, *Gītagovinda* (Kolkata:Town Press, 1887), ii.

62. Shyamlal Basak, ed., *Kavi Giridhar kṛita mahākavi Jayadev-er Gītagovinder prākṛita anuvād* (Kolkata: Art Union Press, 1888), iii.

63. There seems to be several texts which were named *Rasamañjarī*. Bhanudatta, according to Keith, had written both *Rasamañjarī* as well as *Rasataranginī* in the fourteenth century; see, Arthur B. Keith, *A History of Sanskrit Literature* (1928; repr., New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1993), 398. Both the texts were on sentiments (*rasa*). Stoler Miller and others refer to Sankaramishra's *Rasamañjarī*, a commentary on *Gītagovinda*, which has been published. See M.R. Telang and V.L. Panshikar, eds., *Gitagovinda, Edited with the Commentaries Rasikapriya and Rasamanjari* (Mumbai: Nirnayasagara Press, 1899). Bharatchandra has translated a Sanskrit text called *Rasamanjarī* into Bengali. Bharatchandra's text is a catalogue of different types of *nayika* (female protagonists), their disposition and their erotic preferences. This is obviously associated with *Gītagovinda*, as Radha embodies several of these prototypes. Here it is not clear which text Basak is referring to. However, the general association between these texts, and that of aesthetics, poetics and erotics in the context of *Gītagovinda* (and Bharatchandra's works) should be emphasised.

64. Basak, *Gītagovinder prākṛita anuvād*, xi.

65. Achinta Biswas, *Bāṅglā pNuthir kathā* (Kolkata: Ratnabali, 2003), 145. Biswas refers to the writer as Giridhar Das.

66. Basak, *Gītagovinder prākṛita anuvād*, xii.

67. Ibid., xii.

68. Ibid., ix.

69. Sharatchandra Bandyopadhyay and Nagendranath Ghosh, trans., *Śrī śrī Gītagovinda* (Kolkata: Barat Press, 1894).

70. Parbaticharan Mukhopadhyay, trans., *Śrī śrī Gītagovinda* (Kolkata: n.p., 1905).

71. Vishveshwar Bhattacharya, trans., *Śrī śrī Gītagovinda* (Kolkata: Vishvakosh Press, 1905).

72. Jibananda Vidyasagar, *The Gitagovinda: A Poem by Jayadeva Goswami* (Kolkata:Saraswati Press, 1882).

73. Bandyopadhyay and Ghosh, *Śrī śrī Gītagovinda*, i-ii.

74. Ibid., 26.

75. Basak, *Gītagovinder prākṛita anuvād*, 40.

76. Bandyopadhyay and Ghosh, *Śrī śrī Gītagovinda*, 33.

77. Ibid., 56.

78. Basak, *Gītagovinder prākṛita anuvād*, 56.

79. For an elaborate study of this theme, see Hugh B. Urban, *Tantra: Sex, Secrecy, Politics, and Power in the Study of Religion* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: Unversity of California Press, 2003).

80. Christopher A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

81. Ronald Inden, *Imagining India* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 49.

82. For a study of the subversive elements of Kolkata Popular Print culture, see Anindita Ghosh, *Power in Print: Popular Publishing and the Politics of Language and Culture in a Colonial Society, 1778- 1905* (Oxford University Press, 2006).

83. See Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge, 1978).

84. David Gordon White, "Introduction," in David Gordon White, ed., *Tantra in Practice* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000), 17.

85. See Christopher A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Peter J. Marshall (ed.), *The Eighteenth Century in Indian History, Evolution or Revolution* (New Delhi: Oxford Univesity Press, 2003).

86. Hugh B.Urban, *The Economics of Ecstasy: Tantra, Secrecy, and Power in Colonial Bengal* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 208.

87. For an understanding of the rich ideological transactions which defined the boundaries of early colonial culture, see Robert Travers, *Ideology and Empire in Eighteenth Century India: The British in Bengal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Thomas R.Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

Jones's *Sacontala*: Translations of Love in Colonial Bengal

William Jones announced his discovery of *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* in a series of letters to his student Althorp, the second Earl of Spencer, in 1787.[1] He had reached Krishnanagar on 4th August, to spend the autumnal break in a pastoral retreat near Jalangi. Here, aided by his pandit, Ramlochan, Jones became engrossed in studying Sanskrit. He had carried with him some Sanskrit texts – *Manu Smṛiti*, *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* and several other *nātaka*-s.[2] He adopts a schedule of writing a page to Spencer each day. During the course of this correspondence, he not only describes the plot of Kalidasa's *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* but also describes the serene surroundings which had evidently inspired his interpretation of Kalidasa's play. Jones saw a reflection of the 'fugue-like interplay'[3] of the prose and verse in the play, the thematic conflict between duties (*dharma*) prompted by culture and love (*kāma*) prompted by the innocent sensuousness of nature, in his prosaic duties as a judge in urban Kolkata and his scholarly pursuit of Oriental lore in his new Arcadia. While describing his cottage in Krishnanagar, he tells Spencer[4]:

> How preferable is this pastoral mansion, (though built entirely of *vegetable* substances; without glass, mortar, metal, or any mineral but iron nails from its roof to its foundation) to the marble palaces, which you have seen in *Italy!* It is a thatched cottage with an upper story, and a covered *verone*, or *veranda*, as they call it here, all round it, well-boarded and ten or twelve feet broad; it stands on a dry plain, where *many a garden flower grows wild*.

Jones's assertion that he had been unravelling obscure Sanskrit treasures is replete with the sense of a successful romantic exploration of forgotten past. He was aware of the importance of his role as a discoverer, hinting at the fact that the non-Brahmanic population of India were largely ignorant of this vast treasure-hoard. He suggests a hypothetical parallel to Spencer, so that he would better appreciate the importance of his discoveries[5]:

> Suppose Greek literature to be known in modern Greece only, and there to be in the hands of priests and philosophers; and suppose them to be still worshippers of Jupiter and Apollo: suppose Greece to have been conquered successively by Goths, Huns, Vandals, Tartars, and lastly by the English; then suppose a court of judicature to be established by the British parliament, at Athens, and an inquisitive Englishman to be one of the judges; suppose him to learn Greek there, which none of his countrymen knew, and to read Homer, Pindar, Plato, which no other European had even heard of. Such am I in this country

It is important to note that Jones thought of himself as not only discovering Kalidasa's masterpiece but an entire genre of Sanskrit literature which had been previously unknown to the Europeans. In the Preface to his English translation of *Abhijñānaśakuntalam*, he states that he had initially heard of Sanskrit works called *nátac* from the Brahmins, who had asserted that these contained 'a large portion of ancient history without any mixture of fable'. Jones desired to know the state of the Indian Empire before the conquest by 'the Savages of the North' (note Jones's comparison between the Islamic invasion of India and the barbarian invasions of Europe). He searched for these texts on his arrival in Bengal for possible hints about Hindu jurisprudence. However, on closer introspection and more intimate conversation with the Brahmins, Jones discovered that 'Natacs were not histories, and abounded in fables.' They had been extremely popular, and 'consisted of conversations in prose and verse, held before ancient Rájás in their publick assemblies, on an infinite variety of subjects, and in various dialects of India.'[6] This anecdote itself makes us aware of the dyadic strains of duty

and love that inextricably intertwined in the Orientalist enterprise in late eighteenth century Bengal. Jones's search for history was driven by his desire to find out authentic laws to facilitate the colonial administration in Bengal. However, he eventually uncovers an indigenous literary genre, which serves as a thematic prelude for a different kind of colonial exchange. This protean, amorphous group of texts – partly in verse, partly in prose, partly in Sanskrit and partly in other dialects (literary Prakrits) – had appeared to him as 'discourses on moral and literary topicks', while other Europeans had interpreted them as 'discourses on dancing, musick, and poetry'. It was Radhakanta Tarkavagish who eventually enlightened him about the genre[7] :

> At length a very sensible Brahmen, named Radhacant, who had long been attentive to English manners, removed all my doubts, and gave me no less delight than surprise, by telling me that our nation had compositions of the same sort, which were publickly represented at Calcutta in the cold season, and bore the name, as he had been informed, of plays. Resolving at my leisure to read the best of them, I asked which of their Natacs was most universally esteemed; and he answered without hesitation, Sacontala…

Horace Hayman Wilson, in his Preface to the *Select Specimens of the Theatre of the Hindus* (1827), points out that the aforementioned incident led to Jones's discovery of the fact that Hindus possessed a 'national drama, the merits of which, it was inferred from those of the specimen published, might render it worthy of further investigation.'[8] It is important to interpret this as an inherently collaborative enterprise. Radhakanta had heard of English plays and recognised the formal resemblence of *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* to these productions. Jones, searching for history, finds literature — which turns out to be the ‘national drama’ of India. In the nineteenth century, this ‘discovery’ would be of considerable relevance as playwrights and prose writers would endeavour to adopt Kalidasa’s play in Bengali, hence shaping the contours of indigenous prose aesthetics.

Romila Thapar, in her diachronic study of the textual reception and interpretation of the play, claims that the ‘privileging of Sanskritic high culture and looking upon it as the sole depository of tradition was an outcome of the colonial discourse.’[9] This imaginative reconstruction of tradition often homogenised textual inflections and did not differentiate between the varied layers of an accretive text. The layers of didactic ‘high’ tradition and of popular ‘little’ traditions were often co-mingled in the same narrative; the homogenisation of Kalidasa’s text into a monolithic ‘national’ drama failed to recognise these ruptures. The various versions of the Sakuntala narrative (the Mahabharata story, the Braj version) recede into comparative obscurity while Kalidasa’s play becomes the ‘sole representative’ of the story. Thapar also reads the Jonesian interpretation of the text as connected with his ‘hunt for a Druidic past’.[10] The unity of poetry and mythology, which was central to the Romantic conception of ‘the childhood of mankind’, was discovered in Sanskrit literature as an innocent expression of sensuality.[11] German Romantics like Goethe, Herder, Fredric Schegel and Novalis were enamoured when they read George Forster’s German translation of the text (Mainz and Leipzig, 1791). Forster had not encountered the Sanskrit text but had translated from Jones’s translation. Goethe prefaced *Faust* with a *Prologue* in which the director converses with an actor, a dramatic convention (*prastāvanā*) he had encountered in Forster’s translation. In 1792, Nikolai

Michailowitsch Karamsin translated the text into Russian and there was an anonymous Dutch translation in the same year, both translated from Foster's text. A Danish translation from Jones by Hans West appeared in 1793. A. Bruguiere subsequently translated Jones's version into French (Paris, 1803) and L. Doria used Bruguiere's translation for an Italian adaptation (Darmstadt, 1815).[12] What we encounter in early nineteenth century is thus a proliferation of Jones's initial interpretation of the play, shaping the Orientalist discourse about the pastoral twilight of Indian Arcadia. Goethe summed it up by his memorable apotheosis of Śakuntalā[13]:

Willst du den Himmel, die Erde mit Einem Namen begreifen,
Nenn ich, Sakontala, dich, und so ist Alles gesagt

Thapar's study emphasises the evolution of the Orientalist paradigm throughout nineteenth century, as she analyses the various influential translations of the text and shows how the image of Śakuntalā shifts from being the inviolate 'rustic maiden' of nature to the woman whose innocence was maligned by the cultural tropes of imperial / gender hegemony –'for nature had receded and mores of culture were triumphant.'[14] She also exposes the pervasive influence of these Orientalist interpretations on subsequent translations of the play in regional languages. Dorothy Matilda Figueira on the other hand, investigates the broader reception of the text in Europe, which eventually structured the 'misreading' of the Orient.[15] Both these studies, however, seem to suggest a unilateral Saidian history of 'misreading'. The emic interpretations and responses to the text in the nineteenth century were varied and though evidently influenced by Orientalist translations, cannot possibly be reduced to a simplistic figuration of a derivative discourse. In this present study, I would focus on some of the translations, adaptations and editions of the play which were printed in nineteenth century Bengal and would endeavour to decipher how the efforts of the Orientalists of the Asiatic Society of Bengal overlapped with the print histories of Kalidasa's narrative in Bengal. I would especially focus on Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar's 1854 prose adaptation of the play, an important text in the evolution of Bengali prose aesthetics. I would also try to delineate how drama, understood as a distinct literary form, influenced changes in prose aesthetics. As a textual study of the entire play would be quite elaborate, I would primarily focus on Act 3 of the play, trying to find out how certain passages in that act manifested in various editions, translations and adaptations.

As Radhakanta's assertion attests, the fame of *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* as a literary masterpiece had been established long before Jones encountered the text and chose to translate it. The dates of Kalidasa have been uncertain and his legendary association with the court of a king bearing the title of Vikramaditya, has added to the confusion. Some critics have associated him with the Guptas, his patron being variously identified as Chandragupta II (reg. 375-413 CE), Kumaragupta (reg. 413–455 CE), or Skandagupta (reg. 455–467 CE). Others have associated him with the court of King Vikramaditya of the Paramara dynasty of Ujjain in the first century BCE or with Gautamiputra Satakarni (first century CE) of the Satavahanas. Further, he has also been associated with Agnimitra Sunga (reg.149-141 BCE) and Devabhuti (assassinated in 72 BCE) of the Sunga Dynasty.[16] Frederic Edgerton highlights the subjectivity underlying the critical preferences for one of the above dates.[17] The text is a *driśyakāvya* or *nātya* (dramatic presentation), and is considered as belonging to the genre of *nātaka* (heroic romance).[18]

The plot of a *nātaka* is expected to be derived from a 'well-known' tradition, generally an epic,[19] and Kalidasa's play derives its basic narrative from the Adi Parva of the *Mahābhārata* (1.82-89).

King Duḥṣanta of the Kuru dynasty, during an hunting expedition, lands up in the hermitage (*āśrama*) of sage Kanva. While the sage is away, the king is welcomed by Śakuntalā, the sage's adopted daughter (who had been born out of a union between the sage Viśvāmitra and Menakā, an *apsarā*) and her two friends (Priyamvadā and Anusūyā). Enamoured by the immaculate beauty of Śakuntalā, the king, aided by his buffoon (*vidūṣaka*), seeks an excuse to enter the hermitage once again, when the ascetics request him to protect their rites from malevolent demons. In Act 3, Śakuntalā and Duḥṣanta meet and aided by her friends, attain a blissful (though apparently unfulfilled) union. They later contract a *gāndharva* marriage and the king leaves for his capital and vouches to send a royal entourage to take her to his palace. While leaving, his signet-ring accidentally slips off his fingers. Later in the play, we encounter Śakuntalā, distracted with love, ignoring the quick-tempered seer, Durvāśā, who curses her in rage that whoever she was thinking of would not remember her. He later tempers his curse and asserts that the spell might be broken by a token of recognition. When Kanva returns, he finds his daughter pregnant and despatches Śakuntalā to the royal court. At the court, the king disavows her and while she ventures to show the King's signet-ring, discovers that it is lost. Humiliated, Śakuntalā is carried away into the heavenly realm of *apsarā*-s. Later, the ring is found in the guts of a fish and was brought to the king. His memory revived, the king becomes repentant for disavowing his beloved. Duḥṣanta is summoned by Indra, king of the Gods, to fight the demons. After an ardous fight which lasts several years, Duḥṣanta returns to the mortal realms in an airborne chariot and alights at a celestial hermitage. There, he meets his estranged wife and son and a happy reunion ensues. William Jones, in his summary of the plot in his letters to Lord Spencer, focuses on an allegorical interpretation of the plot. Viśvāmitra is translated as 'Universal Friend' and Jones compares the play to 'many of Shakespeare's fairy-pieces.'[20] Later, in his Preface to the play Jones emphasises its allegorical nature[21]:

> [T]he deities introduced in the Fatal Ring are clearly allegorical personages. Marichi, the first production of Brahma, or the Creative Power, signifies light, that subtil fluid which was created before its reservoir, the sun. as water was created before the sea Casyapa, the offspring of Marichi, seems to be a personification ofinfinite space, comprehending innumerable worlds ; and his children by Aditi, or his active power (unless Aditi mean the primeval day, and Diti, his other wife, the night), are Indra, or the visible firmament, and the twelve Adityas, or suns, presiding over as many months.

In his letters, Jones's summary of the plot is erroneous. According to him, Duḥṣanta marries Śakuntalā and brings her to his palace. It is he who receives the curse from Durvāśā and his ring is lost while he went for his daily bath 'in a sacred pool called Sasitirt'ha or the Moon's Pilgrimage'. Śakuntalā fails to recognise him (the curse of Durvāśā having its effect) and he fails to show the ring to her. He thinks of her as a 'Sorceress, and a harlot' and imprisons her in 'the interior part of the palace,' wherefrom she subsequently disappears (aided by Indra's violent storm, at her mother's request).[22] This dramatic inversion of genders in his first recorded retelling of the narrative reveals the complex method of mediated reading adopted by the early Orientalists who would read the texts aided by indigenous scholars while they were still learning the language.

As Garland Canon notes, Jones adopts a cliffhanger device in his letters, suspending the summary ‘at a peak of interest in order to hold at a high plateau what he hoped would be Lord Spencer's absorption with the story.’[23] This Shehrzadesque understanding of the plot and Deist inclination to interpret Indian mythology as metaphorical truth, contributed to the Jonesian translation of the play. In the subsequent years, other Asiatic Society members would engage more intimately with Sanskrit aesthetic traditions and would develop varied interpretations about Indic dramatic and literary practices. The establishment of the Sanskrit College in Kolkata, in 1826, resulted in an increased need to print student editions of Sanskrit texts. H.H. Wilson, the Secretary of the Asiatic Society (1811-1815, 1816-1832), published an edition of Kalidasa’s *Meghadūtam* in 1813. He would also publish translations of several Sanskrit plays in his two-volume *Select Specimens of the Theatre of the Hindus* (1827). This work also includes his essay, “Treatise on the Dramatic System of the Hindus,” in which he discusses about concepts of Sanskrit dramatic aesthetics. Before discussing the efforts of early Orientalists like Jones and Wilson, we need to situate the Orientalist understanding of *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* in the textual tradition of the play.

Back in his Krishnanagar residence, assisted by his ‘teacher Ramlochan’, Jones started translating the play verbally into Latin. Why did Jones translate the piece in Latin? He informs us that he did so because it 'bears so great a resemblance to Sanscrit, that it is more convenient than any modern language for a scrupulous interlineary version…'[24] Jones then translated the Latin version, 'word for word', into English and later on, tried to remove the stiffness of the foreign idiom without 'adding or suppressing any material sentence'. This is how he arrives at his *faithful* translation of the drama, which he now presents as 'a most pleasing and authentick picture of old Hindû manners'. It is worthwhile to note that Jones' justification for translating into Latin was its similarity with Sanskrit, but he seems to ignore the Prakrit prose that was scattered throughout the text. *Abhijñānaśakuntalam*, like other *nātaka*-s of its time, was a multi-lingual text. The Sanskrit passages are interspersed with Prakrit verse and prose. Later in the Preface, Jones would delineate the schema of the languages in Indian drama[25]:

> They are all in verse, where the dialogue is elevated ; and in prose, where it is familiar : the men of rank and learning are represented speaking pure Sanskrit, and the women Prácrit, which is little more than the language of the Brámens melted down by a delicate articulation to the softness of Italian ; while the low persons of the drama speak the vulgar dialects of the several provinces which they are supposed to inhabit.

Jones reaffirms two pervasive and inter-related ideas in pre-colonial literary discourse. Verse is considered to be elevated and would hence be written in 'pure' Sanskrit; prose belongs to the familiar world and hence was composed in 'vulgar dialects' of Prakrit. The other dichotomy is between the class and gender of the speakers – the men of rank and learning (representing authority) would speak in Sanskrit verse; women and the 'low persons' would speak in Prakrit, and often in prose. Jones would also point out that the play can be abridged by excising certain unnecessary portions as ‘the whole of Duḥṣanta's conversation with his buffoon, and great part of his courtship in the hermitage, might be omitted without any injury to the drama.’ We need to be hardly reminded that these are the very portions of the play which consist of the majority of the Prakrit dialogues. Interestingly, Jones’s suggestion that ‘great part’ of the courtship might be excised refers to the passages in Act 3 of the play which we have chosen for closer introspection. Jones’s remark would have considerable influence on the development of subsequent textual criticism.

Kalidasa’s text has been preserved in various recensions with considerable differences not only in the names of dramatis personae and stage directions but also in the rendition of various passages. The text retains atleast five distinct recensions/ versions: (1) the Bengali or the Gaudiya recension; (2) the Devanagari recension; (3) the Kashmiri version/ recension; (4) the Maithili version / recension; (5) the South Indian recension.[26] According to Stoler Miller, the Kashmiri version / recension is based on the Bengali recension with an interpolated Interlude before Act 7. The Maithili version / recension is derived from the mixture of ‘common Bengali text and Kashmiri version’ while the South Indian text is a version of the Devanagari recension. Somadeva Vasudeva, in his Introduction to an edition of the Kashmiri recension of the text, points out to the blurred boundary between recension and version in this context.[27] Dileep Kumar Kanjilal, in his important endeavour of textual reconstruction, refers to an older strata of Newari manuscripts in Old Bengali (which is distinct from the Bengali recension) and subdivides the Devanagari manuscripts into mixed and retrenched readings.[28] William Jones had translated the Bengali recension of the play, which had been popular in Bengal in late eighteenth century. Later Sanskritists like Wilson and Monier Williams, would however consider the Bengali recension to be a corrupted form of the text. In the Preface to his 1853 edition of the play, Monier-Williams comments thus about the Bengali recension[29]:

> The bold and nervous phraseology of Kalidasa has been either emasculated or weakened, his delicate expressions of refined love clothed in a meretricious dress, and his ideas, grand in their simplicity, diluted by repetition or amplification. Many examples might be here adduced; but I will only refer the student to the third Act of the Bengali recension, where the love-scene between the King and Sakuntala has been expanded to five times the length it occupies in the MSS. Of the Devanagari recension, and the additions are just what an indelicate imagination might be expected to supply.

This opinion about the Bengali recension is of extreme importance, as it points out to the very passages in Act 3 which we have selected for closer analysis. These passages of '*sringaric* elaboration' (Kanjilal's phrase) are the vortex of much critical debate and controversy. It is important to note that Jones's translation is not a faithful representation of the Bengali recension either; he (with the aid of Ramlochan) would reinterpret several passages of the standard text of the Bengali recension. Further, opinions about the relative inferiority of the Bengali recension was not (and is not) universal. Richard Pischel, who had edited the authoritative version of the Bengali recension in 1877, considered the Bengali recension to be superior because of the 'purity' of the Prakrit passages. He comments that 'in the Dravidian and Devanagari recensions the Prakrit is not Sauraseni, but a wild mixture of various dialects.'[30] He also notes that two verses in Act 3 of the Bengali Recension (Pischel 3.31, 36) are alluded to in Vishvanatha's

Sāhityadarpaṇa, a popular fourteenth century treatise on Sanskrit poetics. Moreover, as various editions and translations of the text would proliferate in nineteenth century Bengal – the presentation of courtship and Prakrit dialogues in Act 3 would also experience critical changes, shaping indigenous prose aesthetics.

Jones's translation evades references that Europeans might have found unfamiliar. In order to analyse his interpretation, we would closely follow his translation of the relevant section (containing the passages of '*sringaric* elaboration'; Pischel 3.16 - 3.37.2). We encounter Śakuntalā, love-sick, sitting amidst the shady bowers beside the river Mālinī. Her two friends, Anusūyā and Priyamvadā, converse with her, trying to allay her agony. Duḥṣanta, ravished by Śakuntalā's beauty and eager to meet her again, eavesdrops on the conversation. Duḥṣanta reacts favourably when he comes to know that Śakuntalā also loves her and comments on the irony of the situation. The following aspects of Jones's interpretation of the text should be noted: (a) his reinterpretation of individual words; (b) passages which he translates by introducing new expressions or constructions; (c) passages which he chooses not to translate; (d) meta-structural changes/ transformations.

In the demarcated section of Act 3, there are several words which Jones reinterprets, often referring to closely associated but different concepts. He translates *gīdiā* ['song'] as 'couplet' (Pischel 3.18.1, Jones 31)[31]; *aṅga* ['parts of a body'] as 'faculties' (Pischel 3.19, Jones 31); *madirākṣaṇe* ('wine-eyed') as 'whose eyes enchant me with their black spendour' (Pischel 3.22, Jones 33); *bhrulatām* ['eyebrows'] as 'forehead'(Pischel 3.13, Jones 31); *mukham*['face'] as 'delicious lips'(Pischel 3.37, Jones 38). He avoids translating certain words. For example, Duḥṣanta refers to Śakuntalā as *rambhoru* (Pischel 3.24) which might be translated as 'a women with well-shaped thighs, like a plantain tree.' Jones avoids this expression – most probably because the image would have been unfamiliar for his European readers.

Jones's reinterpretations of expressions are more pervasive. When Duḥṣanta raves about Śakuntalā's baseless fears of refusal from him, he states:

> upasthitastvaṃ praṇayotsuko jano
> na ratnamanviṣyāti, mrigyate hi tat||
>
> (Pischel 3.17)
>
> [That person, eager for love, is here –
> A gem does not seek, it is sought for]

Jones translates this as:

> He who shall possess thee will seek no brighter gem; and thou art the gem which I am eager to possess (Jones 31).

Śakuntalā cannot see clearly as pollen from her lotus ear-rings has entered her eyes. Duḥṣanta blows on them, eliciting gratefulness from Śakuntalā. She says:

> bhodu| paiditthamdasana mhi sanbutta
>
> (Pischel 3.36.4)
>
> [That will do! I can now see clearly!]

Jones's Śakuntalā *sees* in a different sense, her vision is introspection; she is assured that her virginity is not ravaged by the King to whom she had allowed considerable physical intimacy:

> Well, now I see a prince who keeps his word as it becomes his imperial character (Jones 38).

Jones's reinterpretations often span over a question and its response. Priyamvadā asks Duḥṣanta whether it is not the duty of a king to relieve the suffering of the residents of the hermitage (as they are his subjects). Her real intention is to suggest (as she does later) that the king must relieve Śakuntalā from her agony by accepting her love. Duḥṣanta replies that there is no higher duty, alluding to the protection that he had provided to the hermits from malevolent demons (Pischel 3.21.12-14). Jones's Priyamvadā is merely thankful for the protection offered to the hermits; the playful innuendo is avoided. It is Duḥṣanta who is intent to talk about love:

> Pri. By dispelling the alarms of our pious hermits, you have discharged the duty of a great monarch.
>
> Dushm. Oh! Talk a little on other subjects.

That Jones reinterpreted Priyamvadā is evident elsewhere. When Duḥṣanta wants to sit beside Śakuntalā, supposedly to allay her love-sickness, Priyamvadā mischievously quips:

> ṇa ettikeṇa uṇa tuṭṭī bhavissadi | (Pischel 3.24.1)
>
> [Would merely this satisfy her?]

Jones's Priyamvadā does not think of Śakuntalā's satisfaction. She gives a homely advice to Śakuntalā, so that the royal guest might be satiated:

> Allow him room; it will appease him, and make him happy.

There are certain instances of Jones leaving out an entire section, for example the third and fourth verses of Pischel 3.16. The reference to Śri (Lakshmi, Goddess of Fortune) was perhaps left out as it would sound unfamiliar (though later, Jones translates Kāma as Love, affirming to the personification of the God). Later, when Duḥṣanta tells Priyamvadā to be frank and not leave things unsaid, he states:

> vivakṣitamanuktamanutāpaṃ janayati (Pischel 3.21.9)

[What one desires to say, if left unsaid, engenders regret]

Jones leaves this entire maxim untranslated.

When Śakuntalā is left alone with Duḥṣanta, his advances unnerve her and she reluctantly tries to leave the bower. She walks for a short distance and when no longer visible to the king, hides herself behind an amaranth hedge. She cannot renounce the chance of listening to the love-tormented utterances of Duḥṣanta. She appropriates the role of a voyeur, which had been earlier adopted by the king:

Haddhi haddhi, imaṃ suṇia ṇa me calaṇa puromuhā pasaranti| bhodu | emehiṃ pajjantakuruvaehiṃ ovāridasarīrā peksvassaṃ dāva se bhāvāṇubandhaṃ|

(Pischel 3.29.1-3)

[Alas! Listening to this (i.e. Duḥṣanta's love-sick rant), my feet refuse to move. Let me hide behind this amaranth hedge and observe how his feelings are expressed]

In Jones's translation, Sakuntala walks off and hides behind the bush but her thoughts remain unexpressed. Jones would leave out Duḥṣanta's remarks about the contradictory nature of female desire, not only because it appears to be redundant but also as it directly refers to female desire for sexual communion. The text runs :

Raja – (swagatam)

apautsukye mahati dayitaprārthanāsu pratīpāḥ
kāṅksantyo 'pi vyatikarasukhaṃ kātarāh saṅgadāne |
ābādhyante na khalu madanenaiva labdhāntartvā-
tāvādhante manasijamapi kṣiptakalaḥ kumāryaḥ ‖

(Pischel 3.27)

[King – (aside)

Though eager to unite, virgins refuse the requests of their beloved --
Though possessing inner urge for union, they fear yielding their bodies.
It is not Love who torments virgins to achieve his ends,
It is they who torment Love, letting the time pass by.]

Jones's text does not mention the latent female desire for consummation:

> Dushm. [Aside] One would imagine that the charming sex, instead of being, like us, tormented with love, kept love himself within their hearts, to torment him with delay.

(Jones 35)

The most striking changes introduced by Jones are however, structural. Following the suggestion of his friends, Śakuntalā decides to write a love-missive to Duḥṣanta. Śakuntalā has composed a song but points out that there is no writing material to set it down. Priyamvadā suggests that she should incise the words with her nails on a lotus leaf (Pischel 3.18.1-4). Jones translates Priyamvadā's suggestion as follows:

> Let us hear the words; and then we will mark them with my nail on this lotos leaf, soft & green as the breast of a young paroquet: it may safely easily be cut into the form of a letter. – Repeat the verses.

Jones's Śakuntalā does not write, she merely recites her love-missive. This association of Śakuntalā with pre-literate innocence sculpts her out as a 'child of Nature.' It also emphasises her disjunction from the complexities of literacy and culture. This fusion of the exotic and the immaculate was often displayed in European responses to colonial subjects. Kalidasa's idea about Nature was remarkably distinct. As Daniel Ingalls points out[32]:

> The epic tale of Sakuntala is laid in a forest. But how little Kilidasa was thinking of a real forest is obvious from the first act of the play… It is in the asrama life, which I suppose to be conservative

> brahmin life on the outskirts of a village, that Kalidasa achieves his most wonderful harmonies of man and nature.

Jones ascribes to Anusūyā words that have been assigned to both companions (*sakhyau*) by Kalidasa (Pischel 3.20.1; Jones 31). Kalidasa's Anusūyā is quite reserved in contrast to the sprightly, mischievous Priyamvadā. Perhaps Jones assigned these words to Anasuya to provide substance to her role. Kalidasa, however, considers Anusūyā's passivity an effective counterpoint to Priyamvadā's garrulous superfluity. When the text would be later adopted in Bengali in the nineteenth century, this shift in Anusūyā's role would be discernible.

When Duḥṣanta reveals himself before the women, Śakuntalā feigns remorse for being frank in her revelation of love. She tells her companions to join her in pleading to the king for pardon. The friends smile and reply that the one who has been frank (i.e. Śakuntalā) should be the one to ask forgiveness (Pischel 3.23.4-7). Jones's Śakuntalā asks forgiveness from her companions. Priyamvadā (not both), reply suitably:

> Sac.[To the damsels] Forgive, I pray, my offence in having used unmeaning words: they were uttered only for your amusement in return for your tender care for me.
>
> Pri. They were the occasion, indeed of our serious advice. But it the king who must forgive: who else is offended?

(Jones 34)

The section that we have selected for analysis ends in a climactic conversation when Duḥṣanta tries to kiss Śakuntalā, while Gautamī, the matron of Kanva's hermitage, comes searching for Śakuntalā, interrupting the love-tryst:

> Rājā – sundari ।kimanyat।
>
> Idamapyupakritipakṣe surabhi mukhaṃ te mayā yadaghrataṃ।
> Nanu kamalasya madhukarah santuṣyati gandhamatrena ॥
>
> Śakuntalā —asantoshe una kiṃ karedi ।
>
> Rājā – idamidam । ॥iti vyavasito vaktraṃ dhaukate ॥
>
> (Pischel 3.36.6 – 3.37.2)
>
> [Raja – O beautiful lady, what else?
> I feel honoured just to inhale the fragrance of your face.
> Is not the bee satiated merely to smell the fragrance of a lotus?
>
> Sak. – If it were not, what would it do?
>
> Raja – This… this…(Sakuntala hurriedly hides her face)]

It is suggested that Duḥṣanta wanted to kiss Śakuntalā which she resisted by hiding her face. In Jones, this conversation seems to be a mutual agreement to kiss:

> Dushm. What reward can I desire except that which I consider as the greatest, the fragrance of your delicious lip?
>
> Sac. Will that content you?
>
> Dushm. The bee is contented with the mere odour of the water lily.
>
> Sac. If he were not, he would get no remedy [Kissing her eagerly.
>
> Dushm. Yes, this and this –
>
> (Jones 38)

In his Preface, Jones expresses his hope that his translation would inspire others to learn Sanskrit and translate other works of Kalidasa. As for himself, he considers literature to be 'foreign' to his 'professional studies'; he wanted to translate no other book but the *Manu Smṛiti* and the new Digest of Hindu and Arabic Laws. However, he observes with some surprise, the 'venerable compiler of the Hindu Digest' (Jagannath Tarkapanchanan), in his eighty sixth year, could recite the entire *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* from memory. He confesses that he translated the play largely to prove to the Europeans that 'the Brahmens, at least, do not think polite literature incompatible with jurisprudence.'[33] It is this inviolate core of Indic thought, apparently unaffected by the Cartesian rupture of Wit and Reason, which had appealed to Jones. His translation can be read as a practical embodiment of this synthesis, which harked back to India's past for a vindication of its central thesis. Jones hence sees Kalidasa's play in the context of the Vikramaditya legend, harping about its grandeur[34]:

> The play of *Sacontala* must have been very popular when it was first represented; for the Indian empire was then in full vigour, and the national vanity must have been highly flattered by the magnificent introduction of those kings and heroes in whom the Hindus gloried; the scenery must have been splendid and beautiful; and there is good reason to believe, that the court at Avanti was equal in brilliancy during the reign of Vicramaditya, to that of any monarch in any age or country.

This fascination with India's past led to elaborate probing into past literature, not only by Jones but also by Colebrooke, Ward, Wilford, Wilson and other Orientalists. However, Jones's initial note of amazement led to tempered cynicism in Colebrooke's interpretation of inscriptions. There is the infamous case of Wilford being deceived by his Pandits about several forged texts which he accepted to be genuine. Worse, he was charged for wilful deception.[35] This led to a change in Orientalist attitude(s) towards Indic texts. Further, Jones's adherence in what Thomas R. Trautmann calls his 'Mosaic Ethnology' made him believe that all human beings have had a common origin.[36] Hence, he stressed on the similarity of the Indic and European traditions, perceiving Kalidasa's solemn account as an allegorical yarn of universal significance. This had evidently influenced Jones's selection / erasure of particular images/ words/ constructions which he had encountered in the play. The choice of registers, though Jones was aware of the varieties of language in the play, could not perturb him – as the message that the play conveyed, according to him, was universal. Jones is evidently apprehensive of discussions about obscenity, prompted by the exposition of erotic passion in the play. He hence discusses about 'taste,' relativising it, but at the same time not distinguishing it along racial lines[37]:

> On the characters and conduct of the play I shall offer no criticism; because I am convinced that the tastes of men differ as much as their sentiments and passions, and that, in feeling the beauties of art, as in smelling flowers, tasting fruits, viewing prospects, and hearing melody, every individual must be guided by his own sensations and the incommunicable associations of his own ideas.

By the early decades of the nineteenth century, however, the Orientalists in Bengal, were stressing on disjunctions and distinctions rather than on similarities. Wilson emphasises the fact that Indian drama was quite distinct from its European counterpart. Wilson states that '[w]hatever be the merits or defects of the Hindu drama, it may be safely asserted that they do spring from the same parent, but are unmixedly its own.'[38] He concedes that the science of the Hindus may be indebted to other regions, even their mythology is perhaps derived from Pagans and Christians; but their dramatic aesthetics was not borrowed. Even the Islamic conquerors of India, according to Wilson, did not contribute to the development of drama. Though limited in its scope, the distinctive domain of Indian aesthetics (poetry and drama) shows signs of 'national development'. Jones's views about the basic unity of world cultures had been challenged by his successors in the Asiatic Society.

While translating dramatic works in the *Select Specimens of the Theatre of the Hindus*, Wilson considers himself as accomplishing a work long suggested by Jones in his Preface to the *Sacontala* – to unravel the literary hoard of India. In the "Advertisement to the Second Edition" of the book, Wilson declares that his object for translating these works was 'to secure to the Hindu Theatre a place in English Literature'.[39] In the Preface to the

Second Edition of his edition of *Megha Duta* (text and translation), he comments about the difficulty of printing such works in Kolkata[40]:

> The Text of the Megha Duta was printed in the year 1813, at Calcutta. It has the faults of most of the early-printed Sanskrit books; -- the words are altogether unseparated, and the Text is not always accurate.

As Wilson concedes, these were necessarily collaborative productions and his translations of the plays were shaped by the indigenous Sanskritists, especially those working in the Sanskrit College, Kolkata. The editions of the text helped students, both in Kolkata and Haileybury and the English translations were later edited to help students of the East India College. In the Preface to the second edition of his translations of plays, Wilson states[41]:

> Since the publication of my translation also, the original Sanskrit plays have been printed and published in Calcutta, under the authority of the Committee of Public Instruction; the edition was prepared from my manuscripts, collated with others belonging to the Sanskrit College and to different individuals, by Jaya Gopala Tarkalamkara, the professor of Sanskrit literature in the college; and although the work may present a few typographical errors and some questionable readings, it is upon the whole a highly creditable specimen of unassuming editorial erudition and care. It is with this printed edition that I have compared my translation, and some alterations have been rendered necessary by following the reading there adopted, when it differed from that of the manuscripts which I originally employed.

It is Wilson's collaboration with Jayagopal Tarkalankar and other teachers in the Sanskrit College (Premchand Tarkavagish, Gangadhar Tarkavagish, Joynarayan Tarkapanchanan among others) which resulted in his translations of Indic texts. Joygopal Tarkalankar (1775- 1846), from Bajrapur village of Nadia, had assisted Colebrooke in his Sanskritic studies for three years. Later he joined William Carey in Srirampur and helped to edit *Samachar Darpan*. He taught Premchand Tarkavagish (1805-1867), Madanmohan Tarkalankar (1817-1858) and Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar(1820-1891) who would all become teachers in the Sanskrit College and would influence the development of Bengali literature.[42] All of them were proficient in Sanskrit aesthetics; Premchand Tarkavagish (who had also taught Vidyasagar in the College) and Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar would play significant part in the reception and adaptation of *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* in Bengal, in the nineteenth century. It is these indigenous scholars and their collaboration with Orientalists in the Asiatic Society which would considerably influence ideas about aesthetics in nineteenth century Bengal.

Kalidasa's play, especially after the publication of Jones' translation, had not only a textual history but also a performative one. This needs to be emphasised as Indian dramatic tradition was considered to be dormant (if not extinct) by the Orientalists. The construct of an 'Islamic rule' in India favoured this splitting of India's past, hence suggesting that a reinterpretation of classical Sanskrit plays on stage was also a revival. Wilson states this widespread impression[43]:

> The Hindus have a strong relish for these diversions, but the domination under which they so long pined, and which was ever so singularly hostile to public enjoyments of a refined character, rendered theatrical representations infrequent, and induced a neglect of dramatic literature.

Wilson continues to confess that dramatic forms have indeed survived but these were decidedly inferior specimens in vernacular dialects and hence cannot be conceived as continuation of the Sanskrit dramatic tradition[44]:

> It may also be observed, that the dramatic pieces which have come down to us are those of the highest order, defended by their intrinsic purity from the corrosion of time. Those of an inferior description, and which existed sometimes apparently in the vernacular dialects, may have been more numerous and popular, and were more, strictly speaking, national. Traces of these are still observable in the dramatised stories of the Bhanrs or professional buffoons, in the Jatras of the Bengalis, and the Rasas of the western provinces. The first is the representation of some ludicrous adventure by two or three performers, carried on in extempore dialogue, usually of a very coarse kind, and enlivened by practical jokes not always very decent. The Jatra is generally the exhibition of some of the incidents in the youthful life of Krishna, maintained also in extempore dialogue, but interspersed with popular songs. The mistress of Krishna, Radha, his father, mother, and the Gopis, are the ordinary dramatis personae, and Narada acts as buffo. The Rasa partakes more of the ballet, but it is accompanied also with songs, whilst the adventures of Krishna or Rama are represented in appropriate costume, by measured gesticulations.

It is interesting how the schism between Sanskrit and vernacular defines the faultlines of aesthetic purity. Sanskrit drama is compared to the drama of Greece and other European parallels while ‘vernacular’ performances are more ‘national’ in character and also (quite strangely) decadent. Wilson also suggests the association of songs with *jatra* (*yātrā*) performances and alludes to its association with the Krishna-Radha topos. As nineteenth century would unfurl, these strands would be further ossified, engendering distinct linguistic/ aesthetic idioms in the modern languages of India. Kalidasa's play would embody these dyadic currents as it would survive both as a popular indigenous play (as *yātrā* / *opera*) as well as an apparently new-fangled revival in vernacular of the immaculate Sanskrit *natak*. In the introduction of his Bengali translation of another Sanskrit play, *Ratnavalī* (1858), Ramnarayan Tarkaratna reaffirms Wilson's dichotomy. He welcomes the newly established tradition of sophisticated plays, castigating the indigenous tradition of *yātrā*[45]:

> It is a matter of immense happiness that in recent times people have developed an appreciation for *nātaka*. Everyone has started denigrating the despicable tradition of *yātrā* as they have become aware of the poetic beauty (*rasamādhurī*) of plays (*nātaka*) written in the enriched (*saras*) languages of Sanskrit and English. Once a person tastes the immaculate nectar of the moon, he loses interest in fermented rice-soaked water(*kanjikā*).

Ramanarayan is considered to be one of the important figures who sculpted this new tradition, not only composing social satires like *Kulīṇ Kulasarvasya* (1854) and *Nabanātak* (1866) but also translating Sanskrit plays like *Veṇīsaṃhāra* (1856), *Malatīmādhava*(1867) and *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* (1860). Ramnarayan had taught in studied in the Sanskrit College(from 1843-1853) under Premchand Tarkavagish and Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar and had subsequently taught in the College from 1855 to 1882.[46] It is important to note that Ramanarayan considers English plays as one of the major spurs which brought about the revival of *nātaka*.

The English in Kolkata had established several playhouses in which plays were regularly performed. Though the tradition was mostly derivative, consisting mostly of re-enactments of English plays which had been popular in Britain, it was often visited by Indians who must have been influenced by these performances. The Orientalists were often intimately linked with the setting up of these theatres. Wilson played an active role in the establishment of the Chowringhee Theatre in 1813. In the *Proceedings* of the Second Annual Meeting of the proprietors of the theatre, he is thanked 'for the valuable support that he had given to the theatre from the very beginning.'[47] Moreover, Orientalist compositions were sometimes performed on stage. For example, as *The Calcutta Gazette* informs us on May 6, 1790 that at the Calcutta Theatre (also known as the New Play House), '[t]he piece of music after the play was well-received, as was also the song from Hafiz, translated by Sir William Jones, though it certainly derived no advantage from the tune to which it was sung.'[48] Thus Orientalists were involved in the ideation of the new aesthetics which redefined the discursive limits of Bengali theatrical prose.

Evidently, this redefinition was also influenced by classical Sanskrit aesthetics. From its very inception on 25th February, 1824, the Sanskrit College endeavoured to institutionalise classical Indian conceptions and epistemologies. Nathuram Shastri, who had earlier taught in the Government Sanskrit College at Benaras, became the Professor of Rhetoric in 1827. Nathuram was not only a famed rhetorician but also an adept in Navya-Nyaya. He composed a commentary on Kalidasa's *Raghuvaṃśa*. In 1828 and 1829, being instructed by the General Committee of Public Instruction, he edited two popular texts of Sanskrit rhetoric – Vishvanatha's *Sāhityadarpaṇa* and Mammata's

Kavyaprakāśa.[49] These two texts were important in popularising the *rasa* and *dhvanī* theories of Sanskrit aesthetics, which were considered to be of pre-eminence amongst the South Asian rhetoricians. *Sāhityadarpaṇa*, as has been pointed out earlier, was especially popular in Bengal and had quoted two verses from the *sringaric* elaboration of the Act III (Pischel 3.31, 36), present only in the Bengali recension. During the nineteenth century, the primacy of these rhetorical conceptions would be reformulated, hence shaping the reception of Kalidasa's play.

It is evident that a considerable change in aesthetics had been initiated in the generation between Nathuram and Ramnarayan. Premchand Tarkavagish had studied aesthetics under Nathuram and had subsequently taught Ramnarayan and Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar. When Nathuram left the college in 1831, Premchand joined as the Professor of Rhetoric at the College and continued teaching for more than thirty one years. He had been a favourite of Wilson, who had recognised his talent when he joined as a student in the College.[50] He helped Wilson in preparing his translations of the Sanskrit plays and after Wilson left for England, he wrote a Sanskrit *sloka* bemoaning the threat that the Anglicists posed to the college and urging Wilson to be a saviour.[51] He was also the editor of the first printed Indian edition of *Abhijñānaśakuntalam*, which had been published in 1839. Prepared for teaching the students of the college, it improved upon M.Chezy's edition of the text (which had been printed in Paris) and follows the Bengali recension.

Interestingly, Premchand's initiation in the domains of poetic craft had an indigenous root. Born in the village of Saknara in the Bardhaman district of Bengal, Premchand used to participate in extempore poetry contests (*tarjā*) as a young boy, composing songs for performers in the vicinity of his village. It was his interest in *tarjā* compositions that made him delve into indigenous Bengali poetic traditions.[52] Even during his years as a teacher in the college, he did not lose interest in such indigenous performances, accompanying Ishwarchandra Gupta to nocturnal *kabiyāl* contests.[53] Evidently, his views about the indecency and aesthetic propriety of such performances would have been more nuanced than Ramnarayan's one-dimensional castigation.

The second edition of Premchand's text of *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* was published in 1860. While the first edition was published in Bengali script, the second edition used Devanagari. Edward Byles Cowell, the Principal of the Sankrit College, encouraged him to publish this edition because he hoped that 'an edition of the Gaudiya recension, prepared by an eminent Pundit, might be acceptable in Europe.'[54] In the Preface to the second edition, Premchand confesses that the earlier edition was replete with misprints and misreadings which he has endeavoured to correct in the recent edition. Premchand reveals that Cowell had collected several other editions of the text, both Gaudiya (i.e. Bengali) as well as Devanagari recensions, that had been published in Europe and Premchand had suitably reedited his text after consulting these editions.[55] The editions that Premchand might have looked into are Otto Boeithingk's edition (published at Koenig in 1842) and Monier Monier-William's edition with English translations of the verse passages (published at Hertford in 1853) for the students of the East India College, Haileybury. It is interesting to study how Premchand's consultations influenced his reading of the *sringaric* elaboration.

Premchand's text consists of 228 verses, preserving most of the elaborations of the Bengali recension. His text of the *sringaric* elaboration is closely paralleled in Jones's translation and retains certain portions which have been later considered as spurious. Śakuntalā pleads to Duḥṣanta to be restrained in expressing his desires as the sages of the hermitage are in the vicinity (Pischel 3.27.3). Pischel's text runs as 'Paurava! Rakkha viṇayaṃ| Ido tado isīo saṅcaranti.' Jones translated this as: 'Son of Puru, preserve thy reason; oh, preserve it.—The hermits are busy on all sides of the grove.' The repetition of Śakuntalā's request is discernable when we realise that in Premchand's text, Śakuntalā pleads, 'Paurava! Rakkha rakkha viṇayaṃ, idotado isīo saṅcaranti.' [56] However, Premchand's edition also includes phrases which are considered to be redundant, like 'bhodu evam dāva' ('well, so be it)' with which Śakuntalā consents to Duḥṣanta's condition that he would return her flower bracelets only if he is allowed to replace it. Śakuntalā's affirmation qualifies her earlier interrogative ('kā gadi?'—Pischel 3.33.8; 'What alternative do I have?') and lets her assume an assertive role in assenting to Duḥṣanta's advances. Interestingly, Jones does not translate Śakuntalā's affirmation, transforming her question into an acceptance of her hapless condition ('I have no alternative'—Jones 37). Pischel does not include the assent in his text.

The other remarkable aspect of Premchand's text is the Prakrit spoken by the female characters. Pischel comments in his Preface that the earlier versions of the text prepared by the Indian pandits that had come to his notice were based on manuscripts 'of doubtful value and are altogether uncritical'[57]. Pischel prefers the Bengali recension to the Devanagari and Dravidian ones. The Prakrit in the other recensions (according to him) is a heterogenous mixture of various dialects. Pischel adhered to the convention established in Bharata's *Nātyaśāstra* 17:50 in which it is stated that the heroine and her attendants should converse in Sauraseni. Hence, he had given 'special attention to the Prakrit passages'[58] and had arguably standardised them according to the grammatical Sauraseni described in Prakrit grammars of Vararuchi and Hemachandra. Kanjilal describes these variants and points out that there are two different varieties of manuscripts belonging to the Bengali recension – (a) the 'pure' Bengali recension (b) the 'later' Bengali recension. Kanjilal elaborates[59]:

> There is, however, a group of later Bengal Mss. written in Bengali which differs considerably from the tradition upheld by the best Bengal Mss… These manuscripts are not very old and contain readings belonging to Mithila, Kashmir and Devanagar recensions. They represent the maximum height of elaboration embodying 230 verses in 7acts… The printed editions of Damaruvallabha Panta, Premchand Tarkavagis, Jaganmohan Sarma and Kedaranatha, and also of J.Vidyasagar are based on these later Mss.

Both Pischel and Kanjilal identify Tarkavagish's edition as based on 'later' and hence corrupt manuscripts which had maligned its immaculate splendour. For Kanjilal, the purity of earlier manuscripts of Bengali recension stems from apt metrical reading of verses as well as their proper retention of Sauraseni Prakrit. Yet, Somadeva Vasudeva would emphasise that 'Pischel's editorial decision to standardize the Prakrit to that of the grammarians has been called into question.'[60] It is critical to realise that Vararuchi and Hemachandra's categories were abstractions which often did not reflect languages as they were truly spoken.[61] Madhav Deshpande warns us about the 'pseudo-histories' of Prakrit languages crafted by grammarians[62]:

> [A]ll the Prakrit grammars available to us show a more western or perhaps south-western perspective. They generally make Maharashtri the principal Prakrit and then write rules to derive other Prakrits from it…[S]hifting geopolitical and geocultural perspectives underlie the work of Sanskrit grammarians, Prakrit grammarians, Sanskrit dramas etc. and an understanding of these shifting perspectives may afford us a better sociolinguistic appreciation of the complex history of India.

It hence becomes important to note the heterogeneity in the use of Prakrit in Premchand's text. Like Pischel, the voiceless stop (t) and fricatives (th) in the Prakrit sections are always transformed into voiced consonants (d, dh) in his text. This is considered to be one of the distinctive traits of Sauraseni.[63] Medial 'p' if not omitted becomes 'v' in Sauraseni, as is evident in Pischel 3.23.4 (Skt. lokapālam > Sau. loavālam). Premchand, however retains 'p'(Premchand 61).[64] According to Woolner, 'yathā' in Sanskrit parallels 'jadhā' in Sauraseni. In Pischel 3.22.1, 'jadhā' has been used. Premchand, however, Sanskritises the word as 'yadhā'(Premchand 60). When the medial consonant is voiced, the initial 'y' is used – a typical trait of Magadhi Prakrit.[65] In Pischel 3.20.2, the word 'maṇoradhassa' depict the voicing of the intervocal 'dha.' Premchand's text reads ‘maṇorahassa’(Premchand 58); the reduction to ‘h’ is often encountered in Maharashtri Prakrit.[66] Interestingly, Monier-Williams’ Devanagari recension of 1853 also reads ‘maṇorahassa’ (Monier-Williams-53 3.70.1-2).[67] In the use of Sanskrit pronouns, such similarities are noticed – for example ‘sādhārano’yampraṇayaḥ’ (Premchand 60, Monier-Williams-53 3.71.12) in contrast to ‘sādhārana eṣa praṇayaḥ’(Pischel 3.21.18). The use of indeclinable ‘api’(Sanskrit) in the phrase ‘diva vi rattiṃ pi’ from Śakuntalā’s verse epistle (Premchand 58; Monier-Williams-53 3.69) to Duḥṣanta has been presented as ‘vi’ after vowels and ‘pi’ after nasal *anusvara*, following standard rules of Prakrit.[68] Pischel 3.19 however reads as ‘diva a rattiṃ ca,’ perhaps conscious of the fact that Prakrit verses in plays should be rendered in Maharashtri which typically displays a loss of consonant sound(in contrast to Prakrit prose of women, which is rendered in Sauraseni). Further, certain verbs and pronouns are also rendered similarly in editions of Premchand and Monier-Williams [‘aṇṇesadi’ (Premchand 62, Monier-Williams-53 3.73.3) in contrast to ‘anusaredi’ (Pischel 3.24.5); ‘attāṇaṃ’(Premchand 63, Monier-Williams-53 3.74.1) in contrast to ‘attāṇaaṃ’ (Pischel 3.24.1)]. Premchand sometimes renders second person endings of verbs with ‘-di,’ (‘karissadi’in Premchand 60; ‘pāsaissadi’ in Premchand 76) while Pischel retains the normative ending with ‘-si’(‘karissasi’ in Pischel 3.22.2; ‘pāsaissasi’ in Pischel 3.33.4). It seems evident that Pischel’s construction of the Bengali recension (Kanjilal’s ‘pure’ recension) maintains stricter normative contrast between Sanskrit and the varied Prakrits used, hence regularising its grammar. On the other hand, the texts of Premchand and Monier-Williams reflect greater heterogeneity in the use of Prakrit registers.

We have already come across Monier-Williams' reservations about the Bengali recension. In his Preface of 1853, he provides us probable reasons for the alleged changes creeping into this recension[69]:

> The MSS. of the Devanagari class are chiefly found in the Upper Provinces of India, where the great demand has produced copyists without scholarship, who have faithfully transcribed what they did not understand, and, therefore, would not designedly alter. On the other hand, the copyists in Bengal have been Pandits, whose cacoethes for emending, amplifying, and interpolating, has led to the most mischievous results.

Thus the *cacoethes scribendi* of the Bengali pandits had contributed, according to Monier-Williams, to the elaborate *sringaric* transgression. He blames the pandits for not informing Jones about the divergent manuscript traditions of the play. Curiously, the hypercorrections introduced by these scribes might have also resulted in the 'pure' Bengali recension, with its normative Prakrit passages in regularised Sauraseni. Thus, we are encountering variations in two distinct dimensions. The heterogenous Prakrit in Bengali and Devanagari recensions differ from the homogenised linguistic registers of the 'pure' Bengali recension which might have influenced later ideations of vernacular registers in South Asia. Secondly, the elaboration of amorous impulses, especially the agency of Śakuntalā, has been voiced in the Bengali recension (in both the 'pure' and 'corrupt' versions) while it is absent in Devanagari recensions of the text. These present differing conceptions of decency and aesthetic propriety which might have also influenced vernacular prose aesthetics. Often, these tendencies form an intricate matrix of overlapping, yet distinct tendencies which shaped the contours of Bengali prose.

Translations of the play in Bengali were prompted most probably by Premchand's 1839 edition. On 28th June, 1840, *Samvād Prabhākar* reported that a translation by Ramtarak Bhattacharya would be shortly published from the Gyandarpan Yantra.[70] It was Premchand's edition which had surely influenced the reception of the text among Premchand's students—

Taranath Tarkavacaspati, Tarasankar Tarkaratna, Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, Madanmohan Tarkalankar, Dwarakanath Vidyabhushan, Girishchandra Vidyaratna, Muktaram Vidyavagish, Shrishchandra Vidyaratna, Ramnarayan Tarkaratna among others. In 1853-54, Ramlal Mitra published *Śakuntalār upākhyān* (alternatively named as *Sulalita itihās*), a prose adaptation of Kalidasa's play from Anglo-Indian Union Press. James Long deceptively describes this as an 'analysis of the Sanskrit Drama Sakuntala'. About five hundred copies were printed (consisting of sixty pages) and were priced at six annas.[71] Elsewhere, Long describes Ramlal Mitra as being originally from Guwahati.[72] Ramlal's adaptation must have been quite popular, as Bindhubasini Press republished it in 1855 at 1 anna 3 paise. By the time this edition had been published, Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar's popular prose adaptation of the play had been brought out from the Sanskrit Press, in November – December 1854.

Ramlal's adaptation of the *sringaric* elaboration is quite distinctive as he does not translate most of it but adds remarkable details which transform the context of the Śakuntalā- Duḥṣanta encounter. Śakuntalā is advised by Priyamvadā and Anusūyā to write his love epistle which they plan to take to Hastinapur and deliver to Duḥṣanta. Ramlal uses a dense, Sanskritised register which enables him to preserve the polyvalence in the original text and even add innovations of his own. For example, the word ‘ādavatteṇa’(Pischel 3.17.2) means ‘heat-protector’ (Sanskrit: tāp = heat; patra=a leaf) or ‘an umbrella, made of silk or leaves’. The companions tell Śakuntalā that she is deprecating her beauty in doubting whether the king loves her, for who would willingly avoid the radiance of her beauty. ‘Does a man ever shield himself (with an umbrella) from the radiance of the autumnal moon, which can allay the feverish heat?’ they wonder. The words in the Bengali recension are as follows:

> Sakhyao. Ai attaguṇāvamāṇiṇi| ko ṇam santavaṇivvaivaittiaṃ saradīaṃ jonhaṃ ādavatteṇa vāraissadi|

Ramlal however uses the word ‘candrātāp’ and modifies it into a pun. His word might mean ‘radiance of the moon’ (Skt. candra + ātap) but is also can suggest ‘a canopy from heat’ (Skt. candrā + ātap)[73] :

> ...tāhā haile tini abaśya ekhāne āsiyā tomār paṇīpīḍan kariben se hetuk svabhāvśītal śāradīya candrātapke keha candrātap-dvārā nibāraṇ karite ceṣtā kare nā…
>
> […then he would certainly come and ask for your hand, as nobody tries to shield the naturally soothing autumnal moonlight (candrātap) with a canopy (candrātap-dvārā)…]

Śakuntalā neither composes the love-epistle nor does she write it (like Jones’s Sacontala). She apprehends that Duḥṣanta being a king, favoured by the love of many queens, would neglect a naïve, rustic woman like her. This apprehension had been voiced later in Kalidasa’s play (Pischel 3.21.19-20) but Ramlal, in order to condense the text, rearranges the lines. It is also remarkable that these allude to two intensely debated issues concerning women in nineteenth century Bengal – education of females and polygamy. In Ramlal's text, Duḥṣanta immediately reveals himself and expresses his love for Śakuntalā. His words parallel what Duḥṣanta conveyed as an aside in Kalidasa's play(Pischel 3.16-17). Then he continues further, voicing out what Duḥṣanta did say in the play when he first expressed his love (Pischel 3.20). The diction is intentionally Sanskritised, often using elaborate conjugations:

> …he vikaśita vanalālane tumi sakhīsamakṣe kahitechile je madīya darśanāvadhi manmathānalosantapta haiyācho kintu āmi tomār śaraccaandravinindita vadanāravinder śubha darśanāvadhi ki prakār avasthāy āchi tāhā varṇanātīt. Jeman divaśāgame sudhānidhi jata śokamalīmasa hay, kumudinī tata hay nā…
>
> (Ramlal 23)
>
> […O blooming forest-maiden, you have told your companions that you were lovestruck after you have seen me ; but after seeing your radiant lotus-face, the state I am in cannot even be described. Just as when the day dawns, the white waterlily is besmirched, but not like the moon…]

Although Kalidasa implicitly compares Śakuntalā with the waterlily, he does not reaffirm it by suggesting that she is blooming (*vikaśita*) and her face is like a lotus (*vadanāravinder*). Moreover, Ramlal's use of an inflection for the vocative (*vanalālane*) and his conjugated words approximate the rhythmic fluidity of the Sanskrit text. Interestingly, he does not refer to the moon as 'śaśāṅkam', as Kalidasa does, but uses the word 'sudhānidhi.' This parallels the word 'kumudinī' and resonates with assonance.

Śakuntalā submits herself to Duḥṣanta (Ramlal 28) as he swears that he would make her his chief-consort. Kalidasa's imagery is not used (*samudrarasanā chorvī* – Pischel 3.23) but an elaborate pledge is uttered:'even if the sun, which stands as a witness to my pledge, defies the laws of the Lord the Father (*visvapitā*), rises from the west and sets in the west, even if a mother forgets her filial love and submits her child at the tiger's mouth… even then I would not forget my love.'[74] Eventually they exchange garlands while in the grove (which Duḥṣanta suggests in the play, but is never accomplished as such on stage). As the dusk gradually settles down, Ramlal introduces an elaborate scene which leads to the consummation of their love:

> kumudinī niśānāther udayārambhe samallashinī hailen. cakravāk chakravāki bhāvi virahāśaṅkay śaṅkākula haila. patisangalālanātarunīkul vividha prakāre bāsh vinyāsh karite lāgila. … Rājā o Śakuntalā nabapraṇayānurāge mugdha haiya parṇaśālāy gaman karilen evaṃ gāndharvavidhāne vivāha susampanna kariyā vākpathātīt ānandapravahe magna haiyā kautuke vibhāvarī yāpan karilen.
>
> [Ramlal 25]
>
> [The waterlily was ecstatic at the rise of the moon. The shelldrake and its bride were smitten by the pangs of their imminent separation. The women, desirous of the company of their husbands, dressed in various ways… Rājā and Śakuntalā, moved by their newly wrought love, went to the cottage and after marrying according to the *gāndharva* rites, spent the night in jest while being immersed in indescribable happiness]

Our segment of the third act ends as the companions laconically warn Śakuntalā about the fact that Gautamī, the aged matron, was approaching the grove. In Kalidasa's play, they are offstage; only their voices are heard:

> nepathye. cakravāavahu| āmantehi sahaaraṃ| uvatthida raaṇī|
>
> [Pischel 3.37.3]
>
> [Offstage. O the bride of the shelldrake! Bid farewell to your companion! The night has descended.]

It was believed that shelldrakes part from each other at night as they were cursed. In Kalidasa, the laconic suggestion is a presagement of Śakuntalā's separation that he must part from Duḥṣanta. Ramlal refers to the shelldrakes, but his lovers meet rather than separate at nightfall. They not only marry by the *gāndharva* rites but also spend their night in 'indescribable happiness.' The word 'kautuka' (jest / enjoyment) is also critical; Vidyasagar uses it, as we would see later, in a similar context. Thus although Ramlal avoids the *sringaric* passages, he introduces a consummation which is only implicitly hinted by Kalidasa.

In his Preface, Ramlal defends his innovations by stating that a literal translation would not be ideal. He elaborates [75]:

> If Sankrit texts are translated literally, their beauty is reduced. Hence, those sections of the text which are difficult and incoherent, have been left out and at some places, in order to entertain the readers, matters have been elaborated. I have been able to publish this hoping for the patronage of those who are desirous to cultivate Bengali language

In spite of using an ornate, sanskritised register, Ramlal inscribes an autonomous domain for Bengali prose which had effected the alterations in his text. Yet, this domain was buffeted by contesting assertions of Sanskrit aesthetics, European literary and typographic conventions, indigenous literary and performative traditions and an urbane vernacular literary tradition.

The members of the Asiatic Society of Bengal considered these changes, especially the efforts to carve out an autonomous domain for Bengali prose, to be of immense importance. Rajendralal Mitra (1822-1891) played an important role in recognising these innovations. Rajendralal enrolled as a student in the Medical College, where William Brooke O’Shaughnessy was his tutor. O’Shaughnessy was educated at Edinburgh University and joined company’s medical services in 1833.[76] He taught chemistry at the Medical College and was also the Officiating Joint Secretary of the Asiatic Society from November, 1838 to May, 1840.[77] Rajendralal left the College in May, 1841 (probably due to a conflict with the Principal) and his legal aspirations did not materialise. O’Shaughnessy (on 5th November, 1846, the day he himself became the Senior Secretary) had him appointed as the Librarian and Assistant Secretary, on a monthly salary of one hundred rupees. He was to correct proofs and prepare letters for the Society.[78] Rajendralal became proficient in several languages and from March, 1851 till his retirement from the post of Librarian in February,1856 published a series of book reviews and literary observations in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, titled “Literary Intelligence”. He also edited the monthly periodical, *Vividārtha Saṃgraha* from 1851 to 1857, often importing plates from for illustrating his informative essays.[79] It is in Rajendralal’s entries in the *Journal* that we discern the discourse of a transformation in Bengali prose aesthetics. He comments in April 1851, on a new edition of *Raghuvaṃśa*, which had been published from the Sanskrit Press in Kolkata[80]:

> This press from its foundation has been very usefully employed in printing some of the standard works of the Brahmanic literature, and among those already published we find the Kumara Sambhava and Meghaduta of Kalidasa, the Kadambari of Banabhatta, the Sisupala Badha of Sri Harsa, the Dasakumara Charita of Dandi, the Anumanachintamani of Raghunatha Siromani, the Tattvakaumudi of Vachaspati Misra, and the Sabda-sakti prakasika of Jagadisa Tarkalankara.

After enlisting the publications, Rajendralal focuses on the editorial merits of the *Raghuvaṃśa* and other Sanskrit texts published by the press. He comments[81]:

> The name of Professor Madanamohana Tarkalankara on the title page is a sufficient guarantee that the works are correctly printed, but we must observe that in Europe these editions will not be considered to have been "edited"…None of them have any preface, and their readers are left entirely in the dark as to the authenticity of the MSS. from which they have been printed – the history of those MSS. – the names of those who wrote them – the age in which they appeared – the place whence they were procured – and everything else connected with literary fidelity and worth… [N]o attention has been paid to note down the variants which are always met with in collating MSS., and the first chapter of one of the works, the Dasakumara, has been omitted without giving any reason for such omission. Professor Wilson, we know, has expressed some doubts regarding the authenticity of the chapter in question, but he has nevertheless retained it in his edition of the work, thinking it better that his readers should have the doubtful chapter, and with it an opportunity to judge for themselves, than be deprived of the introduction to a romance. In editing oriental classics, we wish that sufficient regard be shewn to obtain the use, and to point out the peculiarities, of good and ancient MSS., and that our Calcutta Schultenses and Erpeniuses may more carefully follow the footsteps of their European prototypes.

Rajendralal was discussing about editions of Sanskrit texts, prescribing historicist perspectives of textual criticism and editing which contrasted with the panchronic convictions of the Sanskritist literati. Colebrooke had earlier criticised the lack of historical consciousness in the Sanskrit works and Rajendralal ingeniously provides the example of Wilson to prove his point. Setting up Thomas Erpenius (1584-1624) and the Henry Albert Schultens (1749-1793) as ideal prototypes, he urges Indian editors like Madanmohan Tarkalankar (1817-1858) to inculcate a new aesthetics of criticism. However, Rajendralal's next entry makes it clear that he endeavours to inscribe a sovereign domain for Bengali language, which can only be materialised if the crafters of modern Bengali language adopt a historicist detachment, demystifying Sanskrit and setting up an independent domain for Bengali grammar. Thus the endeavour of publishing scholarly Sanskrit texts and moulding the contours of Bengali language were inextricably interrelated. In fact, Rajendralal went on to praise Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar (1820-1891), the co-owner (along with Madamohan) of the Sanskrit Press. Vidyasagar was also his colleague in the editorial committee of the *Tatvavodhinī Patrikā*. Rajendralal identifies Vidyasagar as one of the crafters of a new, vernacular aesthetics [82]:

> There is a strong current setting in, favourable to Bengali Literature, which augurs well as to the future prospects of Sanskrita lore, for the Sadhu Basha or classical Bengali is so identified with the Sanskrita, that the students of the former are naturally disposed to cultivate the latter. We hear then with great pleasure that the principal of the Sanskrita College, Isvarachandra Vidyasagara is preparing a Sanskrita Grammar in Bengali, which will be adapted to late improvements in philological science, and is designed to smooth the path to this difficult language, but which has been made more intricate by the mystifications and scholasticisms of pandits. Along with this grammar a series of selections from Sanskrit writers will be given. We hope one day to see the Sanskrita College of Calcutta, a fount for a useful Vernacular Literature – and a model for an improved mode of learning Sanskrit.

Ishwarchandra's tenure as the Principal of the Sanskrit College had been one of widespread changes. He joined the college as Assistant Secretary in April, 1846.[83] He had earlier differed with Rasamay Dutta, Wilson's favourite and the Secretary of the College, about reforms in the curriculum of the college and eventually resigned from his post in April 1847. It is probable that it was after April that Vidyasagar eventually established Sanskrit Press and Depository, for which he had planned for about a year.[84] Like Rajendralal, Vidyasagar also differed from his predecessors (and his friend, Madanmohan), in his conceptualisation of Sanskrit aesthetics. This redefinition, as Rajendralal succinctly points out, is ultimately aimed at shaping vernacular literature.

After being reinstituted in the College, first as the Professor of Literature, and then as its first Principal, Vidyasagar delineated his plan (which had been earlier thwarted by Rasamay Dutta) for overhauling the curriculum of the College. As we have discussed in a later chapter, in his ‘Notes on the Sanscrit College’(submitted to the Council of Education in April, 1852), Vidyasagar urges for a change in curriculum which would redefine vernacular prose aesthetics [85]:

1. The creation of an enlightened Bengali Literature should be the first object of those who are entrusted with the superintendence of Education in Bengal.
2. Such a Literature cannot be formed by the exertions of those who are not competent to collect the materials from European sources and to dress them in elegant expressive idiomatic Bengali.
3. An elegant, expressive and idiomatic Bengali style cannot be at the command of those who are not good Sancrit scholars. Hence the necessity of making Sanscrit scholars well versed in the English language and literature.
4. Experience proves that mere English scholars are altogether incapable of expressing their ideas in elegant and idiomatic Bengali. They are so much anglicised that it seems at present almost impossible for them, even if they make sanscrit their after-study, to express their ideas in idiomatic and elegant Bengali style.
5. It is clear then that if the students of the Sanscrit College be made familiar with English Literature, they will prove the best and ablest contributors to an enlightened Bengali Literature.

Rajendralal’s views are almost identical to those of Vidyasagar – both stressed the importance of Indian scholars, versed in Sanskrit and European prototypes, as important for the crafting of vernacular literature. Rajendralal notes a critical contrast. Madanmohan, the famed Sanskritist who had been Vidyasagar’s classmate (both were students of Premchand Tarkavagish), the co-owner of the Sanskrit Press and Vidyasagar's predecessor as the Professor of Literature in the College, is identified as the relatively sanskritised, indigenous strain in this new discourse. Vidyasagar is praised, on the other hand, for his publication of *Upakramaṇikā*, which would embody the change in educational methods.

Not everyone would favour this change though. Premchand Tarkavagish explicitly told Vidyasagar (while Vidyasagar was the Principal of the College) that this brief Sankrit grammatical treatise was quite inadequate and was hampering language acquisition in young students.[86] Vidyasagar's reforms were not merely about instilling discipline and changing the curriculum, it brought about a change in how Sanskrit language and aesthetics were taught and imbibed by the younger generation of students. Premchand, who had epitomised an earlier paradigm, perceived this as a degeneration of traditional pedagogy. We would later explore this more elaborately, but it is curious to note that Premchand was an intimate collaborator of James Prinsep, helping him in his pioneering studies in deciphering Pali.[87] It is evident that his views about Prakrit used in the passages under discussion would have influenced these Orientalists. Hence, the realignment initiated by Vidyasagar and Rajendralal appears to be particularly significant.

Vidyasagar's prose adaptation of *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* closely follows the text of the Bengali recension, in spite of the publication of Monier-Williams' Devanagari recension in the previous year. Unlike Ramlal Mitra, who had introduced considerable innovation in the plot, Vidyasagar is more conventional in his treatment of the narrative. His modifications and evasions are subtle though significant. At times, he leaves out elaborate descriptions of romantic passion, especially when they are manifested in the female body. Thus, he leaves out Duḥṣanta's voyeuristic description of Śakuntalā as she writes her love-epistle, her eyebrows slightly raised in ecstatic, amorous contemplation (Pischel 3.19). Priyamvadā informs Anusūyā that Śakuntalā seems to have revived from her love-sickness at the arrival of the king, just like a peahen is revived by moisture-laden breeze after the tiring summer heat (Pischel 3.23-2-3). The latent erotic suggestion must have led to Vidyasagar's decision of not translating it. Vidyasagar does not translate Duḥṣanta's comments about latent female desire for consummation (Pischel 3.27) nor does he translate Śakuntalā's inability to leave the grove after secretly listening to Duḥṣanta's pinings for her love (Pischel 3.30.1). Revaprasad Dwivedi (1976) and Saradaranjan Roy (1939), in their editions of the text, have pointed out to Śakuntalā's erotic expressions to be obscene and later interpolations.[88] Although Vidyasagar follows the Bengali recension, his puritanism is decipherable in these evasions. He avoids referring to the kiss and avoids translating Duḥṣanta's suggestive advances ('idamidam', Pischel 3.37.2)[89]:

> Rājā kahilen sundari! ār ki pratyupkār cai; āmi je tomār surabhita mukhakamaler āghrāṇ paiyāchi tāhāi āmār pariśramer yatheṣta purāṣkar haiyāche| dekha madhukar kamaler āghrāṇ mātrei sāntuṣtā thake. Śakuntalā kahilen santuṣta nā haiyāi ki kare| eirup kautuk o kathopakathan haiteche …
>
> [Raja said, "O beautiful one! What other favour can I ask for; the fact that I was allowed to take in the scent of your perfumed face was an ample reward for my ordeal. The bee is satiated merely by the fragrance of the lotus." Sakuntala said, "What else can he do, satiated?" Thus they spent their time in conversation and jest…]

Vidyasagar adopts Ramlal's word 'kautuk' to evade references to the kiss. While Jones translates 'mukham' as 'delicious lip'(Jones 38), Vidyasagar refers to it as 'mukhakamal', reaffirming the simile of the bee and the lotus which soon follows. He also does not translate Priyamvadā's mischievous quip in Pischel 3.24.1. Nor does he translate Śakuntalā's answer to it which emphasises her weakened physical state. Duḥṣanta in the play endeavours to comfort Śakuntalā as her companions leave, offering to wave her fan of lotus leaves or press her feet, 'red as waterlilies' ('padmatamrau,' Pischel 3.25). Vidyasagar's Duḥṣanta consoles Śakuntalā that he would substitute her companions but does not offer to press her feet. He does not mention the wrap of lotus leaves around Śakuntalā's breasts ('nalinīdalakalpitastanāvaranā,' Pischel 3.26). While reading Vidyasagar's translation, we are not aware that Śakuntalā's bracelet smells of the uśīra-balm that anointed her body ('sankrantośīraparimalaṃ tasyāḥ,' Pischel 3.31). No wonder, while Kalidasa's Śakuntalā pleads to Duḥṣanta to return the bracelet as she fears being chastised by the hermit, Vidyasagar's Śakuntalā courteously asks for the bracelet, unhindered by any sense of shame.

Other transformations are associated with pruning down elaborate similes and descriptions, which work quite effectively in Sanskrit. In his Preface, Vidyasagar confesses his guilt in transforming Kalidasa's text into Bengali prose[90]:

> Those who have read *Śakuntalā* in Sanskrit, and would read my tale, would realise the difference in brilliance between the two. They would perhaps rebuke me for my inept portrayal of Kalidasa and *Śakuntalā* to those who do not know Sanskrit. Truly, by compiling this tale I have denigrated Kalidasa and *Śakuntalā*.

These transformations are discernable in leaving out the comparison of the lotus leaf on which Śakuntalā would etch her epistle with the soft, downy breast of a parrot (Pischel 3.18.3). Like Jones, he avoids reference to *aṅga*, used in Śakuntalā's love epistle (Pischel 3.19):

Śakuntalā —(paṭhati) tujjha ṇa āṇe hiaaṃ mama uṇa māaṇo divā a ratti ca |
ṇikkiva dāvai baliaṃ tuha huttamaṇorahāi aṅgāiṃ ||

[Śakuntalā – (reading) I do not know your heart, but by Love, day and night
O cruel one, is anguished every part of my body.]

Vidyasagar's translation refers to *anurāga* (adoration, love) – but neither to Madana (the God of love) nor to Śakuntalā's body ('aṅgāiṃ'):

Śakuntalā padite ārambha karilen, "He nirday! Tomār man āmi jāni nā; kintu āmi tomāte ekānto anurāginī haiyā nirantar santāpita haitechi."

[Śakuntalā started reading, "O cruel one! I do not know your heart; but I am anguished by my love for you."]

(Vidyasagar 42-43)

Similarly, when Duḥṣanta uses a simile to reaffirm that he would never forget Śakuntalā, Vidyasagar does not translate it:

Rājā—sundari!
tvam dūramapi gacchantī hṛidayaṃ na jahāsi me |
dināvasānacchāyeva puromūlaṃ vanaspateḥ ||

(Pischel 3.29)

[Rājā – O beautiful one!
Even if you go far, you will remain in my heart.
At the end of the day, the shadow does not leave the base of the tree.]

Rājā kahilen sundari! tumi āmār sammukh haite chaliyā gele, kintu āmār citta haite jaite pāribe nā.

(Vidyasagar 46-47)

[Rājā said, "O beautiful one! Even if you go away from my proximity, you will never be able to go from my heart.]

Duḥṣanta contrasts Śakuntalā's hard-heartedness with her frail body, using a remarkable simile. He compares the tender albizzia blossom, hanging on a hard stalk: 'kaṭhinaṃ khalu te cetaḥ śirīṣasyeva vandhanam' (Pischel 3.30). Vidyasagar avoids the simile, preserving only the reference to her pitilessness. While adorning Śakuntalā with her bracelet, Duḥṣanta is ecstatic by being granted the opportunity to touch her. He uses a metaphor, referring to her hand as 'the tree of love' and presents a mythical allusion:

Rājā – (Śakuntalāyā hastamādāya) aho sparśaḥ|--
harakopāgnidagdhasya daivenāmritavarṣina|
prarohaḥ saṃbhṛito bhuyaḥ kiṃ svitkāmatarorayam|

(Pischel 3.34)

[Rājā – (Taking Śakuntalā's hands) O, the touch!
Once burnt to ashes by Shiva's ire, has a providential ambrosial shower
Revived again this Tree of Love?]

Vidyasagar’s description is terse and ambiguous:

> Rājā Śakuntalār hasta laiya kiyatkṣan sparśasukh anubhav karite lāgilen.
>
> (Vidyasagar 48)
>
> [Rājā took Shakuntala’s hands and enjoyed the ecstasy of touch for a while.]

Vidyasagar’s Duḥṣanta is romantic, but he lacks the felicity of Kalidasa’s lover who compared the bracelet with the slender-horned, crescent moon (Pischel 3.35).

At least once in the Ishwarchandra’s adaptation, we notice a reformulation which betrays his reformatory zeal. In Kalidasa’s play, Priyamvadā endeavours to ensure that the king would not betray her beloved companion, Śakuntalā. Śakuntalā, however, feigns to restrain Priyamvadā, stating that the king should not be withheld from travelling back to his palace, stricken as he is with longing for his wives (Pischel 3.21.3-3.21.20). When Anusūyā asks Duḥṣanta about his wives, apprehending he would break Śakuntalā’s heart, Duḥṣanta vouches that the legacy of his dynasty rests on twin foundations --- his empire and Śakuntalā (Pischel 3.23). This is significant because in the *Mahābhārata* episode (Ādiparva 87.22-23), Śakuntalā agrees to marry Duḥṣanta only if he would pledge that their son would be his heir apparent (*yuvarāja*). Yet, in Vidyasagar’s text the initial context of the reference to Duḥṣanta’s many wives has been evaded. When Anusūyā asks the question about his wives, Duḥṣanta states:

> Yathārtha bate rājādiger anek mahilā thāke; kintu āmi akapat hridaye kahitechi tomāder sakhī āmār jīvan sarvvasva haiben.
>
> (Vidyasagar 43)
>
> [It is true that kings have many wives; but I proclaim earnestly, your companion shall be the essence of my life]

Thus Duḥṣanta's pledge are redefined – his allegiance to Śakuntalā is a romantic affiliation of the heart, not merely recognition of their issue as a claimant to the throne. Moreover, the affection of Duḥṣanta for his wives disappears. Polygamy is no longer a system where the king might be in a justified romantic liaison with several women – it is an expedient system, framed for meeting worldly, administrative demands. Duḥṣanta, in Vidyasagar's adaptation can be in love with only one woman – Śakuntalā. Though he accepts that kings may have many wives (he does not explicitly say that he has several ones), the sole object of his affection is Śakuntalā. Binay Ghosh hypothesises that it was probably Akshaykumar Dutta, Vidyasagar's intimate friend, who might have initiated the first efforts to prohibit polygamy in 1842, voicing his views in the periodical *Vidyadarśan*. Kishorichand Mitra, who had been the Librarian and Assistant Secretary of the Society before Rajendralal Mitra, moved a motion on behalf of the Shurid Samiti for the prohibition of polygamy. On 27th December, 1855, Vidyasagar also submitted a plea to the government for prohibiting polygamy; the plea had been supported by Maharaja of Burdwan, Mahtapchandra Bahadur (1820-1879) and several other prominent personalities.[91] The plea stated that Hindu scriptures might have allowed polygamy under certain circumstances, but the provision has been grossly abused.[92] Though a draft of a reform had been already prepared, the 1857 Mutiny made the British Government hesitant about enforcing the prohibition. When Vidyasagar wrote his first tract against polygamy in 1870, he addressed the subject of polygamy, practised by ancient rulers [93]:

> Some people question, when there is proof in itihāsa and Purāṇa texts of kings having several wives, then how is polygamy not permitted in the scriptures? It is true that there is evidence that certain ancient kings had many wives; however, these marriages were not whimsical acts of will… Dasaratha married several times as his earlier wives were barren. There is no doubt that other rulers had also indulged in polygamy for a similar reason, or for some other conditions laid down by the scriptures.

Vidyasagar's text bears the imprint of a time which witnessed an obsessive engagement with gender issues in the *bhadralok* circles of Kolkata. Just a few months after the publication of *Śakuntalā*, Vidyasagar would publish his first tract on widow remarriage in January, 1855 which would set into motion a widespread tumult amongst Bengali intellegensia, culminating in the enactment of the Hindu Widows' Remarriage Act in July, 1856. His earlier essay on the evils of child marriage in the first issue of the periodical *Sarvasubhankarī* (August, 1850), his second tract on widow remarriage (October, 1855) and polygamy (April, 1873), his enthusiasm for female education – reflect his prolonged engagement with gender issues. Sumit Sarkar problematises this remarkable focus on the 'women's question' in middle-class male circles and emphasises that this was not merely a phenomenon spurred by the Victorian ethical dispensation. He points out[94] :

> Young men, moving to the city in quest of education and jobs, married off in their teens by parents to brides much younger and generally illiterate, could have faced acute problems of conjugal adjustment – particularly if they happened to be first generation reformers, Derozian or Brahmo, with nuclearity imposed on them through ostracism by their relatives. Issues like widow-burning, women's education, gender seclusion, arranged marriage, child marriage, polygamy, and the prohibition of widow marriage would be 'under their eyes every day and hour of their existence within the precincts of their own respective domiciles.' … Programmes emerged consequently of stri-swadhinata: in effect, a fairly limited and controlled emancipation of wives within a framework of more companionate conjugality, undertaken entirely at male initiative, and sometimes accompanied by a refurbished patriarchy of as reformist husbands within nuclear units sought to impose new norms of religious and social conduct on not-too-enthusiastic wives.

The fact that Vidyasagar's adaptation of *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* marks the faultlines of these engagements immediately makes us note the connection between socio-political affiliation/s and prose aesthetics. If Vidyasagar's prose is compared to Ramlal Mitra's adaptation, certain notes of difference become obvious. While Ramlal adopts a sanskritised register of long, conjugated words, Vidyasagar uses shorter, non-conjugated words. Though he uses a sanskritised register, Vidyasagar shows a greater tendency towards analytic syntax, using post-positions, participles and indeclinables to formulate his more elaborately punctuated sentences. He rarely uses denominative roots and shows a greater affiliation for *tadbhava* words. He avoids the extended similes of Kalidasa, often devising Bengali idiomatic substitutes. In Kalidasa's play, when Sakuntala doubts the overt humility of Duḥṣanta, she says:

Śakuntalā. A-aṃ jeva achvuva-āaro abissāsajaṇa-o|

(Pischel 3.35.6)

[Śakuntalā. It is this excessive devotion that is dubious.]

Vidyasagar adopts a popular Bengali idiom to convey Sakuntala's reservations:

> Śakuntalā kahilen ei ati bhakti-i corer lakṣaṇ.
>
> (Vidyasagar 49)
>
> [Śakuntalā said, "It is this excessive devotion that exposes the thief."]

Themes of ethical deviance, of ambiguity about amorous liaisons not only embodied the social trepidations of the urban middle-class, it also shaped the discursive relationship between the colonial ruler and its subjects. Just a few months after the publication of Vidyasagar's adaptation, Monier Monier-Williams would publish his translation (February 1855) of Kalidasa's play. Unlike his 1853 edition of the text, the 1855 book was an active endeavour to redefine the aesthetics of Jones's translation for the Western readers.

Monier-Williams concedes that his version of the play is a 'free translation.' He directs those who are interested in a textual study of the play to his 1853 book. However, he considers his translation is important as it would present a 'pure' version of the text to European readers, who had been misguided for years by Jones's 1789 translation. Vidyasagar sculpts out a sovereign domain from his indigenous predecessors; Monier-Williams reformulates the Orientalist paradigm. The eventful 1860 election for the Boden Chair (he would eventually win the professorship, defeating Max Mueller in a keenly fought election) is still five years in the future, but the endeavour to present himself as the refurbished voice of British imperialism is all too evident in his translation. Unsurprisingly, the book is dedicated to Colonel Boden. In the Preface, Monier-Williams states[95]:

> [T]he following pages contain the first English translation, in prose and verse, of the true and pure version of the most celebrated drama of the great Indian Shakespere. The need felt by the Brtish public for some such translation as I have offered, can scarcely be questioned. A great people,who, through their empire in India, command the destinies of the Eastern world, ought surely to be conversant with the most popular of Indian dramas, in which the customs of the Hindus, their opinions, prejudices, and fables; their religious rites, daily occupations, and amusements, are reflected as in a mirror. Nor is the prose translation of Sir W. Jones (excellent though it be) adapted to meet the requirements of the Englishman who, unacquainted with Sanskrit, desires an accurate representation of the original text, and notes to explain unintelligible allusions. That translation was unfortunately made from modern and corrupt manuscripts… It is, moreover, altogether unfurnished with explanatory annotations. The text of my edition, on the contrary, represents the old and pure version of the drama and from that text the present translation has been made; while abundant notes have been added, sufficient to answer the exigencies of the non-oriental scholar. Moreover, the metrical portions of the play have, for the first time, been rendered into verse.

The focus on a pure textual tradition is complimented by Monier-Williams’s insistence that the older, corrupt translation of Jones is unfit as the instrument for hegemonic control over not only India, but the entire Eastern world. As Monier-Williams follows the Devanagari recension, he leaves out much of the *sringaric* elaboration. Romila Thapar outlines the ambivalence of scholar-administrators in India at the zenith of Victorian imperialism. Monier-Williams, a professor at Haileybury, naturally thought of these administrators to be his readers. On one hand they felt the need to rediscover the Indian past, in order to suitably rule over their subjects. On the other hand, they felt it necessary to lay down their vision of India and present it as the only, *pure* interpretation of its past.

Thapar quips, ‘The object was to not only make the emergent middle-class Indian aware of this culture, but to imprint on his mind the interpretation given to it by Orientalist scholarship. This was another strategy of control. While the pastoral beauty and lyrical charm of the play were appreciated, the unabridged play was not approved of as a text for teaching Sanskrit in schools and colleges, because it was said to support immorality and impurity.’[96] What needs to be emphasised, however, is that much of this search for pure India was accomplished by internalising indigenous, pre-colonial abstractions and stereotypes – especially those that were associated with the domain of language.

More than Jones, Monier-Williams seems to be concerned with the heteroglossia in the text. Prakrit, for him, is ‘provincial Sanskrit’ which bears ‘the same relation to Sanskrit that Italian bears to Latin, or that the spoken Latin of the age of Cicero bore to the highly polished Latin in which he delivered his Orations.’ His emphasis on the prose/verse dichotomy is further elucidated in his image of a web[97]:

> Thus, if the whole composition be compared to a web, the prose will correspond to the warp, or that part which is extended lengthwise in the loom, while the metrical portion will answer to the cross-threads which constitute the woof.

Monier-Williams aimed at representing the constructed nature of the text in his translation. As there were no metrical parallels in English, he translated the verse passages mostly in blank verse, proclaiming that this gave him ample freedom to delineate the ‘freshness and vigour’ of the original. He avoids paraphrastic circumlocutions and uses hypermetrical verses quite frequently. Thus, though he does not translate many of the passages under discussion, those which he does, reflect an awareness of the complexities of the heteroglossic text.

Monier-Williams sometimes deftly conveys the sensuousness of Kalidasa's verses. Unlike Vidyasagar, he does not tend to evade erotic undertones and does not hesitate to preserve depiction of the female body. He does not hesitate to describe the wrap of lotus leaves around Śakuntalā's breast (Monier-Williams-53 3.74.3—3.75)[98]:

> King. Fair one, the heat of the noon has not yet subsided, and thy body is still feeble.
>
> How canst thou quit thy fragrant couch of flowers,
> And from thy throbbing bosom cast aside
> Its covering of lotus-leaves, to brave
> With weak and fainting limbs the noon-day heat?
>
> [Forces her to turn back

Neither Jones nor Vidyasagar (or Ramlal Mitra) separates the verse and the prose passages. The fact that Monier-Williams does so, distinguishes his text from the rest. The stage direction is significant; Jones had translated it as '[h]e gently draws her back.' The forceful withholding of Śakuntalā suggests that the discourse of colonial/erotic encounter has, by now, transformed into a hegemonic discourse of imperial control. Anusūyā addresses the King as 'Sir' ('vayassa', Monier-Williams-53 3.72.1), thus translating the honorific in Sanskrit into an evident recognition of servility.

One of the few verse passages translated in rhyme is Śakuntalā's love epistle. As Śakuntalā generally converses in prose, this was a rare opportunity of providing her words the resonance of the king's verse overtures. Monier-Williams, however, ensures that Śakuntalā would sound different from Duḥṣanta [99]:

Sakoontala. [Reads.

I know not the secret thy bosom conceals,
   Thy form is not near me to gladden my sight;
But sad is the take that my fever reveals,
   Of the love that consumes me by day and by night.

The artifice of rhyme robs the intimate intensity of Śakuntalā's confession. While Duḥṣanta's confessions seem to be dignified, the rhyme fabricates a child-like naivity for Sakuntala. The domain of the subordinated is hence manifested as the domain of the Child.

That *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* became popular both in Bengal as well as in Europe during the nineteenth century is not merely because it reflected Kalidasa's genius, but because it embodied issues that were of critical socio-political significance. The textual history of the play preserved the pre-colonial ambivalences, engendered by divergent recensions. To this were added diverse ideations about the Prakrit used in the play, as is discernable from the various editions of Premchand, Pischel, Monier-Williams, among others. On one hand, Orientalists like William Jones and Monier Monier-Williams had published influential translations in English. On the other hand, Vidyasagar and Ramlal Mitra had produced Bengali prose adaptations of the play. These were, however, in the form of narratives. It cannot be conclusively proven whether Ramtarak Bhattacharya actually published the first adaptation of the play in Bengali as a drama in 1840. However, most probably spurred by the popularity of prose adaptations, Nandakumar Roy published a translation of the play in August, 1855 from G.P. Roy & Co. It was this translation that led to several popular stage adaptations of the play in Bengal. More significantly, it was the first printed Bengali play that had been performed on Kolkata stage, and is considered as the commencement of a vital tradition of Bengali theatre.[100]

Nandakumar Roy acknowledges the difficulty of translating the play. In his Preface, he confesses that texts lose aesthetic perfection when they are translated. Moreover, he accedes that some of the passages of Kalidasa's play are so complicated that it is difficult to translate them.[101] The play was performed for the first time on 30th January, 1857 at Ashutosh's Deb's residence at Beadon Street. It was subsequently performed on 22nd February, 1857.[102] Later, it had been performed in Janai village in Hoogli at the residence of zamindar Purnachandra Mukhopadhyay on 29th May, 1858.[103] The play would be eventually revived by the professional theatrical troupe, Bengal Theatre. It is evident from the reviews in various contemporary newspapers and periodicals that the first performance, though not blameless, had been memorable. Saratchandra Ghosh, the grandson of Ashutosh Deb, played the part of Śakuntalā with extraordinary grace. Maheshchandra Mukhopadhyay reminisces that when Saratchandra, adorned in jewellery worth twenty thousand rupees, arrived on stage as the radiant Śakuntalā (dressed as queen), the spectators were spellbound.[104] *The Hindoo Patriot*, on 5th February, 1857, considered the performance as initiating a phoenix-like revival of urban Bengali plays, which were modelled on dramatic performances of English plays in Kolkata and which fell into disuse.[105] While the reformers stressed that the performance was a counterpoint to the purported indecencies of indigenous *yatra*-s, conservative periodicals like *Samachar chandrika* (9th February, 1857) emphasised the sanskritic roots of the play. The periodical noted that in the Prologue, the *sutradhar* had expressed doubt whether in contemporary times, in a world devoid of Sanskrit learning, their performance would be appreciated.[106] The fact that the performances moved the initial spectators has been however, countered by Kishorichand Mitra who had written about the play in *The Calcutta Review* (1873). According to Kishorichand, the performance at Beadon Street was a failure as actors were not talented enough to represent Kalidasa's play, which 'requires versatile and consummate talent for representation.'[107] It is interesting that Kishorichand's review strikes a discordant note amidst the universal adulation showered by the native press. Although Kishorichand blames the actors, his reservations might also stem from the fact that the play was also rendered innovatively, something lost if we merely follow the text. Maheshchandra recollects[108]:

> A person composed songs for 'Sakuntala,' we used to call him Kavichandra… When Kavichandra met Chatubabu [Ashutosh Deb], he said, "Kavichandra, the songs should be decent… Kavichandra replied, '… Don't I know that you will see the play along with your family? Should I compose songs which compel the women to leave?'

Thus, the performance used songs which were not composed by Nandakumar. This may reflect the tradition of y*atra*s, which were also considered to be indecent. The fact that the scion should be cautious about the songs, perhaps tells us why Kishorichand, a close associate of the Orientalists and a member of the Asiatic Society, would have reservations about the performance.

Nandakumar translates the text into verse and prose passages. His verse is rhymed, which often results in innovative resonances. Śakuntalā's love-epistle develops subversive undertones[109]:

taba man he niday, nā jāni kyeman hay,
kintu more kṛipāśunya haye duṣta māro he|
āmār ye aṅge nāth, tumi sadā dibe hāth,
se aṅge santāp sei dey anibār he|

[Your intent, o cruel one I do not know
But you murder me by your pitilessness.
Whichever part of my body, o Lord, you would touch incessantly
That part is anguished ceaselessly by it.]

The internal rhyme of 'nāth' (lord) and 'hāth'(hand) immediately engenders suggestions which Ashutosh Deb would have been worried about and which Kishorichand would have protested against. Duḥṣanta's response to the apprehension of Anasuyā that he might disregard Śakuntalā, as he has many wives is also remarkable:

Raja. bhadre! adhik ki kahiba.

yadi grihe vahu nārī, thāke mama āgñākārī,
sehetu ki esakhīre kariba helan.
tomāder kahi sār, ei sakhī dhara ār,
haibe āmār vaṃśa maryādā kāran|

(Nandakumar-55 60)

[Raja. O gentle maiden! What more should I say?
Although there are many women in my house who obey my orders,
Would I neglect my beloved for them?
Let me tell you the truth this beloved of mine and the earth
Would be the cause for my dynasty's glory.]

If Vidyasagar remains ambiguous about Duḥṣanta's wives, Nandakumar insists that he has many who serve him (they might not be his wives). Kalidasa's text uses the word 'parigrahavahutve'api,' yet both the translators remain ambivalent. Does Nandakumar choose 'āgñākārī' as he wants to rhyme it with 'nārī,' or is the evasion associated with debates about polygamy? An evident tension is formed between content and form; the translations often reflect this and depict a close association of aesthetic choice and utilitarian/ socio-political convictions. The *tripadi* stanza (8+8+14 syllables) used to translate the verses had been often used by Madanmohan Tarkalankar and has been used by Biharilal Chakravarty in *Sāradamangal*(1879).[110] Sibaji Bandopadhyay discusses how divergent conceptions of metrical forms shaped the myriad volumes and editions of the popular primers published by Sanskrit Press -- Vidyasagar's *Varṇaparicay* and Madanmohan's *Śiśuśikṣa*.[111] That Vidyasagar and Madanmohan represent two polarities of the reformed aesthetics has been already noted, while discussing the reviews of Rajendralal Mitra. It is interesting to note that when Nandakumar publishes the second edition of his book in 1882, he uses a mixture of *payār* and *caupadi*, avoiding the reference to 'hāth' in Sakuntala's love-epistle[112]:

Śaku. (paṭh karite lāgilen)

Nā jāni hṛiday taba keman kaṭhin.
Tomār lāgiye āmi kNādi nishi din.
Madan hāniche bāṇ, sNapechi tomāre prāṇ,
Ke ār karibe trāṇ, hale kṛipāhin.

[Śakuntalā. (reads)

I do not know how hard-hearted you are,
I yearn for you every day and night.
Love has struck me, I have submitted by life,
Who would save me, if you are merciless?]

In the second edition, Nandakumar uses *payār* when Duḥṣanta talks about his wives; he translates 'parigraha' as 'pariṇay'('marriage'), thus resolving the ambivalence of the first edition. For a text that had been actually performed on stage, Nandakumar's 1855 text seems to have retained a considerable amount of the sanskritised diction. He retains words like 'ātmaguṇāvamāṇiṇi'(Pischel 3.17.1, Nandakumar-55 56) and 'punaruktivādiṇi'('punaruttavāiṇiṃ' in Pischel 3.21.7-8, Nandakumar-55 59). He uses inflected words like "mahipālena'(Nandakumar-55 60). Like Ramlal Mitra, the sanskritised register is retained when there is an evident erotic connotation. When the companions first notice Duḥṣanta, they welcome him as the 'immediate fruit for their intimate wish'('jadhāsamīhidaphalassa avilambiṇo maṇoradhassa', Pischel 3.20.1-2). Nandakumar translates it as 'āmadiger priya sakhīr manoratha cestitaphal ānativilambei pariṇām mukh prāpta haila'(Nandakumar-55 58), retaining the *tatbhava* words. He also uses compound verbs like 'avadhān karitechi' (Nandakumar-55 57), 'vākya kahiyāchi'(Nandakumar-55 60) and 'gaman karite'(Nandakumar-55 64). In the second edition, these are transformed into 'śuni' (Nandakumar-55 50), ' 'balechi' (Nandakumar-55 53) and 'yābār'(Nandakumar-82 56), hence reflecting a *chalit* register. Sanskritised indeclinables like 'yadyapi'(Nandakumar-55 60) are transformed into 'yadi'(Nandakumar-82 53). Nandakumar's popular editions of the play are testaments of changes in Bengali register in the second half of the nineteenth century.

We would discuss these changes later, but Nandakumar's first edition can easily be distinguished from Vidyasagar's prose adaptation. Nandakumar does translate the similes of Kalidasa, which Vidyasagar had often evaded. For example, he preserves the image of the inseperable shadow of the tree (Pischel 3.29):

Rājā. Sundari!
    Karile gaman, kintu mama man,
    Dhāy anukṣaṇ, tomāri tare,
Dibasa yakhan, karaye gaman,
Chhāyā ki kakhan, tyāje tarure.

(Nandakumar-55 63)

[Raja. O beautiful one!
You left me, but my heart,
Forever moves, for you,
When the day, goes by,
Does the shadow, leave the tree?]

Unlike Vidyasagar, Nandakumar's Duḥṣanta offers to press Śakuntalā's feet (Nandakumar-55 62). The bracelet smells of *usīra* (Nandakumar-55 64). Although he does not use the imagery of albizzia, he does compare the bracelet to the crescent (Nandakumar-55 67).Nandakumar preserves the elaborate simile of involving the 'tree of love':

Rājā -- (Śakuntalār hasta graham koriya) Aho| Ki āshcharja sparśa|
Harakopahutāśana ati bhayankar|
Bhasma hay ya he kāmrūp taruvar||
Devatārā tāhāte sudhā briṣti kari|
Ankurita karilen punaḥ kām ari?||

(Nandakumar-55 67)

[Raja – (Taking Śakuntalā's hands) O, what a wondrous touch!
By Śiva's terrible ire,
Was burnt to ashes the tree of love.
Have the gods, showering ambrosial nectar
Revived again Love, the enemy?]

The translation shows that Nandakumar's disposition to rhyme ('kari'/'ari') adds new resonances to the text. The word 'ari' ('enemy') further complicates Kalidasa's polyvalent imagery. Unlike Vidyasagar, Nandakumar avoids the idiomatic expression in translating Śakuntalā's suspicion (Pischel 3.35.6) and translates it literally: 'tomar atibhakti-i avisvās yagya.'('your excessive devotion is dubious', Nandakumar-55 68).

What is of primal importance is a critical stage direction that comes at the end of our chosen extract. Nandakumar tells us that Duḥṣanta does kiss Śakuntalā:

> Rājā. āmi ihāi chāi, (baliyā mukh cumban karilen)
> (Śakuntalā mukh āvaran karilen)
>
> (Nandakumar-55 69)
>
> [Rājā. This is what I want (he kisses her face)
> (Śakuntalā veils her face)]

Although we do not have any witnesses of the actual performance, it would have scandalised the spectators in the Beadon Street residence if the stage direction was followed. Two men, Priyanath Basu Mallick (Duḥṣanta) and Sharat Chandra Ghosh (Śakuntalā), kissing on stage would have engendered quite a furore. It seems that we now understand more elaborately why Kishorichand would have disliked the performance.

The strands of dramatic aesthetics in Bengal crystallised concretely by the 1860s. On one hand, the sanskritic tradition was revived and redefined by the efforts of Premchand, Ramnarayan and Vidyasagar. On the other hand, a native indigenous tradition overlapped with their efforts and always posed a threat to subvert their core assumptions. Moreover, there was a reformed Renaissance aesthetics, influenced by English literature, which was evident in the works of Vidyasagar, Ramnarayan and Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1824-1873). The Orientalist tradition overlapped with both the older Sanskritic and the new, reformed ethos. Jones, Monier-Williams and Kishorichand Mitra held divergent views about obscenity in the play and the representation of the Prakrit passages. When Madhusudan wrote his first play, *Śarmiṣṭha* (1859), he adopted *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* as his ideal. Sukumar Sen notes the close similarities in certain verses.[113] Madhusudan wanted Premchand to revise his text, but Premchand found in them so many inaccuracies that he left it untouched.[114] Madhusudan recognised it as a clash of aesthetics in his letter to his friend Gaurchand Basak[115]:

> I am aware, my dear fellow, that there will, in all likelihood, be something of a foreign air about my drama and that it is my intention to throw off the fetters forged for us by a servile taste of everything Sanskrit.

The clash of these divergent visions of dramatic aesthetics was most evident in performances. For example, Ramnarayan Tarkaratna's *Ratnāvalī* (1858) was staged on 31st July, 1858 at the Belgachia Theatre, promoted by the Rajas of Paikpara.[116] Some songs for the performance was written by Gurudayal Chaudhuri, a student of Premchand Tarkavagish. When his songs were praised and Raja Pratapchandra wanted to reward Gurudayal for his efforts, the lyricist hesitantly expressed that he wanted his songs to be approved by his teacher.[117] Premchand, the Sanskritist as well as a versifier of *kaviyāl* songs, hence served as a bridge between the domains of classical Sanskrit literature and indigenous stage performances. It is this domain that shows its vestiges in Ramlochan's assistance to Jones, in Premchand's edition of the Bengali recension as well as in the translations/ adaptations of Nandakumar and Ramlal. Madhusudan had challenged its foundations while Ramnarayan and Vidyasagar strode both the worlds, reflecting the complicated aesthetics of nineteenth century Bengali prose.

In September 1857, Harimohan Gupta published a curious note in *Samvād prabhākar*. He discusses about his aborted plan of translating *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* and vouches to resume it. Dwarakanath Roy, the novelist and Rangalal Bandyopadhyay, the poet, had encouraged him to persist in his efforts. More significantly, Kaliprasanna Singha has provided him Monier-Williams's 1853 edition, with translation of the verse passages. Harimohan states that there has been three Bengali translations of the play and discusses the efforts of Ramlal Mitra, Vidyasagar and Nandakumar Roy. He is dissatisfied with the printing of Ramlal's Anglo Indian Press edition and mentions that Vidyasagar's book is self-confessedly not a translation and reflects little poetic virtuosity. He further points out that Nandakumar Roy's translation has been prepared from the 1839 edition by Premchand Tarkavagish. Yet, he has noticed differences between the editions of Monier-Williams and Premchand, and prefers Monier-Williams's text. He claims that the prose passages in Nandakumar's book are often obscure. He states[118]:

> The literal translations of Sir William Jones and Monier-Williams, which is preserved in the Fort William Library, have greatly helped me, especially, the latter book, which is written in such a lucid manner and printed so neatly that it makes us happy…

Although he plans not to translate the play literally and would leave out sections, Harimohan intends to translate all the similes of the text. He confesses that Kalidasa is distinctive because of his rhetorical prowess in employing *upamā* (simile) and *svabhavokti* (natural description); thus he has translated most of the similes. Harimohan's note shows how the Orientalist translations and interpretations of the text served as an aesthetic ideal and spurred literary endeavours in Bengali prose. Hardikbrata Biswas considers Harimohan's review to be an embodiment of the dialectical tension between reformist and Hindu revivalist tendencies in nineteenth century Bengal.[119] The debates about aesthetics and language would bring about the crystallisation of literary registers in Bengali prose.

The complexities of the reformist paradigm became evident when Ramnarayan Tarkaratna published his translation of *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* in Ashwin, 1267 Bangabda (September-October, 1860). Ramnarayan's use of *chalit bhasha* (Rajnarayan Basu's *chalit bhasha*, High Chalit Bhasha, according to Suhas Chatterjee's model for Bengali diglossia)[120] is quite remarkable, as subsequent translations of the text would also use this register. The assimilation of conjunct consonants with 'r' – 'sacce,' (Ramnarayan 459), 'pāccine'(Ramnarayan 460), "kocco'(Ramnarayan 461)[121] –is observed in the text which suggests the use of colloquial register (Rajnarayan Basu's *kathya bhasha*, Low Chalit Bhasha, according to Suhas Chatterjee). Similarly, the use of words like 'halem'(Ramnarayan 457), 'callem'(Ramnarayan 459), 'elem' (Ramnarayan 460), 'bNāclem' (Ramnarayan 461) and expressions like 'pāri ne'(Ramnarayan 460), 'pāccine' (Ramnarayan 460) show Vowel Height Assimilation, a common trait of the colloquial register in the nineteenth century Kolkata.[122] Moreover, the deaspiration of aspirated consonates is also noticed , a crucial marker of the colloquial register, as in'rākco'(Ramnarayan 458), 'hacci'(Ramnarayan 458), 'haccen'(Ramnarayan 458), 'āscen'(Ramnarayan 459),'hacce' (Ramnarayan 460). However, sanskritized diction is also used, words like ‘anugrihīta’(Ramnarayan 457), ‘manobhilāṣ’(Ramnarayan 458), ‘grīṣmadagdha’(Ramnarayan 458), ‘kleśdāyak’(Ramnarayan 459) are quite common. Like Vidyasagar, though, Ramnarayan reduces the number of denominative roots and uses *tadbhava* words.

Ramanarayan’s love-epistle is interesting as it uses the *sadhu* rather than *chalit* diction. Generally, the dichotomy of Sanskrit and Prakrit is thought to be reflected in the diglossia of *sadhu* and *chalit*. However, as we have seen earlier, whether the text of the love-epistle is in Maharasthri or Sauraseni is debatable. In Kalidasa’s play, Śakuntalā reads her epistle in Prakrit while Duḥṣanta suddenly appears and vents his emotions in Sanskrit verse (Pischel 3.19-20). In Ramnarayan’s text, quite inevitably, there is a seamless transition from Duḥṣanta’s verse to Śakuntalā’s, creating an impression that Duḥṣanta interrupts Śakuntalā and finishes her verse. This accentuates the dramatic effect of Duḥṣanta’s revelation of his presence in the grove:

> Śāku. Nā jānihe taba man, mor prati se keman, ye kare āmār man, kahiba he kāhāre| Madaner phulabāṇ, satata tāpiche prāṇ ,–
>
> Rājā.(Sahasā agrasar haiyā)
>
> Tomāy tāpiche mātro, dagdha kare āmāre.
>
> (Ramnarayan 457)
>
> [Śakuntalā. I do not know your heart, how it is disposed towards me, the feeling that perturbs me, whom will I disclose? The flower-shaft of Love, ceaselessly singes me –
>
> Rājā. (Suddenly coming forward) It merely singes you, it burns me.]

The epistle is written like prose, although it is composed in regular metre and with punctuation. It might be read as a *caupadi*(8+8+8+7 syllables). The shift from verse to prose marks an important trend in Bengali aesthetics.

Ramnarayan shifts verses from one speaker to the other, as Jones had done earlier. The verse in which it is asserted that ‘a gem does not seek itself, but is sought for’ (Pischel 3.17), is uttered by Priyamvadā, not Duḥṣanta, as in Kalidasa’s play. He leaves out the next prose passage, where the *ātapatra* imagery had been used (Pischel 3.17.1-2). Unlike Vidyasagar and Nandakumar, Ramnarayan did not hesitate to reveal that Duḥṣanta had many wives (Ramnarayan 458). In Ramnarayan’s text, the companions did not invent the excuse of rescuing a lost fawn to leave the lovers alone:

> Priyam. mahārāj, ekhan tabe āmrā mālā gNethe ānige?
>
> Rājā. ār mālye prayojan ki? Tomāder sakhī praṇaypāś-i āmār galadeśe pradān karlen, etei gāndharvva vivāha svīkār karā halo.
>
> (sahaāshye anyonyavalokan)
>
> An. hNā, halo bate tathāpi ānle bhala hay, (ubhaye gamanodyatā)
>
> (Ramnarayan 458)
>
> [Priyamvadā. Maharaj, should we go and weave a garland?
>
> Raja. Is a garland needed anymore? Your friend has placed love’s bondage around my neck, this is how the Gandharva rite is accomplished.
>
> (laughs as he looks elsewhere)
>
> Anusūyā. Yes, It is accomplished, nonetheless, its better to get one,(both tend to leave)]

The idea of accomplishing a *gandharva* marriage is suggested by Priyamvadā, unlike in Kalidasa’s play where Duḥṣanta discusses about it after the companions leave. Ramnarayan does not excise most of the similes – the imagery of the tree’s shadow (Pischel 3.29, Ramnarayan 459), albizzia blossom and stalk (Pischel 3.30, Ramnarayan 459), the mythological allusion to Śiva’s ire and the tree of Love (Pischel 3.34, Ramnarayan 460) and crescent shaped bracelet (Pischel 3.35,Ramnarayan 460) are preserved. He is indecisive about translating Śakuntalā's suspicion (Pischel 3.35.6), he translates it both literally as well as idiomatically:

> Śaku. Ai to—ato ādari to avisvāser mūl, bale – 'ati bhakti chorer lakṣaṇ'
>
> (Ramnarayan 460)
>
> [Śakuntalā. That's it – this excessive flattery is the root of suspicion, there goes the saying – 'It is excessive devotion that reveals a thief.']

The other evasions are, however, similar to Vidyasagar's. Ramnarayan does not mention the wrap around the breasts (Pischel 3.26, Ramnarayan 458). At the end of the extract, Śakuntalā merely asks, "What do they do if they are not satiated?" (Ramnarayan 461) while her companions warn her of Gautamī's arrival. Duḥṣanta neither kisses nor tries to kiss Śakuntalā.

Ramnarayan reveals in his Preface to his translation that he had introduced certain changes in the play in order to make it amenable to contemporary dramatic aesthetics[123]:

> …when I indulged in translating [the play], in order to make it suitable for performance in accordance with modern dramatic conventions, I have changed, excised or added *rasa* (aesthetic sentiment) and *bhāva* (emotional state) at several places…

These aesthetic changes would be important, as the the concept of *rasa* is deeply rooted in not only conceptions about aesthetics but also ideations of language. Other discordant voices were evidently present in the 'despicable' tradition of *yatra* that Ramnarayan had earlier discussed in the Preface to *Ratnāvalī*. The reformed *yatra* tradition, which amalgamated the older indigenous traditions with aesthetics imbibed from Sanskrit/ English plays, came to be known as the *opera*. These were immensely popular and often readapted Sanskritised plays, adding songs and presenting a different ideation of rasa.

Ironically, Ramnarayan's *Ratnāvalī* would be amongst the first plays which were adapted; Harimohan Roy wrote *Ratnāvalī Gitābhinay* in 1865.[124] However, the first play to be refurbished in an operatic garb was *Śakuntalā Gitābhinay*, published in the same year by Annadaprasad Bandyopadhyay. Soon, new adaptations of Kalidasa's play were performed on stage. The popular amateur troupe of Arpuli, Pataldanga performed the play in 1866. There were performances at Kali Krishna Pramanik's house at Kansaripara (in 1867) and at Kshetra Ghosh's house at Sankaritola.[125] It would be interesting to explore this domain of popular urban reception of the Kalidasa's *sringaric* passage.

Annadaprasad's text was published in 1874[126], several years after the earliest performances. Printed at Viswadut Press (Kalighat), it was sold for eight annas. In the preface, Annadaprasad outlines that he had tried to revise the obscene aesthetics of *yatra* to craft plays which could suitably entertain the cultured masses ('bhadra sādhāran') of the city. Like Ramnarayan and Nandakumar, Annadaprasad was also endeavouring to bridge a disjunction in aesthetics but he did so by preserving the lyrical superfluity of popular *yatra*-s. His rendition is not a faithful reproduction of Kalidasa's *sringaric* elaboration. Śakuntalā's love-epistle and Duḥṣanta's initial response (Annadaprasad 18) is taken *verbatim* from Ramnarayan's translation. The verse passages, uttered by the King, are often in the form of songs. For example, as Duḥṣanta elaborates on his anguish of love, he also breaks into a rendition in *rāginī Bārwa*, in '*tāla Ṭhuṃri'*(Annadaprasad 19). Most probably the tala signature indicates a tala of 16 beats, a *chāncar tāla* (variations of *chāncar* like *ādā* and *jāt* are refered to in other songs), which was often used with semi-classical renditions like *ṭhuṃri*.[127] *Bārwa*, considered to be a minor melodic mode, had been popularised by musicians of the Agra Gharana, and is considered to be solemn and melancholic.[128] It is significant to note that *ṭhuṃri* was associated with the courtly circles of the *nawabi* era, especially the court of Wajid Ali Shah in Lucknow.[129] After the annexation of Awadh in 1856, Wajid Ali had travelled to Kolkata along with his entourage of court musicians. This perhaps explains the presence of the *ṭhuṃri* in Annadaprasad's text.

This also suggests a greater emphasis on performance as *ṭhuṃri* is necessarily a performative genre, focused on articulatory modulation during singing and dance. Often performed by courtesans in Lucknow and Benaras, the genre became infamous for its erotic (and decadent) connotations, till it was reformulated in the late nineteenth century. The content of *ṭhuṃri* was often the hankering of love, especially couched as a discourse between Rādhā and Kriṣṇa.[130] While expressing her doubts about Duḥṣanta's fidelity (Annadaprasad 29), Śakuntalā refers to Kriṣṇa and his return to Mathura after stealing the hearts of the *gopi*-s which presages Duḥṣanta's own desertion of his beloved. The texts of the *yatra* often subverted the boundaries of social propriety, hinting not only at the problematic context of a polygamous marriage but also about the illicit relationship between the *nouveau riche* of Kolkata and the *tawaif*s/courtesans/ prostitutes. This, as we would see later, would have considerable impact on shaping the language of love in the *sringaric* passage.

Annadaprasad often elaborates parts of the text to focus on particular themes. For example, Duḥṣanta asks Priyamvadā whether Śakuntalā has revived from her love-anguish. Priyamvadā mischievously quips that the medicine (i.e. Duḥṣanta himself) has arrived, thus she would soon revive (Pischel 3.21.5-6). This conversation is absent in the

Devanagari recension; the reference to Śakuntalā's *śarīratāpaḥ* (literally 'body heat', but might suggest 'febrile anguish of love' as well as 'sexual passion') might have been considered to be indecent. Annadaprasad, however, elaborates this dialogue:

Rājā. tomāder priyasakhīke āj bhāvantar dekhe ātiśay asukhī o nirutsahī hoyechi; satya kore bala, erup asukher kāran ki?

Ana. Mahārāj, priyasakhīr ekhon ār asukh nai, yeman rog, tār mata āusadho padeche, ār cintā ki, āpnār darshānei sakal asukh dur hāyeche|

Rājā. sakhī, tomār kathār bhāv āmi kichu bujhte pāllem nā|

Ana. (hāsya mukhe) sekhi mahārāj?

Rāgiṇī Kālāṅgda – Tāla Ektāla|
Balite haibe tā ki jānonā he guṇamaṇi.
Nalinī mudiyā ray ki prakāśile dinamaṇi.
yar janye guṇanidhi, duḥkhe bhāse niravadhi,
Se nidhi milālen vidhi, ār ki duḥkha
bala śuni||

Priya. tā mahārāj, yathārtha balte ki, āpni-i āmāder priyasakhīr sakal asukher kāraṇ hayechilen|

Raja. sakhī, tā halye avashyai āmi doṣi bate, tā āmi tomāder sakhīr pāye dharye kṣamā prārthanā kacci, ta haleo ki se aparādh mārjjana habe nā| (Śakuntalār caraṇ dhāraṇ pūrvak) –

(Annadaprasad 20-21)

[Rājā. I have been utterly sad and disheartened by the change of mood of your beloved companion; tell me the truth; what is the reason for this discontent?

Ana. Maharaj, our beloved companion is not suffering any more.The medicine has befitted the disease. Why worry any more? Just by seeing you, all her ailment has been alleviated.

Rājā. I did not understand you.

> Ana. (Smiling) Is it so, Maharaja?
>
> Rāgiṇī Kālāṅgda – Tāla Ektāla.
>
> Is it to be explained, o excellent one?
> Does the waterlily remain enclosed when the sun rises?
> For whom the treasured one (i.e. Śakuntalā) is forever despondent,
> Providence bestowed her that treasure, then, tell me, would she be sad?
>
> Rājā. Then o friend, I am to be blamed. I would ask for forgiveness by touching your companion's feet, wouldn't my sin be forgiven even then?(proceeds to touch her feet)—]

Like Ramlal, Annadaprasad often reweaves Kalidasa's images. The image of the white waterlily (*kumudinī,* Pischel 3.20) which sprouts at night has been evaded; however, the complementary image of the lotus that unfurls itself at daybreak has been invoked. Further, the iconic scene of Kriṣṇa touching Rādhā's feet from the Tenth Canto of *Gitagovinda* has been superimposed on the Duḥṣanta - Śakuntalā yarn though Duḥṣanta's offer to press Śakuntalā's feet (Pischel 3.25) has been evaded.

As Śakuntalā resists Duḥṣanta by holding his hands, he reinterprets this as her assent to marry him (*paṇigrahaṇ,* Annadaprasad 22). The comparison of Śakuntalā with a priceless gem (Pischel 3.17), which had been a constituent of Duḥṣanta's soliloquy, becomes a part of Duḥṣanta's passionate assertion of love to Śakuntalā (Annadaprasad 23). Annadaprasad, however, extends the comparison:

> Does the jewel know its own value?...[I]t resides at hideous places – hills, mountains, deep forests and other impenetrable realms. Yet it is a priceless and extremely precious treasure, whoever gains it by fate becomes prosperous. Such a precious treasure, this woman-jewel, have I won today by providence, you are fortuitous-jewel incarnate!

The companions suggest that a *gāndharva* marriage should be performed. As the companions set out to bring the garland, Duḥṣanta suggests that they hardly have any need for external rites – having already been bound by the garland of inner adoration (‘manamālya,’ Annadaprasad 24). He suggests an exchange of rings. In Kalidasa’s play, the ring given by Duḥṣanta acts as a token of love and recognition. In Annadaprasad’s adaptation, the lovers exchange rings (Annadaprasad 25) – sealing a marital vow. The *gāndharva* marriage of Kalidasa’s text is rediscovered as a European wedding ritual in the bylanes of the nineteenth century colonial city.

Like Ramnarayan, Annadaprasad also devises a novel excuse for the companions as they leave the lovers (Annadaprasad 26). Priyamvadā states that they would have to water the madhavi plant (*Hiptage bengalensis*). When Śakuntalā expresses doubt about Duḥṣanta’s intentions, she adopts an intimate, even suggestive tone:

> Śaku. ai to mahārāj, oteito mane sandeha janme, bhāvi ye prathamei ato bādān tāte śeṣ raile hay.
>
> (Annadaprasad 26)
>
> [Śaku. That’s it, O king. That is exactly what rouses doubt. If a person is so forward at first, one apprehends, whether the end would be auspicious.]

She continues with a general accusation about men, an accusation unparalleled in Kalidasa’s text:

> Prathame kathā kauśale hāthe dey cNād|
> Miṣta mukh puruṣ kibal nārī majābār phNād||
>
> (Annadaprasad 26)
>
> [At first, by crafty words, he seems to bestow rapture,
>
> A sweet-mouthed man is merely a snare to fool women.]

Śakuntalā continues to refer to men as devoid of morality and does not even spare Kriṣṇa. Interestingly, Duḥṣanta responds by pointing out that affection of women is difficult to gain:

> Rājā. Bārābādi nā halye ki bādhelo praṇay?
> Elo prem, chNāchā jal, katakṣaṇ ray||
>
> (Annadaprasad 27)
>
> [Rājā. If we (i.e. men) do not overexert, would affection be engendered?
>
> The love of women is like water on a sieve, how long does it last?]

This gendered exchange is akin to *kheru* or *kheur* songs that had been quite popular in pre-colonial as well as in nineteenth century Bengal.[132] When the companions return, Anusūyā voices her apprehension that kings are polygamous. They do not love their wives equally and this might be the cause of displeasure for their companion. Like Ramnarayan (and unlike Vidyasagar and Ramnarayan), Duḥṣanta concedes that he is polygamous; yet he swears his love for Śakuntalā (Annadaprasad 32). Like Ramlal, Annadaprasad depicts Duḥṣanta bidding farewell to Śakuntalā and promising a return (Annadaprasad 37-41). These events never happen on stage in Kalidasa's play. Annadaprasad's text not only informs us about popular *yatra* reinterpretations of the play, it also tells us about the nature of additions to Nandakumar's play which were often an essential part of its performance.

The dialectic tension between text and performance created ruptures in nineteenth century reception of *Abhijñānaśakuntalam*. Baradaprasad Majumdar's B.P.M. Press published two separate books – a Sanskrit text as well as a Bengali translation in c.1869. Jaganmohan Tarkalankar, who had earlier been associated with the periodical, *Paridarśak*[133] and the librarian of the Sanskrit College, edited the text of the first four acts and translated them. Purportedly due to lack of time, he could not proceed any further and the project was stalled. Eventually, Kedarnath Tarkaratna of the Doveton College completed the task of preparing the edition of the text while Harishchandra Kaviratna of the Presidency College translated the rest of the acts.[134] The printing of this innovative bi-lingual project seems to have been fretted with delay. Jaganmohan writes the preface to the Sanskrit edition in 1868 (Shravan, 1790 Saka). Baradaprasad's preface (in Bengali), published in both the books, is dated Samvat 1926 (1869-70 CE). The title page of the Sanskrit edition also bears the same date. The copy of the Bengali translation consulted does not have a title page but is preceded by an anonymous preface (followed by the publisher's preface of Baradaprasad). This anonymous preface might have been written by Harishchandra. The anonymous writer alludes to Goethe's praise of the text. He concedes that translating the text from Sanskrit would encounter inevitable difficulties[135]:

> …if we focus on translating the text in refined Bengali then we necessarily need to change, excise or elaborate certain sections of the Sanskrit text. However, this has not been our intention; our chief concern has been to preserve, as much as possible, the Sanskrit nuances.

Jaganmohan, in his preface written in Sanskrit, explains the process of preparing the Sanskrit edition and translation of the first three acts. He had consulted the three editions (1839, 1860, 1864) of Premchand Tarkavagish's text as well as three editions printed in Europe (most probably the editions of M. Chezy, Boethingk and Monier-Williams). He had also collated two manuscripts. Jaganmohan was the librarian of the Sanskrit College and it is probable that he had accessed the manuscripts preserved in the college (Calcutta

Sanskrit College Ms. Nos. 262, 264 and 273). Amongst these, two manuscripts (Mss. 264 and 273) bear similarities with what Kanjilal demarcates as the 'Mixed Devnagar' recension[136] and might be the source of the eclectic nature of the edition. Nonetheless, the editors and translators of the Bengali recension did study Monier-Williams's text and translation. This had implications in sculpting the amatory discourse of the Third Act.

Although Jaganmohan mostly preserves the *sringaric* elaboration of the Bengali recension, he often adopts readings which are preserved in Devanagari recension. He accepts the Devanagari recension, published by Monier-Williams, when the *ātapatra* imagery (Pischel 3.17.1-2) is banished to the foot-note as a variant while the reference to a veil or cloth (*paṭa*) is introduced[137]:

> Sakhyau. Ai attaguṇāvamaṇiṇi! Ko ṇam sarṃraṇivvabaittiaṃ sāradiaṃ josiṇiṃ padanteṇa vāredi|
>
> [Companions. O undervaluer of our self! Who would veil himself with a piece of cloth to keep off the autumnal moonlight, which cools the body?]

Monier-Williams's text has the same words, except that it has 'dāṇim' for 'ṇām'.

When Jaganmohan translates the line, he uses the phrase 'uttarīya vasan' to specify the specific garment that the companions refer to.[138] He prefers the reading 'kantakitena' (B.P.M. Sanskrit 70) to 'pulakāacitena'(Pischel 3.18), again accepting Monier-Williams' interpretation (Monier-Williams-53 3.68). Jaganmohan sometimes prefers verbs in Monier-Williams' edition, like 'ārobidā'(B.P.M. Sanskrit 73; Monier-Williams-53 3.71.7) for 'pābidā'(Pischel 3.21.16), 'nivvāhehi'(B.P.M. Sanskrit 74, Monier-Williams-53 3.72.2) for 'karissasi'(Pischel 3.22.2), 'navetti'(B.P.M. Sanskrit 71, Monier-Williams-53 3.68.6) for 'na va tti' (Pischel 3.18.5), 'ṇikkhittavanaṃ karehi' (B.P.M. Sanskrit 71, Monier-Williams-53 3.68.3-4) for ‘ālihīadu’(Pischel 3.18.4). Even when there is no parallel in Monier-William’s edition, changes are perceptible. In Jaganmohan’s text ‘dāṇim’(Jaganmohan 72) is used, instead of ‘idaṇim’(Pischel 3.21.1), a transformation often encountered in Sauraseni. Parts of verses are adapted from Monier-Williams/ Devanagari recension. Jaganmohan notes that ‘nalinīdalatālavrintam’ (Pischel 3.25) is corrupt reading and corrects it as ‘nalinīdalatālavrintaih’(B.P.M. Sanskrit 77), in accordance with Monier-Williams’s edition (Monier-Williams-53 3.74). He also realigns the verse lines to agree with the Devanagari recension. He chooses ‘śītalaiḥ’(cool) for ‘śīkaraiḥ’(‘moist with vapour’)—a choice reflected in Monier-Williams’s text. These choices influence Jaganmohan’s translation. Nandakumar had translated the word to suggest ‘drenched with dew’(Nandakumar-55 62, ‘nihārādra’). The lotus leaves are wet with dew and hence when fanned, would soothe Śakuntalā’s febrile condition. Jaganmohan could avoid the tactility of dew drops on lotus leaves, interpreting the word only to suggest ‘lack of warmth.’:

> …sundari! ekhan ki āmi śrāntihara śītal padmapatrer pākhā diyā śītal bātās karba?
>
> (B.P.M. Bengali 38)
>
> […O beauteous one! Would I now fan you with the cool breeze which would be emanated from the refreshing, cold lotus leaves?]

When the symbolic association of dew with semen is understood, it becomes evident why the Devanagari recension had avoided ‘śīkaraiḥ.’ Jaganmohan’s translation accepts the reformed notions of propriety by following the Devanagari recension. When Duḥṣanta assures Sakuntala that Kanva would not consider their communion to be sinful (Pischel

3.27.4-5; Monier-Williams-53 3.75.3-4) the texts of Bengali and Devanagari recensions differ. Jaganmohan prefers the Devanagari recension, not naming Kanva but referring to him as ‘kūlapati.’

The distinctive trait of Jaganmohan’s Bengali translation is the retention of Sanskrit words and phrases, a translation aesthetics which he had already suggested in his Preface. Words like ‘rambhoru’(Pischel 3.24, B.P.M. Bengali 38), ‘śarīrāvastha’(Pischel 3.25.4, B.P.M. Bengali 39), ‘stanāvaraṇ’(Pischel 3.26, B.P.M. Bengali 39), ‘jīviteśvarī’(Pischel 3.32.3, B.P.M. Bengali 41), ‘līlāvaraṇa’(Pischel 3.32, B.P.M. Bengali 41), ‘samudrarasanā`’(Pischel 3.23, B.P.M. Bengali 37) remain unchanged in the translation, sometimes obscuring meaning. Often phrases are inspired by the Sanskrit text, for example, Jaganmohan translates ‘alamalamāyasena’(Pischel 3.21) as ‘āyāser āvaśyak nāi’(B.P.M. Bengali 36). Yet, the assimilation of conjunct consonants with ‘r’ that we had observed in Ramnarayan’s translation is also observable (though not as frequently) as in ‘kallem’(B.P.M. Bengali 35), ‘pāccine’ (B.P.M. Bengali 42). Similarly, signs of Vowel Height Assimilation are observable in words like ‘karlem’(B.P.M. Bengali 35), ‘halem’(B.P.M. Bengali 37), ‘pāri ne’(B.P.M. Bengali 39). Deaspiration of aspired consonants are very frequent – ‘karco’(B.P.M. Bengali 35), ‘hayece’(B.P.M. Bengali 36), ‘balācce’ (B.P.M. Bengali 36), ‘phelece’(B.P.M. Bengali 37), ‘khNujce’(B.P.M. Bengali 38), ‘kArci’ (B.P.M. Bengali 39), ‘cok’(B.P.M. Bengali 42) are only a few examples amongst many. Moreover words like ‘kyān’(B.P.M. Bengali 39) show the lowering of frontal vowel sound, an evident influence of Bengali dialect of the eastern regions of Bengal.[139] There are also vestiges of vowel sound assimilation in words like ‘diki’(B.P.M. Bengali 35). Elision of vowels is also seen in some expressions like ‘necen’ (‘niyechen’, B.P.M. Bengali 41) and ‘phu de’(‘phu diye’, B.P.M. Bengali 42).

It is important to note that the colloquial register is used arbitrarily, both Duḥṣanta as well the companions converse in it. Yet, sanskritised phrases like ‘akṣar vinyās’(B.P.M. Bengali 35) are also used by the women. Yet, the colloquial register is also adopted, as when Śakuntalā chastises Priyamvadā for teasing her. Kalidasa’s text states:

> Śakuntalā.(saroṣamiva) viram dullalide! edāvatyaṃ gadāe vi mae kilasi|
>
> (Pischel 3.24.2)
>
> [Śakuntalā (as if angered): Stop it, you mischievous girl; how dare you mock me in the state I am in?]

Jaganmohan’s Śakuntalā would give vent to her anger more effectively, using colloquial words:

> Śaku. (kupitār nyāy haiyā) ā molo duṣta chNudi! thām| āmār ei avasthā, ekhan āmār saṅge buji tomār parihāśer śāmāy?
>
> (B.P.M. Bengali 38)
>
> [Śaku. (pretending to be angered) For shame, you minx! Stop this. I am in this miserable state, and you want to mock me now?]

Similarly, Śakuntalā does not hesitate to use the idiom expressing her doubt about Duḥṣanta’s excessive devotion for her(B.P.M. Bengali 42).

As Jaganmohan edited the text as well as translated it, he preserves most of the images that Kalidasa uses. However, like Ramlal, he would often use a sanskritised register to avoid being risqué. Consider Duḥṣanta's expression of an ardent desire to kiss Śakuntalā:

> Rājā. (aṅguli dvārā Śakuntalār vadan unnata kariyā svagata) āhā! priyār ei adharbimba adyapi anucchiṣta thākāte ki kamal-i roaeche, āmāro ihā pān kartte vilakṣaṇ icchā hayeche balei bujhi kampita haye āmāke anumati pradān karcce.

(B.P.M. Bengali 42)

> [Rājā.(speaks to himself, as he lifts Śakuntalā's face with his fingers) Oh! The lips of my beloved has not yet been tasted, thus it has remained so soft. As I do verily want to drink from them, it trembles to give me permission.]

Kalidasa's text runs as follows:

> Rājā | aṅgulibhyaṃ mukhamunnamayyatmagatam||
> cāruṇā sphuritenāyamaparikṣatakomalaḥ|
> pipāsato mamānugñāṃ dadātavi priyādharaḥ||

(Pischel 3.36)

Although Jaganmohan does not use many of the Sanskrit words in Kalidasa's text, he compensates by using *tatsama* words like 'adyapi', 'anucchista', 'kampita', 'pradān'. Thus he maintains the sanskritised timbre of the text.

The publication of Jaganmohan's edition of the play was closely followed by several other ones. Krishnanath Nyayapanchanana (1833-1911), the famed scholar of Nyaya from Navadvip, published his edition in 1869. Damaru Vallabha Pant, a scholar from Nepal, published his edition of the Bengali recension from the Jñānaratnākara Press at

Nimtola Ghat Street, Kolkata in 1871. Pant's text of the *sringaric* elaboration is almost exactly the same as Premchand Tarkavagish's edition, with one minor difference. Till that time, all recensions translated in Bengali adhered to the Bengali recension which Jones had translated. University of Calcutta decided to include Kalidasa's play in its graduation syllabus in 1860s. The Syndicate decided to teach the Devanagari recension. Vidyasagar was vested with the responsibility of editing the text.[140] Vidyasagar used Raghavabhatta's seventeenth century commentary *Arthadyotanikā* and shaped his text, not necessarily as a critical edition but as one suitable for students. His edition would however be extremely influential in establishing the critical prominence of the Retrenched Devanagar recension. As Dileep Kumar Kanjilal elaborates[141]:

> In presenting an acceptable text mainly for the students, the great humanist and reformer eschewed the greater portion of the 3rd act as undelectable, and bolstered the cause of the retrenched text accepted by Raghavabhatta so much that the whole literary world almost veered round Isvarachandra in espousing the retrenched text as the genuine text of the drama.

Why would Vidyasagar choose to edit the Devenagari recension when he had himself adapted the Bengali recension in 1854? His edition was not merely an effort to produce a textbook but also one to redefine the aesthetics of language in Bengal. It was buffeted by not only the aesthetics he inherited from Premchand, the conventions he imbibed from the Orientalists and his own reformist vernacular ideations, it was also shaped by the forces of incipient nationalism (and nationalist puritanism) which struck its roots in the Gangetic heartland of South Asia.

In the Preface to his edition, Vidyasagar tries to justify the reason for preparing a new edition. He states that the Bengali and Devanagari recensions are so divergent that one cannot understand one by reading another. Yet, the Devanagari recension cannot be accessed in Bengal. Hence, there was a need to prepare a Devanagari edition for the students, collating manuscripts from the Northern parts of India (Vidyasagar uses the term ‘Northwestern’ to point out to Devanagari recension). Vidyasagar evidently accepts Monier-Williams as his model. He comments[142]:

> About eighteen years have passed since Mr. Monier-Williams, the Sanskrit Professor of Oxford University, published an exquisite edition of the text in England. In this edition, almost all the difficult passages are well explained with English commentary. This gentleman has taken great care in editing, reflecting considerable dilligence and profound understanding. This edition is prepared in such a manner as would cater fully to the needs of examinees of the university. Yet, his book is not accessible to the students of our country, hence, it fails to alleviate the need for a Northwestern (Devanagari) recension of the text available here [i.e. in Bengal]. In order to fulfil this demand, this edition has been published.

Vidyasagar elaborates on the difficulty he faced while procuring a text of the Devanagari recension. He had asked one of his relatives in Varanasi to help him but the request was in vain. Later, however, he met Bharatendu Harishchandra (1850-1885) while on a trip to Varanasi. It is Harishchandra who gave him from his manuscript library, Sarasvati Bhandar, three texts, one commentary (Raghavabhatta’s *Arthadyotanikā*) and three regional Prakrit variations (*Prakṛit vikṛiti*). Moreover, Prasanna kumar Sarvadhikari, the Principal of Sanskrit College, Kolkata had helped him to access two manuscripts from Government Sanskrit College, Varanasi. Vidyasagar claimed to have collated these texts and he had noted all the variations in footnotes. After elaborating on his critical apparatus, Vidyasagar makes an interesting point. He states[143]:

> I have ventured to represent the text of the Northwestern (Devanagari) recension; hence I have followed the texts of the above mentioned manuscripts. However, in some sections, where the text seems to be incoherent in those texts… only in those few places, out of compulsion, the Bengali recension had to be adopted. Moreover, at places, judging the text to be affected by scribal errors, I have emended them.

This bit of confession is significant as, in spite of his insinuations to the contrary, Vidyasagar's text differs considerably from the text edited by Monier-Williams. The first four acts of Monier-Williams' edition follows the Mixed Devanagar recension while the rest follows the retrenched Devanagar recension. Vidyasagar, however, follows the retrenched Devanagar recension almost in entirety. Moreover, some of his emendations reflect his puritanism as is his use of 'inguli' for 'ingudi' in First Act (Pischel 1.13; Monier-Williams-53 1.14), as the 'former was supposed to contain some element of vulgarity.'[144] Both the Devanagari as well as the Bengali recension retains the reference to the *ingudi* plant. Thus, Vidyasagar's edition did not adhere to any one specific recension.

The most distinctive feature of Vidyasagar's edition[145] is the use of diminutive verb forms. Verb forms like 'vārei' (Vidyasagar-71 85) for 'vāredi'(Monier-Williams-53 3.67.2), 'nioiā'(Vidyasagar-71 86) for 'nioidā'(Monier-Williams-53 3.67.3), 'karai'(Vidyasagar-71 89) for 'karedi'(Monier-Williams-53 3.71.3; Pischel 3.21.8), 'ṇivvua'(Vidyasagar-71 92) for 'ṇivvuda'(Monier-Williams-53 3.73.1) reflect the loss of consonants in Maharashtri. Other words like 'mā-aram'(Vidyasagar-81 92) for 'mādaram'(Monier-Williams-53 3.73.3, Pischel 3.24.5) and 'saṅga-attham'(Vidyasagar-81 87) for 'saṅgadattha/ saṅgadattham' (Monier-Williams-53 3.68.5, Pischel 3.18.5) also reflect a similar pattern. Some words are considerably different from corresponding expressions in other editions, like ‘gīavatthu’(Vidyasagar-71 92 86; Sanskrit: ‘gītavastu,’ ‘content of the song’) for ‘gīdiā’(Monier-Williams-53 3.68.1, Pischel 3.18.1; Sanskrit: ‘gītikā,’ ‘a short lyric’). Although most of these variations are in the Prakrit words, the Sanskrit also reflects interesting changes. For example, ‘śarīrāvasthā’ (Pischel 3.25.4; Monier-Williams-53 3.74.3), which Jaganmohan had preserved even in his Bengali translation becomes ‘samavasthā’(Vidyasagar-71 93). Thus a reference to ‘bodily condition’ is evaded by a reference merely to ‘condition or state’.

Vidyasagar’s revisions reveal two tendencies. His preference for Maharashtri is perhaps guided by a desire to reaffirm the dichotomy between Sanskrit verse and Prakrit prose, thus exaggerating the distinctions between the two registers. A similar process had influenced the use of Brajbhasha and Khariboli, thus delineating two distinct registers of Hindvi/ Hindi. It is significant that Harishchandra supplied the texts to Vidyasagar as he would actively participate in reimagining these dichotomies in Hindi/Hindvi.[146] Lalitha du Perron points out how the use of Brajbhasha in ṭhumṛi imagines a space ‘insulated from mundanity’[147]. This othering of verse is one of the important stimulants that sculpted the domains of modern, analytical indigenous prose. As our study of Beames would reveal, it would also lead to the ideations of dichotomous nationhood(s). The second revisionary tendency is evidently the erasure of what is perceived as obscenity. In the subsequent years, Vidyasagar’s interaction with the Orientalists and performative adaptations of the play on Kolkata stage would further ossify these aspects of revision.

Vidyasagar had been one of the active proponents of dramatic performances at Kaliprasanna Singha’s Vidyotsahini Sabhā and later at the Belgachia Theatre. The success of private theatres at the aristocratic residences of the Tagores at Jorasanko and Pathuriaghata and the Debs at Shovabazar, prompted some to establish theatres for the public. The National Theatre (established in 1872) and the Bengal Theatre (established in 1873) aimed at fostering the public stage in Bengal. Sharatchandra Ghosh, a gifted actor who had acted as Śakuntalā in the 1855 performance, decided to construct a stage at 9/3, Beadon Street, opposite to the house of his maternal grandfather, Ashutosh Deb. Biharilal Chattopadhyay, his friend (who had also taken part in the 1855 performance) became his collaborator and the Manager of the theatre.[148] An Advisory Committee was set up, which included Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Satyabrata Samasrami and Umeshchandra Dutta (Sharatchandra's brother-in-law).[149] Madhusudan was requested to script plays for performance. He put forward a condition that he would write plays for the Bengal Theatre, only if women would enact the female characters. Bound by the conventional and reformist notions of propriety, women from urban families were prevented from acting on stage. The founders of the Bengal Theatre discovered that prostitutes were willing to act, as they had already been doing in *yatra*s. Sharatchandra, Biharilal, Madhusudan, Satyabrata Samasrami and Umeshchandra eventually selected four women to join their group – Golap, Elokeshi, Jagattarini and Shyama.[150] In the controversy that ensued, Vidyasagar resigned from the Advisory Committee.

As Sumit Sarkar comments, the 'limits of Vidyasagar's ideas and reform activities still remain clear, especially from the feminist perspective.'[151] Binoy Ghosh points out to the limited perview of his reformist projects and his acceptance of British authority.[152] Asok Sen sculpts this out as an inevitable outcome of the contradictions of 'colonial englightenment'[153] where the enlightened classes were often semi-feudal rentiers and hence were complicit in the exploitative mechanism of the colonial state. However, this limitation should not be viewed through merely a reductionist perspective of class identities, it was also spurred by ideations about linguistic signifiers and how these were embodied in literary and gender discourse. Vidyasagar's publication of the Devanagari edition is associated with these ideations and their interactions with Orientalist/ colonial englightenment.

Madhusudan wrote two new plays for the Bengal Theatre but he eventually died before they were staged. When the new group performed for the first time on 16th August, 1873, they staged *Śarmiṣṭha*, an earlier play written by Madhusudan.[154] We have already discussed about the influence of *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* on the genesis of this play. More significantly, two of the female actresses imbibed in the group—Elokeshi and Jagattarini—performed in the play. Golap soon joined them during the next performance (23rd August)[155] and soon became the *prima donna* of the Kolkata stage. If newspaper reviews serve as indicators, many were scandalised by the introduction of women on stage. The *Hindoo Patriot,* a weekly Vidyasagar was once closely associated with, quipped on 18th August, 1873:

> Mr. Michael Madhusudan Dutta's classic drama of Sarmistha was selected for the first performance. The actors performed their parts very creditably, the two actresses, who were professional women, we are informed, were most successful. We wish this dramatic corps had done without the actresses. It is true that professional women join the jattras and natches, but we had hoped that the managers of the Bengali Theatres would not bring themselves down to the level of Jattrawalas.

The actresses, in spite of the protests, enjoyed considerable popularity and even the National Theatre soon had female characters being enacted by women. Sharatchandra Ghosh had his group enact *Śakuntalā*, on 18th January 1878, with the female roles being played by actresses. Narayani, a young actress, performed as Śakuntalā while Sukumari and Banabiharini most probably appeared as Priyamvadā and Anusūyā.[156] The songs were evidently quite popular and *The Indian Daily News* reported on 21st January:

> Priyamvada and Anasua, favoured the audience with some excellent singing, with the usual neuralgic effects.

It was for this production that Nandakumar revised his text and produced a new script. This was eventually published in 1882 from the Nutan Arya Press. His revisions are important in tracing the evolution of *sringaric* elaboration in shaping the contours of Bengali prose.

Before Nandakumar's publication, Monier-Williams would publish the second edition (in 1876) of the second volume of his 1853 book. By this time, he was the Boden Professor of Sanskrit. He published his volume from Clarendon Press, Oxford. In his Preface, he notes the recent editions of the Bengali recensions of the text that had been published from Kolkata. He also notes the editions of the Devanagari recension, Carl Burkhard's 1872 edition from Breslau and the edition from the Indu Prakash Press, Mumbai in 1861. Monier-Williams adds a note about the Prakrits [157]:

> In the Hindu drama, as is well known, the women and inferior characters speak in Prakrit the name given to the colloquial Sanskrit, prevalent throughout a great part of India in early times. This spoken form of Sanskrit, which was really the precursor of the present vernacular tongues, must have varied greatly, and particular dialects must have belonged to particular districts and classes of

> men. There is, however, but one principal Prakrit, peculiar to the plays, viz. the Maharashtri, although specimens of some varieties occasionally occur, and two of them may be found in the interlude between the fifth and sixth Acts of this play.

The note suggests that the Prakrit spoken in the Third Act, according to Monier-Williams, should be akin to Maharashtri rather than Sauraseni. This is significant because when Richard Pischel would publish the Bengali recension of the text the following year, he would defend the authenticity of the recension by claiming that it contained a more accurate version of Sauraseni. In the earlier edition, Monier-Williams wanted to avoid long conjugated forms of Sanskrit words. He did not have problems with *sandhi* or euphonic changes but declared that use of long conjugated words formed by *sandhi* is quite unnecessary[158]:

> …I have constantly observed that the Hindu practice of joining every word operated on by the rules of combination is perplexing even to the readiest European apprehension… The Latin scholar, if acquainted with the laws of euphony, would not be embarrassed by the sentence *Uby ad Dianae penerir itav at sinistram* (euphonically changed from *Ubi ad Dianae veneris ito ad sinistram*); but he would, I think, be unnecessarily hindered if this permuted sentence were linked together according to the Indian system followed by Dr. Boehtlingk – Ubyaddianae venereritavatsinistram. Nor can I understand why the mere spaces left between the words in the first case should be deemed inconsistent with euphony.

In the 1876 edition, however, Monier-Williams not only follows the euphonic laws but also retains the longer conjugated forms of the words. Thus although the text does not change significantly, the Orientalist interpretation of it has suffered a change. This might also explain why Vidyasagar's choice of the Maharashtri forms was part of a larger trend – the part of a larger process of dichotomising sociolects.

The revisionary aesthetics of Monier-Williams and Vidyasagar had been shaped by the Orientalists in the studies of the vernaculars as well as the classical languages. Major Robert Leech, for example, tries to reframe the way Kashmiri should be conceptualised – in the process moulding Orientalist attitudes towards Indian languages. His essay, "A Grammar of Cashmeree Language" (published in 1844 in the Society's *Journal*), had been the product of his collaboration with an 'educated Mussalman in Lodiana', who had not visited Kashmir for a quarter of a century. He humbly claims that though his work cannot be classified as an exhaustive grammar, it facilitates the practical learning of languages. Atleast, one would not have to 'get by heart such labouriously manufactured tenses of verbs' as one encounters in William Carey's *A Grammar of the Punjabee Language*(1812). He further asserts[159]:

> Much labor and time would be saved, and every ordinary purpose answered, if in order to assist the acquirement of a colloquial knowledge of similar minor dialects, that scarcely observe the name of a language, a Vocabulary only of words, and a collection of sentences actually heard spoken, were made in the Roman character.

Leech's attitude towards minor dialects explains why the various forms of North Indian vernaculars were later grouped as dialects of Hindi. It also reveals why the conjugations of verbs in these different languages would be deemed as dialectical variants, hence othering them in a dichotomic ideation of language. There were other critical changes in Orientalist attitude towards classical texts. The use of an intermediary language for translation was quite frequent, especially in the early efforts of Orientalists in Bengal. Jones had used Latin to translate Kalidasa's play while Persian had been used by Halhed in preparing the code of Hindu laws. Edward Roer, however, criticises William Ward for probably using Bengali as an intermediary language for translating *Vedantāsāraḥ*. He quotes Colebrooke's criticism of Ward's translation[160]:

> I wish to speak as gently as I can of Mr.Ward's performance, but having collated this, I am bound to say, it is no version of the original text, and seems to have been made from an oral exposition through the medium of a different language, probably the Bengalese. This will be evident to the Oriental Scholar on the slightest comparison, for example, the introduction, which does not correspond with the original in so much as a single word…

Bengali had often been learnt as an intermediary language (which had engendered the sanskritised 'Fort William' ideation) was still learnt for communicating with native informants. For example, Colonel Lyold's memoir of Csoma de Koros (dated 12th December, 1843) highlights his desire to learn Bengali, not for its own sake but as a suitable aid in his Tibetological endeavours[161]:

> He wished to study Bengalee, and I sent him to Julpiegoree, where he remained about three months, and being dissatisfied there, returned to Titalya, I think in March; he would not remain in my house, as he though his eating and leaving with me would cause him to be deprived of the familiarity and society of the natives, with whom it was his wish to be colloquially intimate, and, I therefore got him a common native hut…

W. Seton Karr's "Notes on the Course of Study pursued by the Students in the Sanskrit College"(published in *JASB* 14 in 1845) however emphasises the fact that natives despise Bengali as an intermediary for learning Sanskrit[162]:

> The grammar mostly used is one called the Mugda Bodha, written in Sanskrit, as those written in Bengali are despised by the Natives.

It is interesting to note that Vidyasagar's *Upakramaṇikā,* which we have discussed earlier, broke this trend as it was a Sanskrit grammar book written in Bengali. There are uncanny resemblences between Seton-Karr's criticisms of the curriculum and Vidyasagar's observations in the "Report on Sanskrit College" (16th December, 1850). Like Seton-Karr, he considered that the use of *Mugdhabodha* ('with all its voluminous commentaries') to be an ineffective tool for teaching Sanskrit. Vidyasagar wanted Bengali to be the medium for teaching Sanskrit. Like Vidyasagar, Seton-Karr seems to protest against the absurdity in the curriculum when he states[163]:

> It is a peculiarly native idea, that until a thorough acquaintance with the rules of grammar, as seen theoretically, is obtained, nothing can be done towards acquiring the language by reading other books; no attempt is therefore made to combine the learning of the rules of grammar with the reading of Hitopadesa or other books of an easy style. When, however, they have acquired a thorough knowledge of grammar as to be able to repeat whole pages of it by heart, they plunge at once into some of the hardest books of the language…

It is the consideration of this difficulty that made Vidyasagar recommend the use of readers in his report, which would be used while grammar was being taught and which would be based on simpler texts. Unsurprisingly, Seton-Karr lists *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* among the 'most difficult books in the language' that students of the Sanskrit College suddenly plunged into. Thus in the mid-nineteenth century, both Vidyasagar as well as Orientalists like Seton-Karr and Csoma de Koros recognised the inevitability of the use of Bengali as an intermediary though their purposes were perhaps different. For Vidyasagar, the course in the Sanskrit College was meant to improve (as he would point out in his "Notes on the Sanskrit College") vernacular literature. For some Orientalists, it served as a bridge to the native informants – for others (like Colebrooke and Roer) it was a deceptive intermediary and was not to be trusted. The intersecting faultlines of these tendencies shaped the mid-nineteenth century ideation of Bengali prose.

Doubts about using Latin as an intermediary language, as Jones had used in his translations, arose by the mid-nineteenth century. Latin was of primal importance as the 'language of contact' between the Sanskrit text and the Orientalist, especially in early stages of language acquisition (as Bengali had served in other cases, between the Orientalist and the native informant). Thus many translations of Sanskrit texts in Latin were published in Europe in the nineteenth century. James Long, in his analysis of Kalidasa's *Raghuvaṃśa* (in 1852), criticises Stenzler's translation of Kalidasa's *mahākāvya*[164]:

> His Latin style is very inelegant and very deficient in perspicuity, so that it is sometimes almost as difficult to ascertain the meaning of the translation as of the original. It retains to a great extent the absurd system of the pandits in grouping a number of words together.

Interestingly, as we have already seen, Monier-Williams had avoided the long conjugated words in his first edition of *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* (he even used a Latin parallel to reveal its 'absurdity') but reverted to conventional Sanskrit lexicography in the second edition of the text. In the early part of the nineteenth century, Latin's use as a 'language of contact' marked the modification of conjugated Sanskrit words into a Latinate lexical style. In 1858, Fitz-Edward Hall compares the artificial copiousness of Sanskrit with Greek while commenting on Goldstucker's additions to Wilson's *A Dictionary, Sanskrit and English* (originally printed in 1819). Many of Goldstucker's additions were, according to Hall, redundant compounds, the meanings of which were self-evident from the entries of the individual words. He also notes the ahistorical nature of Sanskrit as a classical language for the Orientalists of his generation, in contradistinction to Greek which can actually be historicised[165]:

> Experience, moreover, has shown it to be practicable to embrace, within a reasonable compass all the complex terms that occur in extant Greek authors: and the accession of such terms, from works likely still to be discovered, is contemplated without apprehension. But the case is found to be very different indeed, when we turn to Sanskrit. For, who, here, is not classical, or, at least, is not of weight for his words? The next century may solve the problem; but our own… will not.

However by 1870s, it is not the similarity but the difference between the classical ideal of Europe and that of South Asia that seems to trace Sanskrit as the classical Other.

Long voices out with prophetic confidence the influence the Orientalists would have in shaping vernacular literature. For him, it is the Orientalists who would reintroduce Kalidasa and Sanskritic literary heritage to colonised Indians which would, in turn, sculpt vernacular literature. He even draws a much withered Jonesian parallel between Shakespeare and Kalidasa[166]:

> So will it be with Kalidasa: the educated natives of this country are now seized with Anglo-mania, as were our forefathers with the classic mania, but the time is rapidly coming when the importance of forming a vernacular literature on Oriental model will be felt, and as Germans brought prominently to view *in England* the beauties of Shakespeare, so probably will European Orientalists bring in India those of Sanskrit literature.

Long criticises the Young Bengal and ‘the alumni of English Colleges’ for neglecting the indigenous literary traditions of South Asia. He quotes an article from *Calcutta Literary Chronicle*, which upholds the dramatic traditions of the sub-continent. While the writer concedes that the ‘Hindu youth’ should marvel at Shakespeare’s images, they should not neglect the language and literature of their country. He further points out that many 'advanced students in English literature have evinced a profound ignorance of Hindu poetry and science, and some have added to the faults of negligence and inattention, the crimes of misinterpretation and caricature.'[167]

The other tendency that we had noticed in the Orientalist and indigenous reception of *Abhijñānaśakuntalam*, both in its textual and performative representations, were varying perspectives about morality and obscenity. The erotic content of the *sringaric* elaboration, the references to polygamy, the use of suggestive imagery in the play, the voicing of Sakuntala's desire – were all problematic faultlines.

This revisionist tendency prompts the erasure of what is perceived as obscenity. In the subsequent years, Vidyasagar's interaction with the Orientalists and performative adaptations of *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* on Kolkata stage would further ossify these aspects of revision. Edward Byles Cowell, who had played an importance role in the reception of the Bengali recension of *Abhijñānaśakuntalam*, was also a member of the Asiatic Society. In 1859, a few months before the publication of Premchand Tarkavagish's second edition of *Abhijñānaśakuntalam*, Cowell publishes an article in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, entitled "On the Swayamvara of the Ancient Hindus, and its traces in the ancient world generally" (*JASB* 28). As is evident from the title, Cowell interpreted *svayamvara* as a widely practised ritual in the ancient world and refers to Greek and Persian parallels (Cowell, like many Orientalists, was a Persian scholar and sent a copy of Omar Khaiyam's *Rubaiyat* to Edward Fitzgerald). The bride in *svayamvara* has an 'active share in the transaction' just like the problematic love-encounter and the subsequent *gāndharva* marriage in the Bengali recension of Kalidasa's play. Cowell not only universalises *svayamvara* but also tries to establish it in the orthodox Hindu traditions. In a footnote, he concedes that *Manu Sṃriti* does not list it among the various forms of marriage but justifies the absence by stating that *svayamvara* refers to the choice not to the ritual followed during marriage (the subject of Manu's text).[168] This thinly disguised stance to justify the apparently non-normative in pre-colonial South Asian texts was not novel but its inclusion of the assertive voice of female passion was indeed remarkable. Cowell would later associate this interpretation to Kalidasa's creations.

In 1862, Premchand Tarkavagish published the eighth canto of Kalidasa's *Kumārasambhava*, along with his commentary. The text exists in seventeen cantos though Mallinatha, the famed commentator, had commented on only the first eight. In the nineteenth century, the eighth as well as the subsequent cantos were all considered to be interpolations. The reason for the suppression of the later cantos had been candidly discussed by Vidyasagar in a lecture delivered at Beaton Society in 1853. Vidyasagar states[169]:

> The remaining ten cantos… in spite of being pervaded by Kalidasa's magical poetic genius, has been little known, probably because of the description of communion between Hara and Gauri in the eighth canto. This is extremely obscene and has been described like the communion of ordinary lovers. The ninth (canto) contains the description of Hara and Gauri's return to Kailasa while the tenth describes the birth of Kartikeya. Even in these two cantos there are several obscene descriptions. Indians consider Hara and Gauri to be the Cosmic Father and the Divine Mother. It has been considered inappropriate to study obscene descriptions about them, hence the study of the last ten cantos of *Kumārasambhava* has been discontinued.

Cowell writes a review on Tarkavagish's edition of the play in the *Journal* of the Society (*JASB* 31), published in 1863. He concedes that whether the eighth canto was actually written by Kalidasa remains 'for future criticism to determine'. Tarkavagish not only publishes the controversial eighth stanza but, in his Preface, expressed that he would subsequently publish the remainder of the text. Like Vidyasagar, Cowell describes the supposed 'obscenity' as a deviation from the norms of Sanskritic aestheticism. Yet, his position remains a tenous one, conditioned by a reluctant appreciation of Kalidasa's verses[170]:

> The present canto describes the loves of Siva and Parvati, but in a manner which befits mortals alone, and hence perhaps the oblivion into which the poem has fallen, as it violates a direct canon of Hindu criticism. Although, however, some of the opening verses, from their indelicacy, do not deserve to be published, this by no means applies to the greater part of the canto, which is chiefly occupied with a very full description of evening and moonlight on the Gandhamadana mountains. Many of ther verses are very beautiful, and as they have never been published, we add a few of those which seemed to us most worthy of being ascribed to Kalidasa.

Cowell translates several verses from the eighth canto and quotes them. Cowell also notes that *alamkara* treatises like *Sāhityadarpaṇa* (3.218) and *Daśarūpaka* (4.12) quote verses from the eighth canto, hence providing an indirect proof of its authenticity. Interestingly, *Sāhityadarpaṇa* also quotes, as we have already discussed, verses from the *sringaric* elaboration of *Abhijñānaśakuntalam*. Thus, in spite of Vidyasagar's claim to the contrary, the Sanskritic aesthetic and rhetorical traditions, especially those that are concerned with the performative aspects (both *Daśarūpaka* and *Sāhityadarpaṇa* discuss *drsya kāvya* i.e. plays), seem to affirm to the subversive eroticism in Kalidasa's works.

Discussions on the ethical significance of Kalidasa's works soon became dominant amongst some of the members of the Asiatic Society. In 1876, Prannath Pandit presented an article on "Morals of Kalidasa" (*JASB* 45). Pandit, a member of the Philological Committee of the Society, starts by quoting from Comte's *Positive Philosophy* that the idea of man being 'the chief of the economy of nature' spurs the cultivation of noble qualities and helps in fostering civilisation. Man is the 'head of the living hierarchy'. Thus an analysis of Kalidasa's works has been undertaken to unravel the 'moral type' sculpted by his genius, which were imitable archetypes for the ancient Indians, many of whom were 'the highest development of the human race'[171]. Prannath's anthropocentrism and nationalistic excluvism thus shaped his reading of ethical values in Kalidasa's play. He sub-divides morality into (i) individual,(ii) domestic (iii) social and (iv) military and political. Under individual morality, Prannath discusses several critical issues like maiming, *sati* and suicide. Maiming an individual needs to be accomplished if the act guarantees collective preservation, as exemplified by Kalidasa's simile on the advisability of cutting off the snake-bitten finger (*Raghuvaṃśa* I.28). Interestingly, Prannath justifies the practice of *sati* from evidences he culls from Kalidasa's works; one of the examples is also an interesting case of reversal of gender roles[172]:

> In the case of Sati the individual duty of self-preservation is subordinated to the higher duty of conjugal fidelity, and it cannot be urged as a reproach against our poet, that he was one-sided in his conceptions. Whatever might be the popular practice, Kalidasa could conceive of a husband's immolating himself on the funeral pyre of his beloved wife, or deterred from exterior considerations, killing himself deliberately in some manner more orthodox. In the case of the disconsolate consort of the God of Love, the final catastrophe is avoided, without any detriment to her conjugal fidelity, by

> the intervention of a voice from the sky which bids her to desist, as her husband would at last be restored to life.

In the same issue of the *Journal*, Rajendralal discusses human sacrifices practised in ancient India. He adopts a wider strategy than Pandit, and like Cowell (in his essay on *svayamvara*), underlines the prevalence of the pratice around the world. From Phoenicians, Scythians and Greeks, from Homeric and Euripidean incarnations of Cyclops to Napoleon I, from Lamaie and Lestrygons to Abraham and the Aztecs – Rajendralal's scope is exhaustive. Earlier Orientalists like Colebrooke and Wilson had denied that Vedas authorised human sacrifice. Rajendralal, however, differs from his predecessors[173]:

> As a Hindu writing on the actions of my ancestors – remote though they are,-- it would have been a source of great satisfaction to me if I could adopt this conclusion as true; but I regret I cannot do so consistently with my allegiance to the cause of history.

Thus Rajendralal and Prannath construct divergent strategies to validate what they perceived as immoral, depicted in the pre-colonial South Asian texts. Rajendralal historicises the ritual, associating the *puruṣa-medha* described in *Taittiriya Brāhmana* with the recently abolished rite of sacrifice of infants at the confluence of the Ganges.[174] Prannath's defence of *sati* was based, as we have already seen, on notions of conjugal fidelity. Prannath's discussion on sexual morality and love is of extreme interest. He emphasises that the 'ultimate molecule of society is not the monad man, but the dual couple.' He posits that this duality is brought to fruition in the union of love which is of 'abundant supply in the works of Kalidasa'. He passionately upholds the romantic hankering in Kalidasa's works as a mark of 'sexual morality'[175]:

> From the tender regard of Dilipa for his royal spouse to the famished looks with which the latter drinks in the countenance of her husband when returning from the forest where he tended Nandini; from the eloquent madness of Pururava to the feeling of delusion of the exiled Yaksha; from the heart-rending dirge of Aja for his beloved Indumati, which makes even the trees shed their tears of nectar, to the equally moving lament of Rati for her incinerated Kandarpa… there is ample room and space enough to satisfy the most fastidious ideal of conjugal love… when Sita reproaches herself with having survived the illusion of Rama's decapitated head, which the malignant ingenuity of Ravana had conjured up, after she had once believed it to have been true, there is a poesy of love that would bear comparison with anything that has been written in different climes or distant ages.

This notion of romantic love is based on notions of fidelity, especially to one's wife in a monogamous marriage. Prannath strives to prove that Rama was 'a staunch monogamist at heart', much like Vidyasagar had tried to define the limits of polygamy among the Ksatriyas of yore. Obviously marital love is conditioned by the 'natural subordination of the woman'. This is reflected in the 'resignation with which Sita bore her mandate of exile'(*Raghuvaṃśa* 14.57-66). It is evident that for Prannath, references to polygamy in *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* would be problematic. His discussions under the sub-section 'Polygamy' is pervaded by evasions and ambivalences[176]:

> That this practice was prevalent among the kings and aristocracy will not admit of dispute, and perhaps the greater fidelity to nature expected of a dramatist may account for its mention in the dramas. But it is noteworthy that it is never prominently brought forward in the poems, except in the case of the wives of Dasaratha. These are only three in number, and not ten thousand. The fact was one too prominent to be safely suppressed and indispensable to the plot of the story, and indeed it may be pleaded as an excuse that the tragic end of the monarch, and the exile of his eldest son, illustrate very well the evil effects of Polygamy. The greatest of our poet's heroes are either monogamists or may be taken to be so for all the purposes of his epic narrative. 'Mayest thou gain the undivided love of thy husband' is the blessing that is pronounced over Uma when her bridal

> toilette is ginished, and throughout the seven cantos of the *Kumara Sambhava* there is no mention of the co-wifehood of Ganga, that was well-known to Kalidasa.

It is interesting to note that Prannath does not discuss *Abhijñānaśakuntalam*'s reference to Duḥṣanta's wives. He mostly refers to *Raghuvaṃśa* and only to the first seven cantos of *Kumārasambhava*. In the next issue of the *Journal*, there would be two ripostes published challenging Prannath's views on polygamy in Kalidasa.

George Abraham Grierson(1851-1941) had arrived as a civil servant to India in 1873. He would eventually oversee the publication of the *Linguistic Survey of India* (1894-1928) and would imprint an indelible mark on the sculpting of the aesthetics of indigenous prose. In his early entry in the *Jounral of the Asiatic Society*, he responds to Prannath's article and explains why he differs in his views about Kalidasa's representation of polygamy. For Grierson, polygamy was an accepted practice in Kalidasa's world. Discussing about Prannath's observations, he rhetorically retorts[177]:

> Has he not with regard to the poems forgotten *Dilipa*, one of the very noblest characters in the *Raghuvansa*, who is especially declared to have had a numerous (I.32) *antah-pura-varga* or *zenana*. Moreover, though it is then said that he considered these wives of no value in comparison to *Sudakshina*, *Dilipa* is at the same time distinctly said to have considered not only her, but also *Lakshmi* as his wife, and hence to have been at least a professed bigamist. Of course, it may be urged that calling *Lakshmi* his wife was a mere figure of speech, but still the fact shows that according to Kalidasa, his model *Dilipa* did not consider polygamy an objectionable practice… With regard to *Kalidasa's* play-heroes, one, at least, viz., *Pururavas*, cannot be taken as a monogamist, "for all purposes of all epic narrative," or of the dramatic narrative either.

Interestingly, in the *sringaric* elaboration of Act III, Śakuntalā uses the word 'anteurāvirahapajjussueṇa'(Pischel 3.21.19) to express that the king has been anguished due to his separation from his wives of the *antaḥpura* (inner quarters). Duḥṣanta also compares Sakuntala with Śri, which might refer to both wealth as well as the Goddess of Fortune (Pischel 3.16). Thus, though Grierson does not explicitly refer to it, the points he made are relevant to the *sringaric* elaboration of Act III.

Grierson does mention an earlier extract from Act II of *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* (Pischel 2.0.18), which according to him, hints at Duḥṣanta's polygamous disposition[178]:

> The only other Dramatic Hero of *Kalidasa* with whom I am acquainted, -- *Dushyanta*, though undoubtedly possessed of an "affinity" for *Sakuntala*, as every right-minded hero should have for the heroine, used to appear surrounded by Yavan women, with bows in their hands and wearing garlands of flowers. I know that the commentators say that these women were simply arm-bearers, but on this occasion there was no reason for their bearing arms, and even if there was, such a profession does not explain their carrying garlands at the same time.

As this passage is variously interpreted by commentators, Grierson refers to another extract (Pischel 2.9.1-3) of the same act. He specifically refers to Monier-Williams' edition (2.42.1-3), hence suggesting the fact that it was the authoritative edition of the text. Although he refers to Monier-Williams, Grierson translates the words himself. These were spoken by Vidūṣaka(Jester) to Duḥṣanta, explaining to him why he was fascinated by an unadorned, forest-maiden[179]:

> Just as a man who is sated with dates may desire the tamarind, so your highness, slighting the jewels of women in your *Zenana*, has fixed your desires upon *Sakuntala*.

The use of the word 'zenana' to translate 'antarurā' is interesting as 'zenana' had evidently Perso-Arabic connotations and was associated with Islamic practice of polygamy. This heterogenous, anachronistic reference is enlightening as it tells us why

Prannath Pandit would desperately try to establish Kalidasa's heroes as monogamists. The wave of Hindu revivalism, with its associated ossification of religious identities had already set in.

G.S. Leonard, the Assistant Secretary to the Asiatic Society, wrote in the same issue to offer 'further proofs' to establish that Kalidasa's heroes were polygamists. Leonard focuses his discussion on *Abhijñānaśakuntalam*. He quotes a verse from the Act I when, enamoured by his first gaze at Śakuntalā, Duḥṣanta wonders how a forest-maiden could possess such extraordinary beauty. Leonard elaborates:[180]

> In the first place Dushyanta's admiration of the surpassing beauty of the woodland maidens, viz., Sakuntala and her two companions, and his comparing them with the royal dames in his seraglio, plainly enough indicates his having more than one wife at home, thus:
>
> Dusha. Oh how charmingly they look! If the beauty of maids, who dwell in woodland retreats, cannot easily be found in the recesses of a palace, the garden-flowers must make room for the blossoms of the forest, which excel them in their fragrance.

The verse that Leonard quotes runs as:

Duḥṣanta. Aho| Madhursmāsā darshanam|

Suddhāntadurlabhamidaṃ vapurāśramavashino yadi janasya|

Dūrīkṛitāh khalu guṇairuddhānlatā vanalatābhiḥ||

(Pischel 1.15.5-1.16)

Monier-Williams's translation of the verse 1.16 is significant because it establishes the associations between 'suddhanta' and 'harem.' This is what he adds as a note in his 1853 edition of the text[181]:

> 'If this (beautiful) figure of people living in a hermitage is rarely met with [or difficult to be found] in the inner apartments of palaces [i.e., in harams], then indeed the shrubs of the garden are distances [left behind, surpassed] by the (wild) shrubs of the forest.' Sir W. Jones translates, 'garden-flowers must make room for the blossoms of the forest, which excel them in colour and fragrance.' The *Suddhanta* is the *antahpura* or 'inner suite of apartments, appropriated to women;' called also the *avarodha* or 'private quarter,' shut out from the rest of the house and strictly guarded. *Haram* is the equivalent Arabic word.

Monier-Williams quotes Jones's translation which illustrates that Jones left the word 'suddhanta' untranslated. Monier-Williams, however, not only translates the word but also refers to the more commonly used Sanskrit synonym 'antaḥpura' and further establishes a connection of it with 'harem'. This interpretation becomes important for both Grierson and Leonard.

Leonard then refers to the conversation within the *sringaric* elaboration (Pischel 3.22.1-3.23.1) in which Anusūyā asks Duḥṣanta about his wives, apprehending he would break Śakuntalā's heart. Leonard emphasises Duḥṣanta's acceptance of having many wives. He states[182]:

> With reference to the passage "*women in my palace*," there can be no room for supposing that the royal consorts alluded to, were concubines or sweethearts, as the word *parigraha* in the text bespeaks them to have been the Prince's partners, by *vinculum matrimonii*.

Leonard also refers to the love-ditty of queen Haṃsamatī in Act V and Duḥṣanta's acceptance of the fact that he once used to love her. Leonard then turns to *Kumārsambhava* and refers to Śiva as a polygamist, for 'besides possessing Uma or Durga, Kali and Ganga, he is known, like amorous Jupiter, to have transformed himself into human shapes to enjoy the loves of a Kochini, Bagdini, and others.'[183] Like Grierson, Leonard also endeavours to prove that the heroes of *Raghuvaṃśa* were polygamous. Leonard points out that Kalidasa indeed depicted kings having special affection for certain queens who were their *pradhāna mahiṣī*, 'whose offspring alone was entitled to succeed to his crown.' He then explains why certain lovers in Kalidasa seem to be extremely passionate in their expression of love[184]:

> Kalidasa's long-winded elegies of woe at the separation of lovers… are only descriptive of the excessive love and fondness that a lover might naturally have for the particular object of his esteem and affection in preference to all others… So also the professed devotedness of the wanton Krishna to Radha, whom he addresses in the following enraptured strain, does not in any way prove the singleness of his love.
>
> "Thou art my life, thou art my ornament, thou art a pearl, in the ocean of my mortal birth; oh! Be favourable now, and my heart shall eternally be grateful."
>
> The frantic lamentations of Pururavas and Dashmanta are but graphic pictures of distracted lovers, and bear no resemblance to the calm and constant love of a monogamist placed in the same circumstances.

The reference to a verse from *Gitagovinda* (Aṣṭapadī 19, verse 4) is significant as Leonard was endeavouring to refer to a romantic archetype which he encountered in South Asian literature. Krishna, whom we saw being alluded to in Annadaprasad's adaptation, has been compared with Duḥṣanta. The anguished state of a lover pining for beloved has been categorised as morally frail and inconstant and hence not reflective of the 'constant love' of a Victorian monogamist. These moral sanctions were undoubtedly important in the reception of the play.

Nandakumar Roy, as has been earlier discussed, revised his 1855 translation of the play for the new production of the play at the Bengal Theatre in 1878. Nandakumar refers to the circumstances leading to the staging of the play in his Preface to the second edition[185]:

> When I translated this book for the first time in 1262 Bangabda[1855 CE], there were no readable Bengali plays; hence this had been approved of by all. It served as an ideal for translating plays in the vernacular and it was the first play to be performed at Ashutosh Babu's house and then at Jamindar Mukherjee's residence at Janai.
>
> Recently Honourable Governor-General Lytton and the members of his Council had asked the administrators of Bengal Theatre for performing the play, accordingly the play was staged; they themselves were present at the performance and enjoyed it. A huge crowd had gathered on that day [to witness the performance].

Why would Robert Bulwer-Lytton (1831-1891), the Viceroy of India, ask for the performance of Nandakumar's *Śakuntalā Nātak*? Lytton's tenure as the Viceroy (1876-1880) had been a tumultuous phase in Indian history. His disastrous handling of the 1876 Indian famine, his staging of the Delhi durbar in 1877, the clamping down of the Vernacular Press Act in 1878 and his policies during the Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878-1880) had been controversial measures and spurred the growth of incipient nationalism. To find why Nandakumar's Bengali translation would be staged in 1878, we need to look into the socio-political context of the performance. This would also enable us to comprehend how the changes in Nandakumar's second edition had been shaped, thus delineating the context for the evolution of Bengali prose aesthetics.

The Dramatic Performances Act had been already introduced by Viceroy Northbrook in 1876 to control seditious tendencies on native stage. The police was granted the license to arrest and seize any individual or prop which might be deemed as seditious or disruptive. The performances of the Calcutta National Theatrical Society – which staged *Nīl Darpaṇ* on 7th December, 1872, had alarmed the British authorities. *Nīl Darpaṇ* was reprised by the Great National Theatre, under the management of Upendranath Das and Amritlal Basu. The play had incited nationalist furor amongst the spectators during performances in Agra, Delhi, Mathura, Lucknow and several other places in March, 1875.[186] Upendranath's revolutionary views shaped his plays of 1875, which included *Śarat-Sarojinī* and *Surendra-Vinodinī*. Upendranath, a graduate from the Sanskrit College and the founder of the Indian Radical League, shaped a new genre of plays for the Bengali stage. [187] *Śarat-Sarojinī* depicts an eventful romance between the protagonists in which, at a climactic moment, Sarojinī shoots an Englishman. In *Surendra-Vinodinī*, Surendra whips the tyrannical Magistrate of Hoogly, Macrandall.[188] Along with these revolutionary tremors, there were also accusations of libel. When the Prince of Wales (later Edward VII) visited Kolkata, he was entertained at Jagadananda Mukherjee's Bhavanipur residence on 3rd January, 1876. Jagadananda was an established advocate of the Calcutta High Court and was a member of the Bengal Legislative Council. Hemendranath Dasgupta gives a vivid description of this visit[189]:

> The Prince was loyally received by the ladies of his zenana and presented with an emerald necklace,one pair of gold bangles, one gold neck chain and some pairs of Dacca embroidery muslins, Lord Northbrooke, the then viceroy is said to have protested at the Prince's reception at a Hindu zenana and his resignation was rumoured. Mrs. Jagadananda Mukherjee, with her retinue and neighbouring friends, was all attention to the Prince, received him with conchshells, and offered *varan* with the joyous shouts *ulu*, peculiar to Hindu females on festive occasions. The prince seemed to have been astonished at the jewellery and ornaments, which Mrs. Mukherjee and her companions put on their person and is said to have exclaimed, while parting, to Jagadananda Babu :"I see no difference between your house and my Windsor palace."

The Prince's visit to the *antaḥpura* / *zenana* was heavily criticised by the local press. This was conceived of as a defilement of Hindu customs. *Amrita bazar Patrika* reported on 6th January, 1876, 'The Hindu society can bear all oppression, but no shock to its womanhood. Any person, who allows the family to be defiled from outside, is a disgrace, nay a great enemy, to the Hindu society.' This incident spawned several satirical songs and a vitriolic farce, *Gajadānanda*— written by Upendranath – was presented on stage on 19th February after the performance of *Śarat-Sarojinī*.[190] When the Police prohibited its performance, the farce was renamed as *Hanumān caritra* and later, *Police of Pig and Sheep* (a thinly veiled allusion to Stuart Hogg, Commissioner of Police and Mr. Lamb, the Police Superintendent). The boundaries of *antaḥpura* / *zenana* as well as those of nationalist identities were being defined, defied and transgressed. Prannath's ethical interpretations of Kalidasa's work in 1876 and the ripostes of Grierson and Blanford had a wider, socio-political dimension. Lytton's patronage of *Śakuntalā Nātak* was evidently an effort to delineate the domains of appropriate representation on stage. Nandakumar's new adaptation of the love encounter would serve as the model lauded by imperial rule in late nineteenth century Kolkata.

Nandakumar introduces critical changes in his second edition. He states[191]:

> In the first [edition], the dialogue was written in the same register for all the characters; this time, the variations based on social status have been introduced. As verse sounds quite unnatural in conversation, I have appended prose versions of the verse sections.

In the second edition, Nandakumar does not always discard words that reflect sanskritised diction; for example ‘atmaguṇāvamaṇiṇi’ (Pischel 3.17.1, Nandakumar-82 50) is retained. Change is perceptible in the syntax of the sentences as Nandakumar replaces most of the compound verbs and dispenses with obscure case inflexions. Inflected words like ‘mahīpālena’(Nandakumar-55 60) is changed to ‘mahīpāler’(Nandakumar-82 53).

Constructions with non-finite verbs, like ‘…tapasvimṛigaśābak itastatō dṛiṣṭipāt karata tāhār mātāke anveṣaṇ koriteche…’ (Nandakumar-55 61; ‘the saintly fawn searches for its mother by looking hear and there’) are transformed as the sentence is split into separate clauses, as in ‘…ai mṛigaśābaktī jācce ār edik odik cācce, bodh hay or māke anusandhan korce…’ (Nandakumar-82 54;’that fawn goes and looks here and there, most probably it is searching for its mother’). The structure of the sentences becomes simpler with the conjugated *tatbhava* words being changed to simpler, non-conjugated forms. For example, Nandalakumar chooses not to use ‘punaruktivādiṇī’(Nandakumar-55 59):

> Priyamvadā ||… Mahārāa-a| doṇṇaṃ pi vo aṇṇoṇṇāṇurā-o paccakkho| sahīsiṇeho uṇa puṇaruttavaīṇiṃ karedi maṃ|

(Pischel 3.21.6-8)

> [Priyamvadā. Mahārājā, I can clearly see your love for each other. Yet, my love for my companion prompts me to say something once again!]
>
> Priya. Mahābhāga! tomāder parasparer anurāg pratyakṣa koriyāchi, tathāpi sakhīsneha āmāke punaruktivādinī kariteche.
>
> (Nandakumar-55 59)
>
> [Priyamvadā. O fortunate one! I have seen your love for each other, yet love for my companion prompts me to say something once again!]
>
> Priya. Mahāśay! yadio āpnāder ubhayer anurāg pratyakṣa karechi, tathāpi sakhīsneha āmāke kona kathā jigñāsā karte anurodh karche.
>
> (Nandakumar-82 52)
>
> [Priyamvadā. O respected one! Though I have seen your mutual love for each other, yet love for my companion has urged me to ask something]

It is significant that Nandakumar retains ‘sakhīsneha’ (from ‘sahīsiṇeho’, Pischel 3.21.7) in both versions. The vocative address to the king however is modified. The critical change is however, the introduction of ‘yadio’ in the second edition which transformed the coordinate to a subordinate clause. Thus ‘santāpnirvvāṇkārī’(Nandakumar-55 57; from ‘santāvaṇivvaivāttiaṃ’, Pischel 3.17.1) changes to ‘jāte santāp nirvvāṇ hay eman’(Nandakumar-82 50) displaying a tendency towards both subordinate constructions as well as analysing conjugations into a group of words. The transformation of the love-epistle has already been discussed but we have not looked into the prose version of the epistle, appended to second edition[192]:

> Tomār hṛiday āmi jāni nā kintu tomāte tadgataprāṇā āmi, āmār aṅge madan dibā rātri santāp ditechen.

> [I do not know your heart but to you devoted am I; my body is ceaselessly anguished, each day and night, by Love]

The reference to ‘aṅgaim’(Pischel 3.19) is evaded in the 1882 verse translation only to be reimplanted in the alternative prose rendition. In the 1855 edition, Śakuntalā’s reference to Duḥṣanta, afflicted by separated from his wives in *antaḥpura*, is obscured by the presence of a conjugated verbal adjective (which closely parallels the Sanskrit text):

> Śakuntalā || sapraṇayakopasmitam|| halā| alaṃ vo anteuravirahapajjussueṇa rāesiṇā uvaruddheṇa|
>
> (Pischel 3.21.19-20)
>
> [Śakuntalā. (with feigned anger) O companion! Why do you plea to hold back the king, afflicted by separation from his wives who reside in the inner quarters(of his palace)?]

> Saku. (Priyamvadār prati dṛistipāt koriyā) sakhi! antaḥpuravirahotkanṭhita rājāke uparodh karibār ki prayojon?
>
> (Nandakumar-55 59)
>
> [Śakuntalā.(Looking at Priyamvadā) O companion! What is need of pleas to hold back the king, afflicted by separated from his (wives who reside in) inner quarters (of his palace)?]

Nandakumar’s 1882 translation is more analytical, hence clearly stating the context of polygamy:

> Saku. (Priyamvadār prati) sakhi| rājār antaḥpure kata sundarī mahiṣī āchen, ekhan tāder bhāvna bhāvven nā tomār uparodh rākhben|
>
> (Nandakumar-82 52)

[Śakuntalā (to Priyamvadā) O companion! There are many wives in the king’s inner quarters, would he think about them or would he keep your request?]

Nandakumar can, however, still remain obscure when Duḥṣanta is musing about the complex, paradoxical nature of feminine desire (Pischel 3.27; Nandakumar-55 63; Nandakumar-82 55). When Śakuntalā feigns to leave, Duḥṣanta expresses in an aside that he should make the best of the opportunity and grabs her veil. Jones translates it. Vidyasagar, Ramnarayan and Nandakumar(in 1855) do not translate this expression. It is Jaganmohan who translates it for the first time in Bengali and Nandakumar incorporates it in his second edition:

Rājā| kathamātmanaḥ priyaṃ na kariṣye| ||upasṛitya patāntaramavalamvate||

(Pischel 3.23.2)

Rājā. (svagata) āmi ekhan āpnār abhiṣta siddhi nā kari kena? (gaman koriyā ancaldhāraṇ)

(Nandakumar-82 55-56)

[Rājā. (Aside) Why should not I attain what I desire? (approaches her and grabs her veil)]

The expression of Śakuntalā’s desire seems to be more direct in the second edition. For example, consider the love-anguish of Śakuntalā, immobilised by Duḥṣanta’s love-rant:

Śakuntalā | edaṃ suṇi-a ṇatthi me vihavo gacchiduṃ|

(Pischel 3.30.1)

[Śakuntalā. Hearing this, I can no longer go]

In 1855, Nandakumar uses an elaborate verbal construction to express this:

Śaku. aho! ekathā śuniyā āmi gaman korite samartha haitechi nā|

(Nandakumar-55 65)

[Śakuntalā. Alas! Hearing these words, I have no ability to venture forth]

In 1882, the verbal construction is simpler:

Śakuntalā. ekathā śune āmār yābār kṣamatā gela|

(Nandakumar-82 56)

[Śakuntalā. Hearing these words, I have lost my ability to go]

When Śakuntalā decides to return for her bracelet and expresses she 'can no longer wait' (Pischel 3.32.1-2), her monologue assumes a familiar, collouquial air in Nandakumar's second edition. Thus 'ār vilamba karte pāri nā'(Nandakumar-55 66) morphs to 'ār vilamba karte pāri ne'(Nandakumar-82 58). As we have already encountered in Ramnarayan and Jaganmohan's translations, Vowel Height Assimilation is a distinct marker of colloquial register. Adopting the idiomatic expression from Vidyasagar and Jaganmohan's translations, Nandakumar morphs his initial literal translation of Śakuntalā's suspicion (Pischel 3.35.6) about Duḥṣanta's excessive devotion (Nandakumar-82 59).

The stage direction that comes at the end of the *sringaric* elaboration had also been significantly changed in 1882. In 1855, Nandakumar's protagonists kissed on stage, portraying the consummation of their love. In his second edition, however, evasion is hinted at:

> Rājā Śakuntalār mukh chumban karite udyata)
>
> Saku. Nā, nā. (baliyā mukh sañchālan karite lāgilen)
>
> (Nandakumar-82 61)
>
> [(Rājā set about to kiss Śakuntalā)
>
> Śakuntalā. No, no. (she shook her head in denial)]

The kiss that was possible in 1855 was no longer a possibility in 1882. Lytton's imperialist gaze had evidently ushered in necessary restraints in portraying erotic passion. Yet, as we have seen in our analysis of Vidyasagar's Devanagari recension, this transformation was a part of puritanism that was strengthened by nationalism of the 1870s. Where do these paradoxical trends merge and separate themselves and how did their interaction shaped the contours of Bengali prose?

Vidyasagar's reservations about eroticism in Sanskrit texts had evolved through several phases. In his "Report on the Sanskrit College"(1850) he had recommended texts like *Śiśupālavadha*, *Naiṣadhacarita* and *Kiratārjuniya* to be taught not in entirety (as they had been taught earlier) but as excerpts. He claimed that these texts have 'many objectionable passages'[193]. In his lecture delivered at the Beaton Society in 1853, he criticises both *Śiśupālavadha* and *Naiṣadhacarita* for their extended, hyberbolic (*atyukti*) descriptions of 'irrelevant subjects'[194]. It is interesting to note that Vidyasagar often associates erotic undertones with hyperbolic excesses. In his report, he states[195]:

> Naisadha Charita from the beginning to the end is bombastic and hyperbolical. Its style is neither elegant nor chaste…

Naiṣadhacarita, the twelfth century Sanskrit *mahākāvya* by Sriharsha, had an interesting publication history. Premchand Tarkavagish edited the first part of the poem, *Pūrva Naiṣadha*, in 1836 and added a commentary to it. This was published by the Asiatic Society. Premchand, however, declined to write a commentary for the second part, *Uttara Naiṣadha*. On 1st April 1851, Edward Roer urges the society to publish the second part[196]:

> By the completion of the Naisadha the Society, who published the first part in 1836, would gratify the wishes of the Oriental Scholars in Europe as well as India. As Prem Chander Pandit of the Sanskrit College in Calcutta, who has written commentary of the first part of this work, is not prepared to furnish us with a commentary to the second, the Section proposes that the Tika of Narayan Pandit, one of the oldest and best commentaries, be added to the text.

We can only hypothetise about Premchand's reservations in adding a commentary to *Uttara Naiṣadha*. When Roer's edition of the second part is published in 1855 in the *Bibliotheca Indica* series, his criticism of its content is similar to that of Vidyasagar's. He comments in his Preface[197]:

> It is poor in incident, the greater part of the long poem being preoccupied with descriptions… Instead of ennobling the affections or appealing to the tenderest and most sacred feelings of man, the love which the poet describes is earth-born and sensual in a degree far exceeding the lasciviousness of some of the Roman poets…[T]he absence of decent shame pervades throughout, and pollutes even the hearts of the females… Even the love of Nala and Damayanti, although generally tender and delicate and adorned with all the graces of the poet's exuberant fancy, approaches often to unveiled sensuality, and may, in truth, in several places, be designated a practical illustration of Kamasastra.

Vidyasagar's puritanism about the erotic passages in Sanskrit poems is hence associated with the mid-nineteenth century Orientalist reception of these texts. This explains why he avoids both elaborate similes as well as erotic sections in his 1854 Bengali prose adaptation of the *sringaric* elaboration. For Vidyasagar, this was also a question of aesthetics – of what consists of the essence of *kāvya*. In order to emphasise this, he refers to an old debate between the *guṇa* and *alaṃkāra* schools of Sanskrit poetics on whether to consider *svabhāvokti*, unadorned natural description, to be an *alaṃkāra* (figure of speech). Dandin (c.700 CE) rhetorician and proponent of the *guṇa / ritī* school, had pointed out in his treatise on aesthetics, *Kāvyadarśa* (2.244), that *svabhāvokti* is a valid figure of speech. Bhamaha, the proponent of *alaṃkāra* school and Dandin's contemporary, had differed. Bhamaha considers *alaṃkāra* or figures of speech to be essential in *kāvya*, declaring 'however beautiful the beloved's face is, without adornment her beauty is not manifested' (*Kāvyālaṃkāra* 1.13). He rejects *svabhāvokti* and points out to *vakrokti* as the essence of all *alaṃkāra* and of all *kāvya* (*Kāvyālaṃkāra* 2.85-87). While commenting on Kalidasa's *Ṛitusamhara*, Vidyasagar reveals his views about *svabhāvokti*[198]:

> *Svabhāvokti*, which is the chief alamkara of *kāvya*, pervades the entire *Ṛitusamhara*. However, *rūpaka* [simile], *utprekṣa* [poetic fancy] are preferred by people of this region; thus they do not fully appreciate the brilliance of *svabhāvokti*. Thus they do not consider this [i.e. *Ṛitusamhara*] to be an exquisite poem.

Vidyasagar's predeliction for *svabhāvokti* shapes his prose style which avoids the ornate, elaborate metaphors and similes of the *sringaric* elaboration. This preference is also observed in his suggestions about changing the treatises to be followed in the *alaṃkāra* or Rhetoric class of the Sanskrit College.As Vidyasagar elaborates in his report[199]:

> With regards to this class I beg leave to propose the following change. The text-books should be Kavya Prakasha and Dasharupaka. Generally Sahitya Darpana is the work read; but I prefer Kavya Prakasha and Dasrupaka on the following grounds. Kavya Prakasha is a much more profound work than Sahitya Darpana, and is acknowledged to be the highest authority on the subject. The best commentators, such as Mallinatha, quote this work for their authority. The Sahitya Darpana only dilates in very diffuse style what Kavya Prakasha contains in essence.

Viswanatha's *Sāhityadarpaṇa*, as has already been noted, contained the critical references to two verses in the *sringaric* elaboration. Vidyasagar's reservations against Viswanatha's treatise is however also associated with his ideas about *svabhāvokti*. Sanskrit poetics affirms

to three functional levels in poetry – the *avidha* or denotative, *lakṣana* or indicative and *tatparya* or suggestive. Abhinavagupta, in his *Lochana* commentary on Anandavardhara/ Dhvanikara's *Dhvanyāloka* (I.4), suggests that *dhvani* is the fourth function of poetry which ushers from *tatparya*, the collective meaning of the words in a sentence.[200] The meaning that manifests from the suggestive function of poetry is called *vyanga*. It is this meaning that the *dhvani* and *rasa* theorists uphold to be the essence of poetic meaning. Anandavardhana (c.9th century CE), however, concedes the possibility of poetry which is completely devoid of suggestivity and one that has only the denotative and indicative functions. Such poetry, deemed as comparatively inferior, is called *citrakāvya*.[201] Viswanatha, in *Sāhityadarpaṇa* 4.1, denies that *citrakāvya* may be deemed as *kāvya*. Thus, purely descriptive poetry without suggestive function is considered as inferior, and even, prosaic. Though Viswanatha lists *svabhāvokti* as an *alaṃkāra*, he claims that its meaning is obscure and only understood by the poet (‘durūhayoḥ kavimātravedyayoḥ, under *Sāhityadarpaṇa* 10.92). Mammata (c. 11th century CE) in his *Kāvyaprakāśa*, follows the general outlines of the *dhvani*/ *rasa* theory, though he revokes the extremist position on *dhvani*, adopted by rhetoricians like Vishvanatha. In the sixth chapter of his treatise, Mammata discusses *citrakāvya* and accepts it as poetic in ‘as much as the use of figures of speech *per se …*is generally allowed to have a certain kind of charm that marks the utterance as different from ordinary speech.’[202] Even Mammata’s definition of poetry, ‘tad adoṣau sabdartha saguṇanālaṃkṛiti puṇaḥ kapi’ (*Kāvyaprakāśa* 1.4) accepts that poetry might be ‘sometimes without rhetorical ornament’(‘anālaṃkṛiti puṇaḥ kapi’). This is because Mammata accepted the presence of latent, implied *alaṃkāra* in *citrakāvya*, which hence is not completely devoid of indicative and suggestive possibilities. Thus when a *kāvya* is devoid of rhetorical ornament, the *kāvya* itself (as a whole) would have to be accepted as an implied rhetorical figure.[203] It is this relative preference for *svabhāvokti* which, among other considerations, led to Vidyasagar’s preference of Mammata’s treatise. Interestingly, Cowell informs us in his discussion on a passage on the tenth book of *Sāhityadarpaṇa* that hyperbolic assertions (*atiśayokti*) discussed in the text are 'but seldom used by our severer western taste.'[204] This might be read as one of the reasons why Vidyasagar would criticise *atisayokti*. The term is ambivalent in early texts like Bhamaha's *Kāvyālaṃkāra* and is used to suggest *vakrokti* or even generally any *alaṃkāra*.[205] Vidyasagar's evasion of Kalidasa's metaphoric figures and similes thus has a deeper foundation in the mid-nineteenth century reception of Sanskrit aesthetics.

Premchand Tarkavagish, who had an important role to play in the reception of *Abhijñānaśakuntalam*, differed with Vidyasagar on the aesthetics of metaphoric language and the perception of obscenity in *kāvya*. His brother, Ramakshay Chattopadhyay, describes a curious discussion with him during a journey to their ancestral home in Saknara. Besides Ramakshay, Premchand was accompanied by his brother Ramamaya Tarkaratna (who revised the third edition of Premchand's *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* in 1864), two of his students and his son. As they trudged to their village from a nearby railway station, they rested near the Mohanpur bridge. Suddenly, they were attracted by a cluster of *Saraca asoka* (*aśoka*) and *bignonia alliacea* (*pārul*) flowers blossomed on adjacent trees. The erotic association of both the flowers is well-known. *Aśoka* is associated with *yakṣī*-s in Indian art (who are depicted as holding its branches) and it is believed that the dormant potency of the flowers is aroused only when it is touched or kicked by young, nubile women[206] (Kalidasa also establishes an implicit connection between Śakuntalā and the creeper *vanajoṣiṇī*). The elongated, lavender flowers of *pārul*, on the other hand, was called 'Madana's quiver' (Madana is a deified personication of love, akin to Cupid) and was associated with his ‘love shafts’. As they appreciated the beauty of the flowers, Ramamaya quipped that the time wasted by the Indian poets in describing flowers and women (he was evidently disturbed by the erotic associations), could have been spent on discussing ‘elevated subjects’ (*unnata viṣayer*) which would have benefitted society. Tarkavagish was visibly irritated by his brother’s suggestion. He retorted that describing women and flowers, the most graceful beings on earth, was no mean feat.[207] One of Tarkavagish’s students countered by comparing the apparent triviality of Sanskrit poems with the elevated subject of English poetry. He emphasised the fact that associating *pārul* with ‘Madana’s quiver’ has subversive, erotic connotations (a reference to the male sexual organ) and hence deviated from the ‘contemporary, sanctified taste.’ Tarkavagish’s answer is significant in unravelling his views on aesthetics[208]:

> If *kāvya*, written in compliance to the norms set in *alaṃkāra* texts, is the source of *rasa*, then the characters of the protagonists are the embodiments of *rasa*; the appropriate character of the protagonists, the accurate description of all facets of human life and the material reality of the world prove the brilliance of the poet; from these are emotions (*bhāva*) spurted and *rasa* engendered; women are an essential aspect of worldly beauty; it is love which is the essential cause of creation of lifeforms; if these elements are discarded then the poet is indeed a destitute…

Although Premchand later conditions his assertion by saying that plays (*driśyakāvya*) must have certain restrictions as far as its depictions are concerned, his espousal of Sanskrit aesthetics, countering the claims of reformed mid-Victorian values, is indeed remarkable. Premchand stands as a transitional figure in this shift in aesthetic tastes. It is he who edited *Kāvyadarśa* of Dandin, published in the *Bibliotheca Indica* series of the

Asiatic Society in 1863. In the Preface, he stresses the importance of his translation, stating that the text has not been popular in Bengal. He claims that Dandin upholds a more ancient (and implicitly a purer) system of aesthetics. He adds[209]:

> In the older treatises, guna and alamkara were discussed in comparison to which the newer formulations of *dhvani* seem to be more difficult.

By emphasising the difficulty of *dhvani*/ *rasa* theories, Premchand seems to be hesitantly championing the cause of an alternative system of aesthetics. Like Vidyasagar in his Preface to his 1871 edition of *Abhijñānaśakuntalam*, Premchand also claims that he has endeavoured to popularise the text in Bengal by bringing it from Varanasi. Cowell had helped him in accessing the text. Dandin, we might be reminded, had been the first aesthetician who had recognised *svabhāvokti* as a valid, rhetorical figure. Yet, Premchand also taught *Sāhityadarpaṇa* to Vidyasagar. In fact, he had written a commentary on it, which was kept in the form of unstitched manuscript pages at the classroom of the Sanskrit College serving as a reference for students. Like the *pecia* system in pre-print Europe, students would borrow pages from the book and would return them after copying.[210] Hence, Premchand represents a curious minglance of manuscript and print cultures and the evolution of aesthetics affected by these transformations.

The oral, indigenous reception/s of Kalidasa's play survived the revisions of mid-nineteenth century. Unlike Premchand's edition, however, they were products of an inevitable dissociation from the reformed aestheticism of high culture forms. The libidinous elements of the *sringaric* elaboration would survive through Annadaprasad's adaptation of the play and would further be elaborated in Rasikchandra Ray's poetic reworking, *Śakuntalār Vanavihār* (1875), Kunjabihari Basu's *Śakuntalār Nātyagītikā* (1889) and Nandalal Roy's *Śakuntalā Nātak* (1889-2nd edition). As we have already observed in our analyses of Nandakumar Roy's translations, the performances of the play were always threatened by a looming presence of these banished, erotic undertones.

Vidyasagar's interaction with the Orientalists was influenced by the rise of nationalism and Hindu revivalism. Though Vidyasagar's agnosticism[211] distanced him from assertions of religious revivalism, his ideations of nationhood (though Ramakrishna Bhattacharya emphasises its apolitical dimensions) served as a catalyst for his schism with the Orientalist paradigm. On 28th January, 1874, Vidyasagar went to visit the Indian Museum which was housed then at the ground-floor of the Asiatic Society building(the museum shifted to a new building in 1875). Since its inception, the museum was closely associated with the Asiatic Society and its research projects. In 1874, Henry Francis Blanford (1834-1893), the noted meteorologist and a member of the Society, had been the Secretary of the Trustees of the Museum. At the entrance, Vidyasagar was asked by the guard to take off his shoes (he wore a pair of 'native slippers') and take them in his hands while entering the building. Vidyasagar stormed out of the building and refused to reenter it till he would receive a suitable recourse for his humiliation. He wrote a letter to Blanford on 5th February. He pointed out that while the Europeans were allowed to enter the museum with their shoes on, he found it discriminatory that he was barred from it. In the letter he also mentioned the fact that he intended to visit the library of the Asiatic Society, which was on the first floor.[212] Blanford wrote a letter to the Secretary of the

Asiatic Society, Henry Blochmann (1838-1878), requesting a discussion in the Council Meeting about the regulations concerning shoes. Blanford wrote back to Vidyasagar on 26th March, informing him that the Museum did not have any regulations regarding shoes.

According to the report in *The Hindoo Patriot* (26th July, 1874), Vidyasagar had also written to Council of the Asiatic Society. Though the Proceedings of the year does not record this interaction, according to the newspaper report, the Council retorted that Vidyasagar, being a native, 'ought to know the Indian etiquette in the matter'. Vidyasagar wrote back, explaning what he deemed to the proper Indian etiquette. The report in *The Hindoo Patriot* states[213]:

> The Museum is a place of public resort like a park or a public garden, and would a European gentleman think of taking off his hat at such a place, and if not why should a native be required to put off his shoes there. As for the Asiatic Society, it is the last place where the badge of racial degradation should be insisted upon. There men of all classes resort to cultivate science, that is not a place for raising social questions on which it is notorious the natives are keenly and justly sensitive.

Vidyasagar never visited the Asiatic Society again. He wrote a satirical piece in *Sadharani* (on 12th July, 1874) titled "Tāltalār cati", lamenting the fate of his ignominious slippers which could not assume elitist social stature. What is important in this curious episode is Vidyasagar's disavowal of what the Orientalists delineated as proper 'native etiquette.' This self-definition served as the spur for the growth of nationalism and revivalism, which had evident influences on not only his puritanical stance in editing the

1871 edition of *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* but also in shaping Bengali prose. Interestingly, Vidyasagar was accompanied by Bharatendu Harishchandra and Surendranath Bandyopadhyay when he visited the Asiatic Society. Harishchandra served not only as the conduit for the revisionist Devanagari recension but also moulded the contours of Hindu revivalism in North India. Surendranath Bandyopadhyay (1848-1925) would establish the Indian National Association (in 1876) and would be one of the important leaders in the early years of the Indian National Congress.

The splitting of registers had been accomplished, ushering in denounciation of the flirtatious Śakuntalā of the *sringaric* elaboration. Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, in an essay published in the *Vividha Prabandha* (1886) compares the innate simplicity of Miranda with the coquettish diffidence of Śakuntalā [214]:

> …[T]he nature purity of the feminine character, which is the essence of her honour, is never absent in Miranda. Thus, the novelty and sweetness of Miranda’s simplicity appeals to us more than that of Sakuntala’s.

Bankimchandra criticises the *sringaric* elaboration as lacking the profoundity of the Miranda-Ferdinand encounter (Act 3, Scene 1, *The Tempest*). He quotes the amorous exchanges at the culmination of the *sringaric* elaboration (Pischel 3.37-3.37.1), emphasising the coquettish, sexually forward role of Śakuntalā. He comments that Śakuntalā has been etched in this manner in order to glorify Duḥṣanta’s virility. Biharilal Sarkar, in his *Śakuntalā Rahasya* (1896), seems to agree to this suggestion, commenting that but for Gautamī’s timely entrance, ‘the curtain would have to be lowered.’[215]

Chandranath Basu, in his *Śakuntalā Tattwa* (1881), tells us why Śakuntalā should avoid the kiss[216]:

> Śakuntalā was a Hindu maiden… In those nations where the body is considered to be not as immaculate as the soul, matters relating to physical communion engender diffidence. In those nations, evasion becomes inextricably associated with love. Europe's ideals and values are different – there, people do not compare the soul with the spirit as Indians do, they do not condemn the body to be inert, unimportant, degrading; hence, the heroines of European literature (*kavya*) are so forward in matters of love.

It is interesting to note that though Chandranath and Bankimchandra evidently differ about the female protagonists of European literature, they endeavour to sculpt out Śakuntalā as a contrasting figure to her European counterparts. It is in this dichotomic schism that the domains of nationhood (Hindu/ Indian) can be situated and imagined. Jones's Sacontala has split into a myriad, contrapunctal images, weaving the dynamic aesthetics of Bengali prose.

Notes

1. Michael J. Franklin, *Orientalist Jones* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 252.

2. Garland Canon, "Sir William Jones and the 'Sakuntala'," *Journal of American Oriental Society* 73, no.4 (1953): 199.

3. Barbara Stoler Miller, "Kalidasa's World and his Plays," in *The Plays of Kalidasa*, edited by Barbara Stoler Miller (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1999), 36.

4. Jones to Spencer, Krishnanagar, August 5 1787, in *The Letters of William Jones*, vol.2, edited by Garland Canon (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 743.

5. Jones to Spencer, Krishnanagar, August 23 1787, in *The Letters of William Jones*, vol.2, 755-6.

6. William Jones, preface to *The Sacontala: or, the Fatal Ring* (1789; repr., Kolkata: Trubner and Co., 1875), i.

7. Ibid., i-ii.

8. *Works by the Late H.H. Wilson*, vol. 11 (London: Trubner and Co., 1871), ix.

9. Romila Thapar, *Sakuntala: Texts, Readings, Histories* (New Delhi: Kali for Women, 2010), 259.

10. Thapar refers to Prys Morgan, "From a Death to a View: The Hunt for the Welsh Past in the Romantic Period," in *The Invention of Tradition,* eds. Eric Hobsbawn and Terence Ranger, Canto edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 43-100.

11. Thapar, *Sakuntala: Texts, Readings, Histories*, 211.

12. Peter H. Salus, "Sakuntala in Europe: The First Thirty Years," *Journal of American Oriental Society* 84, no.4(1964): 417.

13. Johan Wolfgang von Goethe, *Werke,* Weimar edition, 143 vols in 4 parts (Weimar, 1887–1912), 1: 4, 122.

14. Thapar, *Sakuntala: Texts, Readings, Histories*, 232.

15. See Dorothy Matilda Figueira, *Translating the Orient: The Reception of Sakuntala in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991).

16. See Chandra Rajan, *Kalidasa: The Loom of Time* (New Delhi: Penguin, 1989), 307-313. For perspectives about the different dates see K.M. Shembavanekar, "The Date of Kalidasa," *Journal of the University of Bombay* 1, no. 6(1933):232-246.

17. Cited in Rajan, *Kalidasa: The Loom of Time*, 307.

18. Edwin Gerow, “Sanskrit Dramatic Theory and Kalidasa’s Plays,” in *The Plays of Kalidasa*, ed. Barbara Stoler Miller (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1999), 43.

19. Dhanamjaya, *Daśarūpaka* 3.22-24.

20. Jones to Spencer, Krishnanagar, September 4, in *The Letters of William Jones*, vol.2, 766.

21. Jones, preface to *The Sacontala*, v.

22. Jones to Spencer, Krishnanagar, September 6, in *The Letters of William Jones*, vol.2, 767.

23. Garland Canon, “Sir William Jones's Summary of Sakuntala,” *Journal of American Oriental Society* 83, no.2 (1963):242.

24. William Jones, preface to *The Sacontala*, ii.

25. Ibid., 370.

26. Barbara Stoler Miller, “Recensions of the Text,” in *The Plays of Kalidasa*, edited by Barbara Stoler Miller (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1999), 333-335.

27. Somadeva Vasudeva, ed and trans., introduction to *The Recognition of Sakuntala* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 34.

28. Dileep Kumar Kanjilal, *A Reconstruction of the Abhijñānaśakuntalam* (Kolkata: Sanskrit College, 1980), 17.

29. Monier Monier-Williams, ed., *Sakuntala* (Hertford: Stephen Austin, 1853), vii-viii.

30. Richard Pischel, preface to *Kalidasa’s Śakuntala*, rev. ed.(1877; Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1922), x.

31. The references to verse passages in Pischel’s edition are given by pointing out to the Act and the number of a particular verse passage. For example, 3.6 would refer to the sixthr verse passage in the third act. The prose sections are denoted by referring to the nearest verse passage. For example, 3.6.2 refers to the second line in prose after the sixth verse passage in the third act. The translations of verse passages in Jones’s edition are not numbered, hence only page numbers are used for reference. I am refering to a reprint of Jones’s original publication, William Jones, *The Sacontala* (1789; repr., Kolkata: Trubner and Co., 1875).

32. Daniel H.H. Ingalls, “Kālidāsa and the Attitudes of the Golden Age,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 96, no.1(1976):23.

33. Jones, preface to *The Sacontala*, v.

34. Ibid., iv.

35. For further discussion, see Chapter 4.

36. See Thomas R. Trautmann, ‘Mosaic Ethonology of Asiatick Jones,’ in *Aryans and British India* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1997), 28-61.

37. Jones, preface to *The Sacontala*, v.

38. *Works by the Late H.H. Wilson*, vol. 11, xi.

39. Ibid., v.

40. Horace Hayman Wilson, *The Megha Duta or Cloud Messenger*, 2nd ed. (London: East India College, 1843), i.

41. *Works by the Late H.H. Wilson*, vol. 11, v-vi.

42. Baridbaran Ghosh, editorial notes to *Rāmtanu Lāhidī o tatkālin bangasamāj*, by Shivnath Shastri (1904; Kolkata: New Age Publishers, 2007), 300.

43. *Works by the Late H.H. Wilson*, vol. 11, xvi.

44. Ibid., xv-xvi.

45. Sandhya Bakshi, ed., *Ramanārāyaṇ Tarkaratna racanāvali* (Kolkata:Sahityalok, 1991), 387.

46. Brajendranath Bandyopadhyay, *Kalikātā saṃskṛita colleger itihās*, vol.1 (Kolkata: Sanskrit College, 1948), 66.

47. Cited by Hemendranath Dasgupta, *The Indian Stage*, vol.1 (Kolkata:Metropolitan Printing and Publishing House, 1934), 247.

48. W.S. Seton Karr, ed., *Selections from Calcutta Gazettes*, vol.2 (Kolkata: Military Orphan Press, 1865),263.

49. Bandyopadhyay, *Kalikātā saṃskṛita colleger itihās*, vol.1, 18.

50. Ramaksay Chattopadhyay, *Premchandra Tarkavāgīśer jīvancarit o kavitāvalī*, 2nd ed. (Kolkata: J.N. Banerjee and Sons, 1896), 42.

51. Bandyopadhyay, *Kalikātā saṃskṛita colleger itihās*, 18.

52. Chattopadhyay, *Premchandra Tarkavāgīśer jīvancarit o kavitavāli*, 33-34.

53. Ibid., 50.

54. Edward Byles Cowell, notice to *Abhijñānaśakuntalam*, ed. Premchand Tarkavagish, 3rd ed. (Kolkata: Sanskrit Press, 1864).

55. Premchand Tarkavagish, ed., preface to *Abhijñānaśakuntalam*, by Kalidasa, 3rd ed. (Kolkata: Sanskrit Press, 1864).

56. Ibid., 64.

57. Pischel, preface to *Kalidasa's Śakuntala*, x.

58. Ibid., xi.

59. Kanjilal, *A Reconstruction of the Abhijñānaśakuntalam*, 7.

60. Vasudeva, introduction to *The Recognition of Sakuntala* , 35.

61. Pareshchandra Majumder, *Saṃskṛita o prākrita bhāṣār kramavikāṣ* (Kolkata: Dey's, 1994), 262.

62. Madhav M. Deshpande, *Sanskrit and Prakrit: Sociolinguistic Issues* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1993), 83.

63. Alfred C. Woolner, *Introduction to Prakrit* (Kolkata: Baptist Mission Press, 1917), 12-13.

64. I refer to the pages in 1864 edition of Premchand's text.

65. Woolner, *Introduction to Prakrit*, 10.

66. Ibid., 13.

67. Monier Monier-Williams, ed., *Sakuntala* (Hertford: Stephen Austin, 1853), 121. I refer to the text as Monier-Williams-53, followed by the verse number. However, the prose passages in the text are not numbered I have used the same principles of reference as used for Pischel's edition.

68. Woolner, *Introduction to Prakrit*, 28.

69. Monier Monier-Wlliams, ed., *Sakuntala* (Hertford: Stephen Austin, 1853), vii.

70. Cited in Sukumar Sen, *Baṅgālā sāhityer itihās*, vol.3, rev. ed. (Kolkata: Ananda, 1991), 97.

71. See James Long, *Returns relating to Native Printing Presses and Publications in the Bengal*, in *Selections from the Records of the Bengal Government*, vol.22 (Kolkata: Calcutta Gazette Office, 1855), 90-91.

72. James Long, *A Return of the Names and Writings of 515 Persons Connected with Bengali Literature*, in *Selections from the Records of the Bengal Government*, vol.22 (Kolkata: Calcutta Gazette Office, 1855), 136.

73. Ramlal Mitra, *Sulalita itihās, arthāt Śakuntalār upākhyān* (Kolkata: Bindhubashini Press, 1855), 23. Hereafter I would refer to the text as 'Ramlal', followed by the page number. I have transliterated the Bengali texts according to spelling, not according to the pronunciation of the words.

74. Ibid., 24.

75. Mitra, preface to *Sulalita itihās, arthāt Śakuntalār upākhyān*.

76. Radharaman Mitra, *Kalikātā darpaṇ*, vol.2 (Kolkata:Subarnarekha, 2004), 96-97.

77. P.Thankappan Nair, ed., *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society*, vol.3, book 2 (Kolkata: Asiatic Society, 2000), 1977.

78. William Brooke O'Shaughnessy, ed., *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, vol.16 (Kolkata: Bishop's College Press, 1846), lxxxviii.

79. Mitra, *Kalikātā darpaṇ*, 100.

80. Aloys Sprenger, ed., *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, vol.20 (Kolkata: Bishop's College Press, 1852), 354.

81. Ibid., 355.

82. Ibid.

83. Biharilal Sarkar, *Vidyāsāgar*, rev. ed. (1895; Kolkata: Orient Book Company, 1991), 112.

84. Abhijit Nandi, “Baiparay Vidyāsāgar” in *Mudraṇer saṅskṛiti o bāṃla bai*, ed. Swapan Chakravorty (Kolkata:Ababhash, 2007), 84.

85. Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, “Notes on the Sanscrit College”, Unpublished manuscript records, Sanskrit College, Kolkata, April 12, 1852.

86. Chattopadhyay, *Premchandra Tarkavāgīśer jīvancarit o kavitavāli*, 69.

87. Ibid.,53.

88. See Satyanarayan Chakrabarti, ed., *Abhijñānaśakuntalam*, 7th ed.(1980; Kolkata: Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, 2010), 101.

89. Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, *Śakuntalā* (Kolkata: Sanskrit Press, 1854), 49.

90. Vidyasagar, preface to *Śakuntalā*.

91. Binay Ghosh, *Vidyāsāgar o bāṇgāli samāj* (Kolkata: Orient Longman, 1973), 281.

92. Sarkar, *Vidyāsāgar*, 308.

93. Gopal Halder, ed., *Vidyāsāgar rachanāsaṃgraha*, vol.2 (Kolkata:Pashchimbanga niraksharata durikaran committee, 1974), 167-168.

94. Sumit Sarkar, “Vidyasagar and Brahminical Society,” in *Writing Social History* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), 229.

95. Monier Monier-Williams, *Sakoontala, or The Lost Ring* (Hertford: Stephen Austin, 1855), xi.

96. Thapar, *Sakuntala: Texts, Readings, Histories*, 218-219.

97. Monier-Williams, *Sakoontala, or The Lost Ring*, xii.

98. Ibid., 78; it seemed apt that references for the Devanagari text should be extracted from Monier-Williams’ 1853 text. The references in parentheses are to his 1853 text, not to his 1855 translation.

99. Monier-Williams, *Sakoontala, or The Lost Ring*, 74.

100. Brajendranath Bandyopadhyay, *Baṅgīya nātyaśālār itihās* (Kolkata: Bangiya Sahitya Parishat, 1943), 35.

101. Nandakumar Roy, preface to *Abhijñāna Śakuntalā Nātak* (Kolkata: G.P. Roy & Co., 1855).

102. Hemendranath Dasgupta, *The Indian Stage*, vol. 2 (Kolkata:Metropolitan Printing and Publishing House, 1938), 36-37.

103. Bandyopadhyay, *Baṅgīya nātyaśālār itihās*, 40.

104. Bipinbihari Gupta, *Purātan prasaṅga* (Kolkata: Paragon Press, 1913), 151.

105. Cited in Bandyopadhyay, *Baṅgīya nātyaśālār itihās*, 36-37.

106. Cited in Ibid., 37.

107. Kishorichand Mitra, "Modern Hindu Dramas," *The Calcutta Review* 57(1873): 252.

108. Gupta, *Purātan prasaṅga*, 152.

109. Nandakumar Roy, *Abhijñāna Śakuntalā Nātak* (Kolkata: G.P. Roy & Co., 1855), 58. I would subsequently refer to the text as Nandakumar-55, followed by the page number.

110. Prabodhchandra Sen, *Bāṅglā chandaśilpa o chandacintār agragati* (Kolkata: Ananda Publishers, 1989), 82-83.

111. Sibaji Bandyopadhyay, “Ābār śiśuśikṣa,” *Ababhash* 4, no.3(2004):127-128.

112. Nandakumar Roy, *Abhijñāna Śakuntalā Nātak*, 2nd ed. (Kolkata: Nutan Arya yantra, 1882), 51. I would subsequently refer to the text as Nandakumar-82, followed by the page number.

113. Sen, *Baṅgālā sāhityer itihās*, vol.3, 111.

114. Chattopadhyay, *Premchandra Tarkavāgīśer jīvancarit o kavitavāli*, 83.

115. Cited in Dasgupta, *The Indian Stage*, vol. 2, 71.

116. Ibid., 55.

117. Chattopadhyay, *Premchandra Tarkavāgīśer jīvancarit o kavitavāli*, 82-83.

118. Binay Ghosh, *Sāmayikpatre Baṃglār Samājcitra*, vol.1(Kolkata:Bengal Publishers, 1955), 483-84.

119. Hardikbrata Biswas, “Baṅgasamāj saṃskār, ‘kāler kuhak’ o battaly chāpā meyerā,”*Anushtup* 45, no.4(2011): 213.

120. Suhas Chaterjee, “Diglossia in Bengali,” in *South Asian Languages: Structure, Convergence and Diglossia*, ed. B.H. Krishnamurti (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986), 294-303 .

121. I have refered to the second edition of Ramnarayan’s text in Sandhya Bakshi, ed., *Ramanārāyaṇ Tarkaratna racanāvali* (Kolkata:Sahityalok, 1991). I hereafter refer to the text as ‘Ramnarayan’, followed by the page number of the text printed in this book.

122. Pabitra Sarkar, “Kolkāttāi buli,” in *Paścimbaṅger kathya bhāṣā*, ed. Tapas Bhowmik, 2nd ed.(Kolkata: Korok, 2013), 15.

123. Tarkaratna, preface to *Abhijñānaśakuntal*, in *Ramanārāyaṇ Tarkaratna racanāvali*, 434.

124. Sen, *Baṅgālā sāhityer itihās*, vol.3, 143.

125. Dasgupta, *The Indian Stage*, vol. 2, 139.

126. Annadaprasad Bandyopadhyay, *Śakuntalā Gītābhinay* (Kolkata: Visvadut Press, 1874). I would refer to the text as ‘Annadaprasad,’ followed by the page number.

127. Peter Manuel, *Thumri in Historical and Stylistic Perspectives* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1989), 148-149.

128. Wim van der Meer, *Hindusthani Music in the Twentieth Century* (Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, The Hague, 1980), 17.

129. Lalita du Perron, *Hindi Poetry in a Musical Genre: Thumri* (Routledge: Oxford, 2007), 2.

130. Ibid., 57-59.

131. Peter Manuel, *Thumri in Historical and Stylistic Perspectives,* 15-24.

132. Haripada Chakraborty, *Dāśarathi o tāhār pNācāli* (Kolkata: A.Mukherjee, 1960), 15.

133. Brajendranath Bandyopadhyay, *Bāṃlā sāmayik patra*, vol.1, 4th ed. (1936; Kolkata: Bangiya Sahitya Parishat, 2004), 168-169.

134. Baradaprasad Majumdar, preface to *Abhijñānaśakuntalam,* ed. Jaganmohan Tarkaratna and Kedarnath Tarkaratna (Kolkata: B.P.M Press, 1869).

135. Preface to *Abhijñānaśakuntalam*, trans. Jaganmohan Tarkaratna and Harishchandra Kaviratna (Kolkata: B.P.M Press, 1869).

136. Kanjilal, *A Reconstruction of the Abhijñānaśakuntalam*, viii-ix.

137. Jaganmohan Tarkaratna and Kedarnath Tarkaratna, eds., *Abhijñānaśakuntalam*, by Kalidasa (Kolkata: B.P.M Press, 1869), 70. I will hereafter refer to the text as ‘B.P.M. Sanskrit’, followed by the page number.

138. Jaganmohan Tarkaratna and Harishchandra Kaviratna, trans., *Abhijñānaśakuntalam*, by Kalidasa (Kolkata: B.P.M Press, 1869), 35. I will hereafter refer to the text as ‘B.P.M Bengali’, followed by the page number.

139. Manirujjaman, “Pūrvabaṅgīya kathyabhāṣā o tār vaiśiṣtya,” *Korak* (May-August, 2011): 17.

140. Chakrabarti ,ed., *Abhijñānaśakuntalam*, 102.

141. Kanjilal, *A Reconstruction of the Abhijñānaśakuntalam*, 173.

142.Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, preface to *Abhijñānaśakuntalam*, by Kalidasa(Kolkata: Sanskrit Press, 1871), 4.

143. Vidyasagar, preface to *Abhijñānaśakuntalam*, 6.

144. Kanjilal, *A Reconstruction of the Abhijñānaśakuntalam*, 173.

145. Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, ed., *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* (Kolkata: Sanskrit Press, 1871). I would refer to this edition as ‘Vidyasagar-71’, followed by page number.

146. Vasudha Dalmia, *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), 214-217.

147. du Perron, *Hindi Poetry in a Musical Genre*, 8.

148. Dasgupta, *The Indian Stage*, vol. 2, 220.

149. Amit Maitra, *Raṅgālaye baṅganatī* (Kolkata: Ananda, 2004), 6.

150. Bandyopadhyay, *Baṅgīya nātyaśālār itihās*, 157.

151. Sarkar, “Vidyasagar and Brahminical Society,” 276.

152. Ghosh, *Vidyāsāgar o bāṇgali samāj*, 433-446.

153. Asok Sen, *Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and his Elusive Milestones* (Kolkata: Riddhi-India, 1977), 147-154.

154. Bandyopadhyay, *Baṅgīya nātyaśālār itihās*, 161.

155. Sankar Bhattacharya, *Baṅglā raṅgālayer itihāser upādān*, vol.1 (Kolkata: Pashchimbanga Rajya Pustak Parshad, 1982), 31.

156. Maitra, *Raṅgālaye baṅganatī*, 103.

157. Monier Monier-Williams, ed., *Sakuntala: A Sanskrit Drama in Seven Acts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1876), x.

158. Monier Monier-Williams, ed., *Sakuntala* (Hertford: Stephen Austin, 1853), xi.

159. R. Leech, "A Grammar of the Cashmeree Language," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 13, no.1 (1844): 397.

160. Cited in Edward Roer, "Vedanta-Sara, or Essence of the Vedanta, an introduction into the Vedanta Philosophy by Sadananda Parivrajakacharya," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 14, no.1 (1845):100.

161. G.W.A Lloyd and Arthur Campbell, "Further Notes respecting the Late Csoma de Koros," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 14, no.2 (1845):825.

162. W.Seton Karr, "Notes on the Course of the Study pursued by the Students in the Sanskrit College," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 14, no.1 (1845):135.

163. Ibid.

164. James Long, “An Analysis of the Raghu Vansa, a Sanskrit Poem of Kalidasa,” *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 21 (1853): 446.

165. Fitz-Edward Hall, “A Few Remarks on the First Fasciculus of Professor Wilson’s Sanskrit Dictionary, as ‘extended and improved’ by Dr. Goldstucker,” *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 27 (1859):303.

166. Long, “An Analysis of the Raghu Vansa,” 446 .

167. Cited in Long, “An Analysis of the Raghu Vansa,” 447.

168. Edward Byles Cowell, “On the Swayamvara of the Ancient Hindus, and its traces in the ancient world generally,” *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 28 (1859): 31.

169. Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, “Saṃskṛitabhāṣā o saṃskrita sāhityaśāstraviṣayak prastāv,” in *Vidyāsāgar rachanāsaṃgraha*, vol.3, ed. Gopal Halder (Kolkata:Pashchimbanga niraksharata durikaran committee, 1972), 105.

170. Edward Byles Cowell, “Notices on Books Connected with Sanskrit Literature,” *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 31 (1863): 203.

171. Prannath Pandit, “Morals of Kalidasa,” *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 45, no.1 (1876):352.

172. Pandit, “Morals of Kalidasa,” 353.

173. Rajendralal Mitra, “On Human Sacrifices in Ancient India,” *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 45, no.1 (Kolkata: Baptist Mission Press, 1876): 88.

174. Mitra, “On Human Sacrifices,” 95.

175. Pandit, “Morals of Kalidasa,”358.

176. Ibid., 359.

177. George Abraham Grierson, “Are Kalidasa’s Heroes Monogamists?”, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 46, no.1 (1877):39.

178. Ibid., 39-40.

179. Ibid., 40.

180. G.S. Leonard, “Further Proofs of the Polygamy of Kalidasa’s Heroes,” *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 46, no.1 (1877):160-161.

181. Monier Monier-Williams, ed., *Sakuntala* (Hertford: Stephen Austin, 1853), 21.

182. Leonard, “Further Proofs of the Polygamy of Kalidasa’s Heroes,” 161.

183. Ibid., 162.

184. Ibid., 163.

185. Roy, preface to *Abhijñāna Śakuntalā Nātak*, 2nd ed.

186. Dasgupta, *The Indian Stage*, vol. 2, 244.

187. In his autobiography, Shibnath Shastri recounts his friendship with Upendranath. Upendranath had inspired young Shibnath to pursue social reform. He married a widow and was estranged from his father. When Upendranath suffered from near-fatal illness, he took refuge in Shibnath's house. Shibnath went to Vidyasagar and requested him to arrange for Upendranath's reconcilement with his estranged father, Srinath Das, a famed advocate and Vidyasagar's intimate friend. Though initially reluctant, Vidyasagar eventually helped in reconciling the two. See Shibnath Shastri, *Ātmacarit* (Kolkata: Dey's, 2003), 78-85.

188. Sen, *Baṅgālā sāhityer itihās*, 329-332.

189. Dasgupta, *The Indian Stage*, vol. 2, 256-257.

190. Dasgupta, *The Indian Stage*, vol. 2, 259.

191. Roy, preface to *Abhijñāna Śakuntalā Nātak*, 2nd ed.

192. Roy, appendix to *Abhijñāna Śakuntalā Nātak*, 2nd ed.

193. Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, "Report on the Sanskrit College," reprinted in Brajendranath Bandyopadhyay, *Kalikātā saṃskṛita colleger itihās*, vol.1, 76.

194. Vidyasagar, "Saṃskṛitabhāṣā o saṃskrita sāhityaśāstraviṣayak prastāv", 109.

195. Vidyasagar, "Report on the Sanskrit College," 75.

196. Edward Roer, "Letter to Dr. W.B. O'Shaughnessy," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 19 (1851): 424.

197. Edward Roer, preface to *Naisadha Charita*, by Sriharsha (Kolkata: Baptist Mission Press, 1855), iv.

198. Vidyasagar, "Saṃskṛitabhāṣā o saṃskrita sāhityaśāstraviṣayak prastāv", 115.

199. Vidyasagar, "Report on the Sanskrit College," 76.

200. Bimal Krishna Matilal, *The Word and the World* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990), 168.

201. Avantikumar Sanyal, *Bhāratiya kāvyatattva* (Kolkata: Ruprekha Prakashani, 1995), 34.

202. Edwin Gerow, *Indian Poetics*, vol.3 of *A History of Sanskrit Literature,* ed. Jan Gonda (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1977), 273.

203. Amiya Kumar Bhattacharya, *Sāhityer doṣa, guṇa o alaṃkār prasaṅge ācārya Mammata*(Kolkata: Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, 2012), 481.

204. Edward Byles Cowell, "On a Passage in the Tenth Book of the Sahitya Darpana," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 29 (1861): 220.

205. Matilal, *The Word and the World,* 170.

206. Heinrich Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization*, ed. Joseph Campbell (1946; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 69.

207. Chattopadhyay, *Premchandra Tarkavāgīśer jīvancarit o kavitavāli*, 89-90.

208. Chattopadhyay, *Premchandra Tarkavāgīśer jīvancarit o kavitavāli*, 90.

209. Premchand Tarkavagish (ed.), preface to *Kāvyadarśa*, by Dandin (Kolkata: Baptist Mission Press, 1863).

210. Chattopadhyay, *Premchandra Tarkavāgīśer jīvancarit o kavitavāli*, 68-69. Ramaksay describes that some of the manuscript leaves of the commentary were lost as the students did not return them. This evidently caused problems during teaching. Premchand forbade the students from taking the leaves home. Vidyasagar, however, disobeyed his teacher and took some leaves home for copying. It was a rainy day and Vidyasagar accidentally slipped on the street while returning home. The manuscript pages were wet and so was Vidyasagar. He went into a nearby puffed rice shop and endeavoured to dry the leaves beside the furnace. As luck would have it, Premchand met him and he had to confess his transgression.

211. For a discussion about Vidyasagar's agnostic attitude, see Ramakrishna Bhattacharya, "Vidyāsāgar: dharma o rājnīti," *Bāṅgālir natun ātmaparicay*, 2nd ed. (2005; Kolkata: Ababhash, 2010), 30-44.

212. Sarkar, *Vidyāsāgar* , 321.

213. Cited in Subal Chandra Mitra, *Isvar Chandra Vidyasagar:A Story of his Life and Work*(Kolkata: New Bengal Press, 1902), 590-591.

214. Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, "Śakuntalā, Miranda evaṃ Desdemona," *Vividha Pravandha* (Kolkata: New Sanskrit Press, 1886), 128.

215. Biharilal Sarkar, *Śakuntalā rahasya* (Kolkata, 1896), 32.

216. Chandranath Basu, *Śakuntalā Tattva* (Kolkata: Nutan Arya Press, 1881), 80-81.

Colebrooke and the Polyglossic Voices of the City

Henry Thomas Colebrooke's arrival in India marked the beginning of a period of intense literary and scholastic activity. Colebrooke was born on 15th June, 1765. His father, George Colebrooke, was a member of the House of Commons and enthusiastically supported the East India Company and its pursuits. In 1769, George Colebrooke was made the Chairman of the Company. Henry not only inherited a proficiency in the classical languages from his father but also a taste for mathematics. George Colebrooke had an intimate friendship with Warren Hastings and in August 1782, Henry was appointed to a writership in India. About ten months after his arrival, Colebrooke was placed in the Board of Accounts in Kolkata. In 1786, he was appointed as the Assistant Collector of Revenue in Tirhut. It was in Tirhut that Colebrooke developed an interest in the languages of India and the socio-economic conditions of the native people. In 1795 he published, along with A. Lambert, *Remarks on the Present State of Husbandry and Commerce in Bengal* – a study of conditions of agriculture in Bengal and a plea for the abolition of Company's monopoly. In this early socio-economic study of Bengali people, Colebrooke would remark about the diversity of the inhabitants and how one can distinguish between Hindus and Muslims, between mountain-dwellers and the 'rest of the Hindu nation' on the basis of 'religion, character, language, and manners'[1]. It is a matter of considerable importance that Colebrooke, even in his first treatise, distinguishes between the native inhabitants on the basis of their languages.

Colebrooke reminisced that his initial encounter with Indian literature repelled him. He was disappointed by the intellectuals in Kolkata and asserted that most of them were 'pedantic pretenders.'[2] However, he developed an admiration for Charles Wilkins and eventually became a member of the Asiatic Society. The religious customs and practices of the Hindus gradually caught his attention and he delved deep in the s*hastra*-s in order to find out the origins of these practices. The fruit of his search was an essay "On the Duties of a Faithful Hindu Widow," which appeared in the fourth volume of the *Asiatic Researches* (1795). The essay would prove to be extremely controversial. In the essay, Colebrooke endeavoured to prove that sati had been enjoined in authentic Indian scriptures.

Colebrooke's critical approach to Indian Literature has been evident in the article. He expressed that the authenticity and originality of the texts, if not proven, should be suspected[3]:

> While the light, which the labours of the Asiatic Society have thrown on the sciences and religion of the Hindus, has drawn the attention of the literary world to that subject, the hint thrown out by the President for rejecting the authority of every publication preceding the translation of the *Gita* does not appear to have made sufficient impression. Several late compilations in *Europe* betray great want of judgment in the selection of authorities; and their motley dress of true and false colours tends to perpetuate error; for this reason it seems necessary on every topic, to revert to original authorities for the purpose of cancelling error or verifying facts already published[.]

Colebrooke's emphasis on the authenticity of the textual sources is important. It is this attitude of interpreting religious and literary texts as documents vulnerable to temporal changes which enabled the development of religious discourse in the early nineteenth century Kolkata. Rammohan Roy's *Vedānta grantha* (1815), *Vedāntasāra* (1815); Mrityunjay Vidyalankar's *Vedānta candrikā* (1817); Bhavanicharan Bandopadhyay's *Pāṣanda pīḍan* (1823), Rammohan's religious disputations and articles in *Samvād kaumudī* (estd. 1821); the writings of the Srirampur Missionaries in *Samācār darpaṇ* (estd. 1818) and Bhavanicharan's polemical articles in *Samācār candrikā* (estd. 1822) were all endeavours to establish the authenticity of texts in order to justify the religious correctness of particular beliefs. It is needless to assert that these were also early specimens of Bengali prose. Hence, Colebrooke's essay focused on a particular attitude which became extremely important in the early development of Bengali prose.

Colebrooke's essay on the Hindu widow became controversial. It later became apparent that he did not consult the Vedas while preparing this work. Max Müller would later assert that the work was a 'literal translation from Gagannatha's *Vivādabhangārṇava*' [4], because there is an uncanny resemblance to the sequence of quoted authorities in the essay to the sequence of legal codes in *A Digest of Hindoo Laws* (a translation of *Vivādabhaṅgārṇava*, which was initiated by Jones, and ultimately completed by Colebrooke in 1797). Fitz-Edward Hall, in an article in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, however, asserted that Colebrooke probably translated the passage from the numerous *dharmashastric* treatises which were prevalent in his time. [5] Colebrooke himself listed *Brahma purāṇa, Manu smṛiti, Bhāgavata purāṇa, Apastambha dharmasūtra, Vāyu purāṇa, Vṛihaspati dharmasūtra, Bhaviṣya purāṇa, Gautama dharmasūtra* among his sources. When Rammohan Roy would counter Mrityunjay's jibes in *Bhattācāryer sahit vicār* (1817), he would complain that Mrityunjay had neither quoted sufficient *śloka*s in defence of his position nor did he provide accurate reference for the *śloka*s he did quote[6]:

> Vedanta-chandrika is of sixty seven pages; in it[the writer] has quoted not more than eight or nine Vedantic sutras and two or three references from the Vedas. Moreover, of the sutras he has extracted, he has not mentioned the chapter and verse references [.]

Rammohan says he expects that Mrityunjay would provide the necessary references from *sūtra*s, *śruti* and *smṛti*s in the second part of *Vedānta candrikā*. What Colebrooke had initiated, became a part of the nineteenth century prose discourse.

Colebrooke's paper "On the Religious Ceremonies of the Hindus and of the *Brahmens* especially" was initially presented at a meeting of the Society on 17th August, 1797. This essay would be published in three parts. The first part would be published in the fifth volume of the *Asiatic Researches* (1798) while the second and third part would be published in the seventh volume (1801). This paper was born out of Colebrooke's queries into the *Dharmashastra*s as a part of his preparation of the digest on Hindu law. Colebrooke refused any remuneration for his efforts but the work, when it was published in 1801, earned him recognition. He was appointed to the Bench of the new Court of Appeal at Kolkata in 1801. Besides, Governor-General Lord Wellesley appointed him as the Professor of Hindu Law and Sanskrit in the College of Fort William.[7]

Jones had initially undertaken the work of compilation of a second Hindu Legal Code (after Halhed's unsatisfactory compilation of 1774) in the model of Justinian's *Corpus Juris Civilis*. Jagannath Tarkapanchanan of Triveni, the pundit who was appointed as the compiler, was famous for his erudition. Rammohan Roy praised him by comparing him with the legendary Bengali *dharmashastra* compiler, Raghunandan[8]:

> Jagannath was universally acknowledged to be the first literary character of his day, and his authority has nearly as much weight as that of Raghunandana.

The *Vivādabhaṅgārṇava* was bulkier than *Vivādārṇavasetu*. It was not written in the style of normal *nibandha*s, but rather in the abstruse style of the *navya nyaya* tradition. This made the text ambiguous and posed severe problems in interpretation. Colebrooke, in the preface to his edition of *Dayabhāga*, comments about the problems in the *Digest*[9]:

> [I]ndeed, the author's method of discussing together the discordant opinions maintained by the lawyers of several schools, without distinguishing in an intelligible manner which of them is the received doctrine of each school, but on the contrary leaving it uncertain whether any of the opinions stated by him do actually prevail, or which doctrine must now be considered to be in force and which obsolete, renders his work of little utility to persons conversant with the law and of still less service to those who are not versed in Indian jurisprudence; especially to the English reader, for whose use, through the medium of translation the work was particularly intended.

However, Colebrooke in his Preface to the *Digest* tried to situate *Vivādabhaṅgārṇava* in the matrix of Hindu *dharmashatric* texts. He, following Jones, described the pundits as 'Hindu Lawyers' and the *dharmashastra* as a 'sacred code of law'[10]. Colebrooke also asserted in his Preface that the compilation was sufficient to serve as a ‘standard for the administration of Justice among the Hindu subjects of Great Britain’[11]. Jones translation offered a standard process by which a text may be reinterpreted and assimilated, hence legitimising a certain authority or custom. The text was ambiguous, as Jagannath often referred to many ‘less approved interpretations’ (it was left unspecified, who considered the interpretations to be ‘less approved’ – Jagannath, the Hindu tradition, or the British)[12], before finally referring to his approved view. Colebrooke often used his own discretion to comprehend a single meaning out of the text. Hence, Colebrooke’s translation of the code was necessarily a linguistic enterprise. It equipped the interpreter to deal with the ambiguity which had often troubled Jones and the early Orientalists.

Colebrooke’s essay on religious ceremonies reflects further ambiguities. For example, in the third part of the essay, he would add an interesting footnote. The essay discusses the marriage ceremony and the associated rituals of the Hindus. In a footnote, Colebrooke states[13]:

> I omit the remainder of the text, which it would be indecorous to translate into a modern language. The literal sense of it is here subjoined in a Latin version – Illa redamans accipito fascinum meum, quod ego peranam intromittam in eam, multae qua illicebrae sistemt

It is revealing to note that for Colebrooke, what is obscene and subversive in a vernacular can be encountered through a classical language without being threatened by its obscenity. Colebrooke seems to suggest that a classical language can sustain the polyvalence of words. On the other hand, a modern language is too direct and unambiguous. Being so, it is unsuitable for preservation of ambiguity. The fall into (modern) language is necessarily a fall into the domain of prose. The paradise of verse, with its abundance of meanings, connotations and camouflage has to be sacrificed. The ideas about the difference between *sadhu bhāṣā* (refined langauge) and *laukik bhāṣā* (everyday language) perhaps originates from this initial dichotomy between classical language/ modern language. Like Halhed, a sense of sacrality would be adduced to Sanskrit and sanskritised speech. This sense of *laukik bhāṣā* as a sacrilege, as obscene and immoral, is suggested by Mrityunjay in *Vedānta candrikā*[14]:

> Just as gems are not found lying on the streets but are kept carefully enclosed in casket by their connoisseurs, in a similar way the injunctions of *śāstra* cannot be contained in everyday speech – however, they can be contained, like ripened blackberries, in a well-constructed sentence. Again, like clever men who know the heart of a beautiful, virtuous woman and hence turn aside when they see naked, immoral women, similarly, virtuous men who know the essence of ornate, scripture-revealing refined language, turn aside as soon as they hear the unrestrained language of the commoners.

Rammohan had suggested in his *Vedānta grantha* that the reader must minutely study the construction of his translated sentences in order to avoid misinterpretation. He had suggested that ‘anyone who has some knowledge of Sanskrit or who lives with a Sankritist’ would develop an ability to converse in *sadhu bhāṣā*. He wanted his readers to be careful about the beginning and ending of the sentences. Subjects and objects are to be related properly and a sentence should not be deemed as completed unless one encounters a verb. As there can be multiple nouns in a sentence, it is essential to know which verb is related to a particular noun.[15] Rammohan himself used a style which was remarkably free from Sanskrit influence, although it showed the vestiges of long, sententious construction. Dineshchandra Sen asserts[16]:

> The language… is clear, simple and forcible though archaic, its chief feature being that it is not at all influenced by Sanskrit, though Sanskrit and Vedic scriptures are the subject of Raja's treatment. The resuscitation of the model which characterized the prose of pre-English days,-- and the characteristics of which we find in the works of Radhavallav Sarma, who had at a previous period translated works of Hindu Jurispurdence, and in the writings of 'Sahajiya Vaisnavas,'—was brought about by the Raja with a vigour of expression which marked his prose with a stamp of his superior genius. This style… was imitated by the Tattabodhini patrika.

Mrityunjay's reference to *sadhu bhāṣā* in *Vedānta candrikā* is hence a mocking response to Rammohan's statement. Mritunjay would try to suggest that the refined language can be suitably used only by a person of considerable moral worth. Rammohan would answer back in the Preface to *Bhattācārjyer sahit vicār* that Mrityunjay had used difficult words in *Vedānta candrikā* in order to render the treatise incomprehensible to common people. He further advises Mrityunjay to write in a simple language in his next treatise[17]:

> Intentional use of difficult Sanskrit words in order to make the treatise dense, merely deprives the readers of the meaning and distorts the significance of the text …

Rammohan counters Mrityunjay's pretensions to civility by requesting him not to abuse him in his second volume (as he had done in the first), and then sarcastically says that such a plea would be futile as habits die hard. Hence, the dyadic polarities of classical/

modern, refined/ vulgar, sacred/ profane, legitimised/ transgressive etc. were etched out. Prose became a dialectical space in which these categories were encountered and imprinted as *code*.

Colebrooke had been in Nagpur for two years. On his return, he presented an important paper before the Society on 7th January, 1801. Colebrooke's essay "On the Sanscrit and Pracrit Languages" can be considered as the first, serious modern study of Indian vernaculars. It also discussed about the traditions of Sanskrit grammar in India. Colebrooke outlined the main features of Indian vernaculars like Hindi, Bengali, Oriya, Tamil, Kanarese, Marathi, Maithili, Punjabi and Braj Bhasha. He made a list of certain common terms in the various languages of India and endeavoured to initiate a comparative philological enquiry. However, he did not print the list with the essay as he felt that it would unnecessarily stretch out the essay. Thomas E. Colebrooke would later comment about the list made by his father[18]:

> The range of his comparison was wide, as it embraced not merely Sanskrit, Greek, and Latin with their derivatives, but the Germanic and Slavonic dialects. In one case(the word brother) it is carried through eighteen variations.

Colebrooke begins his treatise by translating certain passages from a treatise of rhetoric, supposedly compiled by Raja Manikya Chandra, ruler of Tirhut. The treatise lays down the different dialects which were used in Sanskrit literature[19]:

> *Sanscrita*, *Pracrita*, *Paisachi*, and *Magadhi*, are, in short, the four paths of poetry. The Gods, &c. speak *Sanscrita*; benevolent genii, *Pracrita*; wicked demons, *Paisachi*; and men of low tribes, and the rest, *Magadhi*. But sages deem *Sanscrita* the chief of these four languages. It is used in three ways; in prose, in verse, and in a mixture of both.

Not only does the text categorise dialects according to their speakers, it also points out to the essential characteristic of each dialect[20]:

> Language, again, the virtuous have declared to be fourfold; SANSCRITA, [or the polished dialect;] Pracrita, [or the vulgar dialect;] Apabhramsa, [or jargon;] and Misra, [or mixed.] *Sanscrita* is the speech of the celestials, framed in grammatical institutes: *Pracrita* is similar to it, but manifold as a provincial dialect, and otherwise; and those languages which are ungrammatical, are spoken in their representative dialects.

Colebrooke's extract hence reveals the differences between the polished dialect and its vulgar derivatives. This dichotomy, originally existant in Sanskrit prosodic texts, was reemphasised. Colebrooke further comments that Paisachi seems to be gibberish which demons speak in plays. The Misra, or mixed language are only employed in dramatic works. Colebrooke clarifies that '[i]t is not then a compound language, but a mixt (sic) dialogue, in which different persons of the drama employ different idioms.' By expressly stating this, Colebrooke negates the possibly of mixed language being a possible form of everyday discourse. He reconciles the above quoted passages and states that there are 'in fact, only three tongues':

> 1. Sanscrit, a polished dialect, the inflections of which, with all its numerous anomalies, are taught in grammatical institutes. This the dramatic poets put into the mouths of Gods, and of Holy personages. 2. Pracrit, consisting of provincial dialects, which are less refined, and have a more imperfect grammar. In dramas it is spoken by women, benevolent genii, &c. 3. Magadhi, or Apabhransa, a jargon destitute of regular grammar. It is used by the vulgar, and varies in different districts: the poets accordingly introduce into the dialogue of plays, a provincial jargon, spoken by the lowest persons of the drama.[21]

In a footnote, Colebrooke traces the etymology of the words 'Sanscrita', 'Pracrita' and 'Apabhransa.' 'Sanscrit/a' would mean 'adorned', but in the given context, it signifies 'polished'. 'Pracrita', according to Colebrooke, is generally thought to mean 'outcast, or man of the lowest class'. Apabhransa, derived from *bhras* (to fall down), would signify 'a word, or dialect, which falls off from correct etymology'. Colebrooke further informs us that grammarians consider Sanscrita to be 'duly formed, regularly inflected' while Apabhransa is considered as 'false grammar.' Colebrooke appropriates this narrative of the diversity of these speech forms, without delving into the historical/ diachronic element of its development. He seems to be aware of the Paninian category of *bhāṣā,* forms of spoken Sanskrit speech, but prioritises written Sanskrit.[22] He also states that 'Bhasha'/ 'Bhakha', at present, denotes modern Indian vernaculars. These categories are not consistently used by the earlier grammarians – Patanjali, in his *Mahābhāṣya* (c. 2nd Century BCE), would use the word 'Apabhraṃsa' for the first time to signify grammatical inflectional forms which are irregular and do not follow the rules of sanskritised diction. He, however, did not use the term 'Prākṛit' at all. On the other hand, Bharat in his *Nātyaśāstra* (c. 3rd century CE) does use the term 'Prākṛit' but only to signify the regional dialectical forms used in dramatic speech. Later grammarians like Vararuchi (500 CE), who discussed spoken vernacular forms, did not name the language he was discussing.[23] Many Prakrit grammarians like Hemachandra considered it to be derived from Sanskrit, and essentially identical to Sanskrit ('Prākṛitih saṃskṛitam' – *Siddhahemacandra* 8.1.1). Still later, 'Apabhraṃsa' was considered to be the tertiary stage of the development of Middle Indo-Aryan languages (III MIA/ Late MIA). [24] Ignoring these variations, Colebrooke establishes a synchronic division which had been popular among Sanskrit prosodists.

Colebrooke further extends this triadic scheme to contemporary Indian languages: 'The languages of India are comprehended in these three classes.'[25] Hence, the modern vernaculars came to be considered as Apabhraṃsa, the forms of *fallen speech*. Sanskrit ('Sanscrit'), on the other hand, came to be equated with almost the entire scriptural and literary tradition of India. Vedas, which later linguists would consider as written in Old Indo-Aryan, was considered to be written in an 'obsolete dialect' of Sanskrit. Jones's assertion of a shared origin of the Indo-European languages was also reaffirmed[26]:

> It evidently draws its origin (and some steps of its progress may even now be traced) from a primeval tongue, which was gradually refined in various climates, and became *Sanscrit* in India; *Pahlavi* in Persia; and *Greek* on the shores of Mediterranean.

Although Sanskrit had been a 'polished tongue', it has suffered the fate of all old languages, and has become a 'dead language'. Colebrooke clarifies that the language was not an artificial invention by few priests; it had evolved through the gradually improved practice of good writers and *polite* speakers. Perhaps the language had been thought to be non-verbal due to its 'euphonical orthography'. Colebrooke is referring to the rules of *sandhi* – which bring about changes in orthography and pronunciation. He further asserts[27]:

> They require all compound terms to be reduced to this standard; and Sanscrit authors, it may be observed, delight in compounds of inordinate length: the whole sentence too, or even whole periods, may, at the pleasure of the author, be combined like elements of a single word, and good writers generally do so. In common speech this could never have been practiced.

Yet, Colebrooke asserts, Sanskrit is spoken by a few 'and they deliver themselves with such fluency,' that it is almost certain that Sanskrit was used colloquially in earlier times. Colebrooke thus asserts that though Sanskrit *was spoken* earlier, it is nearly impossible (and unfeasible) to speak it at present. Later in the same essay he would characterise Bengali as having a distinctly sanskritised register[28]:

> GAURA, or as it is commonly called, *Bengalah*, or *Bengali*, is the language spoken in the provinces, of which the ancient city of *Gaur* was once the capital: it still prevails in all the provinces of Bengal, excepting, perhaps, some frontier districts, but it is said to be spoken in its greatest purity in the eastern parts only; and, as there spoken, contains few words which are not evidently derived from *Sanscrit*. This dialect is not been neglected by learned men… learned *Hindus* in Bengal speak it almost exclusively: verbal instruction in sciences is communicated through this medium; and even public disputations are conducted in this dialect.

Colebrooke's equivocation is critical to our present concerns. On one hand, he establishes the dichotomy (infact, a triadic hierarchy) of Indian languages – with Sanskrit being a fossilised antiquated language, suitable only for refined composition and speech while modern Indian languages are suitable only for humble poetic compositions and everyday speech. Yet, Bengali breaks asunder his dyadic categories and establishes itself as a medium not only for vulgar speech, but also for 'public disputations'. Again, one of its variants has 'the greatest purity' and is highly sanskritised. Colebrooke further notes that Bengalis use their own script 'which is nothing else but Deva-nagari, difformed (*sic*) for the sake of expeditious writing.' Colebrooke is scandalised by the fact that Bengalis use this script even for the Sanskrit language[29]:

> Even the learned amongst them employ this character for *Sanscrit* language, the pronunciation of which, too, they in like manner degrade to the *Bengali* standard.

Colebrooke also discusses the important texts, commentaries, glosses and vocabularies of Sanskrit grammar. He realises that Paaniniya grammar is difficult for fresh students, yet it helps to bolster critical knowledge of the language. He also mentions the modern abridgements on the subject, including Ramachandra's *Prakriyā kaumudī* and Bhattoji Dikshit's *Siddhānta Kaumadī*. He discusses about easier grammars like the 'Saraswata', which he believes to have been meant for common people. Colebrooke then discusses Vopadeva's *Mugdhabodha*, a grammar which was extremely popular in Bengal and which embodied a considerably different approach in comparison to the *Paaniniya* grammar treatises he had earlier discussed. Colebrooke elaborates that although Vopadeva's treatise is based on the 'Caumudis', the author has not merely translated the rules of Panini, rather he had devised new technical terms and had innovated new abbreviations. He further states[30]:

> The chief inconvenience attending VOPADEVA'S innovation is, that commentaries and scholia, written to eludicate poems and works of science, must be often unintelligible to those who have studied only his grammar, and that the writings of his scholars must be equally incomprehensible… to the students of *Paniniya*. Accordingly, the *Pandits* of Bengal are cut off, in a manner, from communication on grammatical topics with the learned of other provinces of India.

Colebrooke disapproved of many of the modern Sanskrit treatises, and often because they, like *Mugdhabodha*, were not universally comprehensible. In the Preface to his *Grammar of the Sanscrit Language* (1805), he says[31]:

> In the composition of this grammar I have followed the system taught by writers whose works are considered by the prevailing sects of Hindus to be sacred and to form an appendage of their scriptures My reasons for preferring these to the popular or profane treatises on Grammar were stated in an essay on the *Sanscrit* language inserted in the seventh volume of the Asiatic *Researches* I adhere to the opinion there expressed The sacred grammar has been more cultivated, its agreement with ancient writings and classical authors has been more carefully verified, than any other grammar of the language: it is more usually cited and more generally understood… it is more accurate and complete.

Colebrooke's disapproval of the regional grammars stemmed from his conviction that Sanskrit was the standard, refined language of India, and hence cannot possibly entertain regional variations and idiosyncrasies. After describing the vocabularies of Sanskrit, Colebrooke then embarks to define the second broad category of Indian Languages – the *Pracrit*. Here, however, Colerbooke seems to be ambiguous. He says that although all modern languages, 'written dialects which are now used in civil life', can be denominated by the term *Pracrit*. He then states that his term is 'commonly restricted to one language, namely to the *Saraswati bala bani*, or the speech of children on the banks of the Saraswati.'[32] Prakrit is considered to have originated in Punjab. It is imagined as a single dialect which was 'more cultivated than any other among the dialects which will be here enumerated,' and consists of a considerable body of literary works. Many poems and dramatic compositions mix this language with Sanskit. Colebrooke briefly names the popular Prakrit grammars (like *Prakṛita manoramā* and *Prakṛita piṅgala*) and then refers his readers to the Preface of Jones' *Sacontala.*

Another significant thing which Colebrooke demonstrated in the essay is how the vocabulary of major vernaculars is dependent on Sanskrit. He did this by tracing the etymology of certain words, emphasising their interconnectedness[33]:

> SAT literally signifies existent; it is employed in the acceptation of truth: *Satya*, a regular derivative from it, signifies true; or, employed substantively, truth. The correspondent *Hindi* word, *sach*, is corrupted from *Sanscrit satya*, by neglecting the final vowel, by substituting j for y, according to the genius of *Hindevi* dialect, and by transforming the harsh combination *tj* into the softer sound of *ch*. Here then is obviously traced the identity of the Hindustani *sach*, and Bengali *shotyo*, which are only same Sanscrit word *satya* variously pronounced.

Most of the early studies on Bengali prose stressed on its interrelatedness with Sanskrit. Bengali was considered as elegant because it has borrowed most of its words from Sanskrit. For example, William Carey, in his treatise on Bengali grammar would express[34]:

> The Bengalee may be considered more nearly allied to the Sungskrita than any of the other languages of India; for though it contains many words of Persian and Arabic origin, yet four fifths of the words in the language are pure Sungskrita. Words may be compounded with such facility, and to so great an extent in Bengalee, as to convey ideas with utmost precision, a circumstance which adds much to its copiousness. On these, and many other accounts, it may be esteemed one of the most expressive and elegant languages of the East.

Colebrooke was however cautious to emphasise too much on this relationship. He reminds that although nine-tenths of the words in Hindi can be traced back to Sanskrit, some of the words would still lie untraced. He further realises that it is perhaps these words which serve as the basis of the language. Colebrooke then reminisces that William Jones had asserted the independence of Hindi from Sanskrit (in the “Third Anniversary Discourse”). Jones had further inferred, that the ‘pure *Hindi* was primeval in Upper India, into which the Sanskrit was introduced by conquerors from other kingdoms in some very remote age.’ Colebrooke does not directly contradict this, but he states[35]:

> I only contend that where similar words are found in both languages, the Hindi has borrowed from Sanscrit, rather than Sanscrit from Hindi.

Colebrooke justifies his opinion by stating that generally languages with extensive inflections evolve into dialects 'that are simple in structure.' He felt that until the earliest extant compositions in the Hindi dialect have not been studied, the matter cannot be decided conclusively. Colebrooke's disagreement with Jones on this particular issue reveals the faultlines of contending ideologies about linguistic identity in early nineteenth century India.

Not only does Colebrooke claim a common descent from Sanskrit for the North Indian languages, but also for the Dravidian languages. He emphasizes that 'Tamla contains many *Sanscrit* words.' The word Tamil is traced to the word 'Tamrapani', a river in Southern Mathura. Interestingly, for Colebrooke southern Mathura 'is situated within the limits of Dravir.' [36] The Tamil Grantham script is also 'greatly corrupted from its parent Devanagari'.

On 4th July 1804, Colebrooke presented a paper on the Vedas at a meeting of the Society. It was subsequently published in the Eighth Volume of the *Asiatic Researches*. In the paper, Colebrooke established the Vedas as written texts. This might seem insignificant, yet, this assertion of the scripted nature of the revelation had considerable influence on major figures of the Bengal Renaissance. Colebrooke began his essay with a declaration that the views about Vedas have recently changed[37]:

> In the early progress of researches into *Indian* literature, it was doubted whether the *Vedas* are extant; or, if portions of them were still preserved, whether any person, however leaned in other respects, might be capable of understanding their obsolete dialect… The doubts were not finally

> abandoned, until Colonel POLIER obtained from *Jeyepur* a transcript of what purported to be a complete copy of the *Vedas*, and which he deposited in the *British* Museum.

This is an important revision of Indian ideas about the *Śruti*. Unlike *Bible*, *Quran* or *Torah*, the idea of the Vedas as *written* texts had not been formulated in South Asia until the late nineteenth century. Peter van der Veer states that the high value attributed to written texts in Europe did not exist in South Asian traditions. The sanctity of Vedic mantras depends on listening and speaking. Writing down the mantras was forbidden, especially because the women and the lower *jati*s were barred from accessing the mystical aural power of its words. 'The Vedas were transmitted orally and were only transcribed into written texts by the nineteenth century Orientalists[.]' [38] Benedict Anderson's theory about the association of Print Capitalism and Nationalism [39] has been suitably modified by Peter van der Veer to suit South Asian contexts. In South Asia, the discovery of *written* sacred texts and their public performance would have spurred significant changes in predominantly oral religious communities. The collective imagination of people would eventually respond to these changes, hence engendering the construct/s of *nation/s* and *histories*.

Moreover, the idea of Veda as a written discourse would naturally reveal the *possibility* of written vernacular prose. The early prose writers were anxiously aware of this change which their efforts would inevitably lead to. They often tried to resist this change, crafting out alternative ideologies about printed texts. Rammohan Roy, in the Preface to his Bengali translation of the *Īśopaniṣad* contends with this transformation of oral text into written history[40]:

> By listening and reading these Upanisadic texts and by repeatedly pondering over them, one would be able to realise their meaning. If we read the texts merely as historical narratives, we would not be able to understand them. Hence, it is requested that the meaning of these texts should be concentrated upon…

For Rammohan, the problem was a theological one. There has been a tradition of equating Brahman with the *śabda* (sacred sound, syllable, spoken word). This had coexisted with the idea of an intangible *Brahman*; who is only revealed through sacred sound, but is not visible as written text. By publishing the translations, Rammohan incarnated the *śabda-Brahman* as written, tangible text. This would be contrary to his claims that Brahman is to be conceived as the One beyond the limits of the senses. In South Asia, Word's incarnation as printed text was a midwife's nightmare.

Colebrooke was however convinced that historicisation was necessary to etch out a credible history of South Asia and its people. He felt that written texts should be valorised and rationality should be allowed to prevail. The scarcity of credible materials for the history of the 'Hindu race' was noted. In his discourse "On Ancient Monuments, containing Sanskrit Inscriptions", Colebrooke said that importance should be attached to all *genuine* monuments, and 'especially inscriptions of stone and metal'. He further states[40]:

> If these be carefully preserved and diligently examined; and the facts, ascertained from them, be judiciously employed towards elucidating the scattered information, which can be yet collected

> from the remains of Indian literature, a satisfactory progress may be finally made in investigating the history of the *Hindus*.

Yet, Colebrooke realises to his dismay that the Indian attitude towards its past is decidedly complex and its *construction* of history is amorphous. The writers rarely date their compositions and the Hindu's 'love of fable, and distaste for sober narrative' makes it difficult to formulate historical descriptions. The biographies of authors or princes are filled with 'improbable fiction.' Colebrooke also traces the source of all these imaginative historiographies is Hindu mythology.[42] In order to counter this trend, true histories must be deduced from inscriptions whose dates have been ascertained. Colebrooke also endorses the idea that inscriptions might be translated but expresses his discomfort in 'placing implicit confidence' in the transcript made by native Pandits.[43]

Colebrooke's suspicion about the historical acumen of Indians was a response to the evidently pseudo-historiographical strain in the apparently historical narratives. The early Fort-William Pundits were also writing historical compositions, either as classroom texts (Mrityunjay's *Rājāvalī* [1808; written in 1805]) or as separate historical treatises (Rajiblochan Mukhopadhyay's *Mahārāj Kṛiṣṇacandra Rāyasya caritraṃ* [1805]; Ramram Basu's *Rājā Pratāpāditya caritra* [1801]). Ramram Basu's treatise is the first printed Bengali prose text, written by a native speaker. Colebrooke, being a Professor in the College, must have been aware of these texts. Partha Chatterjee, in his study of *Rājāvalī*, has discussed about the treatise's strategic role as a 'puranic history'. It aimed to narrate the story of 'the Rajas and Badshahs and Nawabs who have occupied the throne in Delhi and Bengal.'[44] Mrityunjay's protagonists were gods and kings, and the

Mughal rule was interpreted as a reflection of Divine Will. The text was not merely a study of worldly events but an effort to comprehend (and justify) *dharma*. It was also important for Mrityunjay to justify and legitimise British Rule in India, proclaiming that it has been sanctioned by Dharma. Mritunjay's prose is considered to be easy and free-flowing, but at times he displays a pedantic, sanskritised style.[45] Both Rajiblochan and Ramram would write about the kings whom they considered to be their ancestors. Hence, their relationship to their texts could hardly be dispassionate. In a way, both were defining their cultural inheritance, often legitimising their beliefs and practices. They were also claiming that what they were inscribing were valid histories. Ramram would begin his *Rājā Pratāpāditya caritra* in this manner[46]:

> Many kings like Chandraketu etc. had been born in Bengal, but we sometimes merely encounter their names and remain unaware about their exploits and their rise and fall. The people who are interested in these events are much disappointed by this lack.

Basu further goes on to reveal that there has been a narrative about a native ruler, Pratapaditya, in Persian accounts. Yet, the account seems to be incomplete. He then states that he belongs to the *jati* of the ruler. He has listened to the accounts of this ruler from his family members ('father and grandfather'). He would now synthesise these two accounts (the Persian written text and the oral account) and would write about Pratapaditya. Basu would end his narrative by stating that all the Bengali Kayasthas are still looked after by the descendants of Vasanta Ray (one of the main characters in his narrative). Hence, the text becomes a device which would enable the Kayasthas to *imagine* their history and affirm their distinct identity. The abundance of Persian words in the Basu's narrative has often been criticised.[47] This might be partly because the sources which Basu used were Persian texts and he was obviously influenced by them. However, it is also reflective of the decidedly *mixed* register of the urbane elites, who could speak the *Nawabi* court language fluently. Basu's prose was not merely a sculpturing of historical identity but also a performative portrayal of his syncretic linguistic roots. It is interesting to note that Rajiblochan's text had also described Pratapaditya and the principle events associated with him. Yet, Rajibloachan's language is sanskritised and his affiliations are clearly with the Brahminical culture of Navadvip. His description is completely free from the Persianate vocabulary of Basu. He once refers to Basu's history. His description evidently validates Krishnachandra's joining with the British in the conspiracy of Plassey and his subsequent closeness with the Company. In a way, both Rajiblochan and Ramram were engaged in defining their own identities through their histories. Colebrooke's uneasiness with the fabulous histories composed by the native Indians can perhaps be traced to these subjective roots of historical discourse.

The histories of Ramram Basu and Rajiblochan Mukhopadhyay were perhaps reflective of the voices of the emergent middle-class intellectuals in Kolkata. Ramram's career epitomises this newer urbane culture. Born in Chunchura, Ramram's early life was quite unremarkable. However, he became acquainted with John Thomas and later met William Carey. He used to teach Bengali to these missionaries. His contribution in Carey's Bible translation had been considerable. Later, in 1801, he would join as a Munshi in the Bengali Department of Wellesley's Fort William College. Ramram would die in 1813, but his son Narottam Basu, was already appointed as a Subordinate Munshi in 1806.

Chandicharan Munshi, another early Bengali prose writer, had been associated with the College since its early years. Mrityunjay, the chief Munshi, was born in Medinipur but was educated at Natore. He was well versed in Bengali, Oriya and Sanskrit (Haraprasad Shastri refers to Mrityunjay as Oriya). He used to run a traditional *tol* in his house before joining the College in 1801. Other figures are more obscure but the anecdotes about them are evidently interesting. Kalikumar Ray was well known for his hand-writing and was hence appointed as the Master of Bengali hand-writing in 1803.[48] Tarinicharan Mitra became the Chief Munshi of the Hindustani Department in the College in 1809. He knew Urdu and Persian, and John Gilchrist confesses at the Preface of *Oriental Fabulist* (1803) that he is greatly indebted for the accuracy of his collection of Fables to 'Tarueechurun Mitr's patient labour and considerable proficiency in the English tongue.'[49] Tarinicharan had himself translated the Persian, Bengali and Hindi versions of the Fables. It was these men of letters who were sculpting the form of early nineteenth century Bengali prose.

Colebrooke's essay "On Sanscrit and Pracrit Poetry" was published in the tenth volume of the Asiatic Researches (1808). Colebrooke declared that this was not 'an enumeration of the poetic compositions of the *Hindus*', nor was it a critical analysis of their texts. It was primarily aimed to be a study of the laws of versification of the *Hindu* literary texts along with brief introduction to some of the famous poems. However, Colebrooke briefly discusses the various rhetorical texts of Sanskrit and Prakrit literature. Colebrooke's analysis is prompted by appreciation of the *Indian* system of prosody. He further continues[50]:

> [T]he prosody of Sanscrit will be found to be richer than that of any other known language, in variations of metre, regulated either by quantity or number of syllables, both with and without rhyme, and subject to laws imposing in some instances rigid restrictions, in others allowing ample latitude.

The kind of latitude that Colebrooke hints at is quite fascinating. He would subsequently discuss about compositions in which Sanskrit and Prakrit would be mixed and those in which verse and prose would be mingled. First, however, he points out the fact that Prakrit grammarians like Hemcachandra proclaimed rules for transformation of Sanskrit words into the Prakrit languages. These rules, Colebrooke claims, are exhibited in Indian Dramas and the scriptural texts of Jains. Grammarians state rules for translating from Sanskrit into Prakrit, and also from one dialect of Prakrit to the other. Colebrooke emphasizes the interrelated nature of these dialects[51]:

> The affinity of these dialects of *Pracrit* to the *Sanscrit* and to each other is so great, that they reciprocally borrow, notwithstanding their own particular rules, terms permuted in the manner of other dialects, and even admit, without alteration, words inflected according to the *Sanscrit* grammar. They may be, therefore, considered as dialects of a single language, the Pracrit or derivative tongue; so termed with reference to Sanscrit, from which it is derived.

In other words, Colebrooke wants to establish that the languages are so similar that they can be established as dialects of a corrupted form of Sanskrit. He further elaborates that Prakrit dialects were often categorised by the region from which they originate. Hence, there is ‘Dacshinatya,’ or the language used in the south of India; the ‘Dravidi’ or dialect of the southern extremity of the peninsula; the ‘Avantica’ (probably the language of the

Malava); the ‘Ardhamagadhi,’ the ‘Bahlicabhasha,’ the ‘Maharashtri’, the ‘Prachya,’ the ‘Abhiri’ and ‘Chandali’, the ‘Sancara’ and ‘Sabari’[52].

Colebrooke realises that the rules framed by one rhetorician cannot possibly suit all these languages/ dialects, but he says that perhaps the rules were framed for a particular dialect of Prakrit (in which the text was written) and they would also be applicable to other cognate dialects which are more similar to each other than they are to Sanskrit, ‘their acknowledged common parent.’ Colebrooke then makes a startling generalisation[53]:

> Generally those rules may be considered applicable to all the languages comprehended under the designation of Pracrit, as derivative from Sanscrit; and certainly so to the vernacular tongues of the ten nations of Hindus now inhabiting India.

Colebrooke concludes that the literary compositions in modern Indian vernaculars follow the prosodic rules of Sanskrit verse. He claims to offer examples from the regional languages of ‘Maharashtra,’ ‘Gurjara’ and ‘Canvakubja’. He finds the instances in the Hindi poetry of Kesavadas (1555-1617). Punjabi, which is claimed to be ‘undoubtedly derived from Sareswata’ (Sareswata is the hypothetical dialect of the early Vedic Indo-Aryans), supposedly abounds in specimens of Sanskrit/ Prakrit metre. Colebrooke adds[54]:

> The language of *Mithila*, and its kindred tongue, which prevails in Bengal, also supply proof of the aptitude of *Sanscrit* prosody: and the same is probably true of the other four national languages.

That Bengali literature demonstrates an association with Sanskrit prosody is an oversimplification. Rhythm in Bengali verse and prose is dominated by principles that are considerably different from Sanskrit. In Sanskrit, it is the alternative pattern of the length of syllables in a line, which lends identity to a particular metre. In Bengali, the metrical identity depends upon the arrangement of bars (*parva*) and beats (*parvaṅga*). Each line is divided into a specific number of bars. A bar must contain one or more complete words. Each bar contains a fixed number of syllables/ morae. The pattern crafted by the arrangement of the bars (and not the length of syllables) gives Bengali metre its distinct identity. It is true that some Bengali poets have tried to assimilate properties of Sanskrit prosody in their verses, but this has never been the overwhelming trend.[55]

It is when Colebrooke describes the Prakrit measures that he tacitly affirms to this difference between Sanskrit and Prakrit prosody. While describing *catuṣpādikā*, he would state[56]:

> The Chatushpadica (Pr. Chaupaia or Chaupai) is a stanza of sixteen verses distributed into four tetrastichs, in which each verse contains 30 moments (scanned seven times 4-2), and terminated by a long syllable.

Colebrooke would never tell us that the scanned divisions are not divisions of feet, but rather divisions of beat (*parva*). It is perhaps because of this that he finds Kesavadas's poetry to be following the rules of Sanskrit prosody.

Other ambiguities would soon creep in. Colebrooke discusses about *Rāghavapāndaviya*, by Kaviraja. He acknowledges that the poem is composed 'with studied ambiguity'; the piece can either be interpreted as the story of Rama and other descendants of Dasharatha, or that of Yudhishthira and other sons of Pandu. Kaviraja hints that Subandhu's *Vāsavadattā* and Banabhatta's *Kādambarī* had served as models for him. Colebrooke says[57]:

> Both these works [i.e. of Subandhu and Bana], which like the *Dasacumara* of DANDI, are prose compositions in poetical language, and therefore reckoned among poems, do indeed exhibit continual instances of terms and phrases employed in a double sense…

The ambiguity about these compositions is not merely limited to their content. The form can be interpreted both as prose and/or poetry.[58] Hence, the schismatic categories of verse and prose are problematised. Colebrooke explains this anomaly by explaining that the first stanza of *Rāghavapāndaviya* is in a mixed sort of metre, named 'upajati'. The metre is noted for the relative freedom of its form[59]:

> In general the different sorts of verse… are used singly, and the stanza is consequently regular: but some of the species, differing a little from each other, are intermixed. Thus the *Indravojra*, measured by a dactyl between two epitrites (3d and 2d), and the *Upendravajra*, which begins with a diiambus, may be mixed in the same stanza. This sort of mixt metre …is denominated *Upajati*: it of course admits fourteen variations; or, with the regular stanzas, sixteen. The relief which it affords from the rigorous laws of the uniform stanza, render it a favourite metre with the best poets.

Yet, there are other examples of ambiguities of this kind. For example, the *campu*, a particular genre of Sanskrit composition, has often intermingled verse and prose lines. The *Nalacampu* of Trivikrama Bhatta is one such composition.[60] There are also metres of inordinate length. The *dandaka* ('Dandaca') metre may contain a variable number of syllables from 27 to 999.[61] Besides, some of the stanzas in 'Upajati' metre would not only consist of mixed metrical forms but also would serves as examples 'of the manner in which Sanskrit and Prakrit are sometimes intermixed.'[62] Colebrooke quotes a famous example from Kalidasa's *Kumārasambhava*.

In a later section of his essay, Colebrooke deals with prose. He points out that Sanskrit prosodists distinguish between several prose styles, which are also named differently. The first among these is named 'Muctaca'. It is simple prose and does not approve of compound terms. Colebrooke notes that this style is rarely used in prose compositions, but it is used in drama. Colebrooke states that this must have been the colloquial style, when Sanskrit was a spoken language. The next style is called 'Culaca', and it sparingly allows the use of compound terms. Both 'Culaca' and 'Muctaca' are grouped together and are termed 'Churnica'. Colebrooke further expresses about 'Churnica'[63]:

> It is of course common stile (*sic*) of composition: and, when polished, is the most elegant as it is the chastest. But it does not command the admiration of *Hindu* readers.

The third prose style is 'Utcalica Praya'. This style uses plenty of compound verbs. Often, a single word would exceed a hundred syllables. Colebrooke adds[64]:

> This extravagant stile of composition, being suitable to the taste of the Indian learned, is common in the most elaborate works of their favourite authors.

Prose modulated so as to contain verse is called ‘Virtyagandhi’. The best writers were often using this form of prose. Colebrooke complains that such prose would occur even in elevated compositions. He considers them ‘without study, and even against design’. Finally Colebrooke concluded that ‘[s]ome of the most elegant and highly wrought works in prose are reckoned among poems.’ Colebrooke is however hesitant to keep the identity of these compositions ambiguous. Hence, he desperately seeks for a categorisation. After discussing Subandhu’s *Vāsavadattā* (which is one such indeterminate work), Colebrooke opines[65]:

> In the work above described, as in various compositions of the same kind, the occasional introduction of a stanza, or even several, either in the preface, or in the body of the work, does not take them out of the class of prose. But other works exist, in which more frequent introduction of verse makes of these a class apart.

Colebrooke contends that although the first group of works (Subandhu’s *Vaasavadatta*, Dandi’s *Dasakumāracarita* and Banabhatta’s *Kādambarī*) are *considered* as poems, they are *actually* prose compositions. On the other hand, the *campu*-s are different from these compositions and could be more precisely termed as poems. However, the anxious attempt to reinstate the dyadic categories of prose/verse creates more problems than it solves.

Colebrooke ends his discussion by briefly considering the language used in Indian drama. Colebrooke immediately notices that not only are verse and prose mixed in dramatic compositions, but dialects are also mixed. He says that the instances of ‘transition of verse to prose’ abound in English drama. Hence, the transitions in English and Indian drama are considered to be similar and no examples are provided. Colebrooke comments about transitions between different dialects and alludes to the Italian comedies of Angelo Beolco(1502- 42) as parallels. However, he importantly reminds us, Beolco’s comedies were rustic farces while the Indian dramatists ‘intermingle various dialects in their serious compositions.’ By pointing out this difference, Colebrooke tends to emphasise the socially subversive role of Sanskrit drama. Where the dialects mingle, so do classes of people. He evades the complete implication of his suggestion by dissociating the verse/prose dichotomy from the diversity of dialects. However, these two properties of Sanskrit drama might be considered to be inextricably related.[66] Colebrooke is aware that this polyglossia is perhaps a *defect* of the Indian drama, but he assures us that it can be mitigated[67]:

> NOTWITHSTANDING this defect, which may indeed be easily removed by reading the Pracrit speeches in a Sanscrit version, the theatre of the Hindus is the most pleasing part of their polite literature and the best suited to the European taste.

Colebrooke’s parenthetical suggestion is of utmost significance. He expresses that the potential anarchy of the polyglossic Indian drama can be effectively controlled by translating the Prakrit speeches into Sanskrit. This would reduce the subversive edge of the plays and would render them legible to Europeans. Colebrooke’s efforts to sanskritise

Prakrit speeches would have an impact on how *vernacular prose* is constructed as a category.

William Carey's *Kathopakathan*(1801) is a potent example of the polyvalent voices of Bengali prose in its early years. Although *Kathopakathan* was meant to be a compendium which would help non-native speakers to acquire proficiency in speaking Bengali, it was also an early example of written prose and revealed the possibilities of the language in this largely unchartered domain. The text consists of several short dialogues between people, who are largely identified by their occupation / status / gender. Carey does not try to harmonise the language in the passages; rather he endeavours to show the diversity of the sociolects. The conversation between the British company official (*sahib*) and his *munshi* reveals Persianate diction, occasionally fretted by regionalisms. Saheb initiates the dialogue, directing the munshi to teach him Bengali[68]:

> bate tabe tumi āmake pratham bāṅgāli kathā o kāj kāmer lekhā paḍā śikṣā karāo|
>
> tumi āji avadhi āmār munsigirite prabartta hailā tomār māhinā ki habe|
>
> sāheb āmāder māhinao barāordda ektā thekānā nāi trish tākā chalan tabe manibe meherbāni kariyā jeyādāo ditechen|
>
> [You should then teach me how to converse and official writing in Bengali.
>
> From today, you will be appointed as my secretary. What should be your salary?"

> “My lord, we do not have a fixed salary. Thirty rupees will do, but my master often compassionately gives me a bit more.]

‘meherbāni,’ ‘jeyādā,’ ‘māhinā’ shows an inclination for Persian words. The use of ‘bate’, ‘kāj kām’ etc. are signs of regionalism. Carey would write a considerably different kind of language when he would depict two women quarreling (“Māiyā kandal”) or two fishermen conversing in “Tiariyā kathā”[69]. *Kathopakathan*’s resonant polyphony stands in considerable contrast to Colebrooke’s monolithic suggestion of translating Prakrit dialogues into sanskritised speech. Neither were Carey’s efforts a stray example of this polyphony. Mrityunjay, in his *Prabodhchandrikā* (1833; written in 1813) would also employ three different kinds of styles: (1) the Colloquial style; (2) the Refined (*sādhu*) style and (3) Sanskritised style. The text was meant to familiarise young Civilians to various styles of Bengali prose. The text’s content is also polymorphous – it informs the student about philosophy, aesthetics, ethics, rhetoric and even grammar. While translating from Sanskrit texts, Mrityunjay generally uses sanskritised diction[70]:

> Hey rājputra! samprati kāvyer lakṣan kahi śuna| hey priya śiṣya! caturmukh Brahmā-r mukhacatuṣṭayrūp padmavaner haṅgsī ataeva doṣalesher gandhamātraṣūnya|

> [O prince! Now let me tell you the features of poetry! [It is like] the swan of the lotus-pond, uttered by the four-faced Brahma – hence, it is devoid of any trace of blemish.]

However, Mrityunjay often used the refined, literary style in narration or description. The following can serve as an example[71]:

> Pañcakot vanamadhye ek vyāghra o vyāghrī sukhe vās kare| kālprabhāve ai vaghinīr kāl haoyāte vyaaghra srīviyoge atikātar haiyā vivāhārtha unmattaprāy haila|
>
> [In the forest of Panchakot a tiger and its wife lived happily. Due to the ravages of Time, the tigress died; the tiger was left heartbroken by his wife's death and became almost mad, desirous to marry (again).]

Yet, at other portions of the same book, Mrityunjay would use a colloquial diction[72]:

> srī kahila guḍ hailei ki radha hay? taila nāi lun nāi cāul nāi tarkārī pāti kichui nāi|
>
> [The wife said, " Can one cook only with jaggery? There isn't any oil, salt, rice, or even vegetables.]

Obviously, this polyglossia would perturb many commentators who would accuse Mrityunjay of obscenity. Such a criticism owes its roots to the Preface to the first edition of Mrityunjay's book. The Preface was written by the Srirampur Missionary, John Clark Marshman. Marshman says that the book is valuable because it possesses several narratives from the *shastra*, written in 'purest Bengalee'. He would further add[73]:

> The writer anxious to exhibit a variety of style, has in some cases indulged in the use of language current only among the lower orders; the vulgarity of which, however, he abundantly redeemed by his vein of original humour.

Marshman further states that in other parts, the work has been influenced by Sanskrit to such an extent that 'the uninitiated student may possibly find it difficult to comprehend some of the sentences at the first glance.' Marshman notes that all words of *foreign* parentage (Marshman means Perso-Arabic words) have been 'carefully excluded.' It is significant that Marshman notes four major kinds of Bengali diction prevalent in early nineteenth century Bengal. Among these, Mrityunjay had used three (refined, sanskritised and colloquial) and intentionally excluded one (Persianate). Considering the diversity of diction used in the book, Marshman would conclude[74]:

> Any person who can comprehend the present work, and enter into the spirit of its beauties, may justly consider himself master of the language.

The anxiety about the forms of vulgar speech was as much conditioned by ignorance about the diversity of Indian vernaculars, as it was by the necessity of a dominant discourse. As David Kopf states, in 1800 the English knew about nothing about the modern Indian vernaculars. Wellesley appointed only one man, William Carey, to teach all the popular Indian vernaculars in his College. Besides, to hire Carey was also a matter of administrative dilemma. It was because of the hostility of East India Company towards the missionaries that Carey had initially shifted to the Danish colony of Srirampur. Carey was appointed with great reluctance, and at a salary and rank below the other members of the staff. [75] The Bengali Hindu intellectuals, who were employed in the College, largely represented the fractured consciousness of a crumbling social order. Kopf elaborates[76]:

> By 1800, however, after a half-century or more of unusually severe socio-economic stress and its corresponding cultural repercussions, the composite of socio-cultural practices and attitudes of the Bengal people – Kulin Brahmanism, sectarian Buddhism, Vaishnavism, and a unique kind of

> Hindu-Muslim syncretism, among other elements—seemed to have lost the ethos which had been its cohesive force.

The disintegration of the Mughal Empire brought about an extremely chaotic phase of Indian history. The *nawabi* rule was short-lived and effective power passed into the hands of the Company in 1757. The seizure of control by the Company was followed by intense economic exploitation culminating in the famine of 1770-72.[77] The famine led to a migration of rural peasantry.[78] Bengal's river system also suffered a change, withdrawing from vital commercial and cultural centres. The development of a new-group of city dwellers (*bhadralok*), who were investing in land the money they earned from the cities, disrupted the rural framework of social relationships. The spread of impersonal, contractual relations affected the dynamics of the caste system.[79] Most of the Fort William writers experienced the effects of these tumultuous changes.

Allied to these changes were major transformations in the system of education in Bengal. Francis Buchanan-Hamilton, a member of Asiatic Society, was commissioned by the Court of Directors to conduct a survey in several districts of Bengal and Bihar about general topography and social, economic and cultural conditions of the people. Buchanan noticed an overall decay of Sanskrit learning in almost all the centres of Bengal.[80] Earlier in 1801, Walter Hamilton had discovered that there are about 190 Tols in 24 Parganas teaching Hindu Law, Grammar and Metaphysics.[81] In the district of Hoogly, Buchanan-Hamilton found about 150 *smriti tol*s. However, Burdwan and Midnapur lacked such tols and they often imported teachers from Nadia. The *vortex* of Sanskrit learning in Bengal, Nadia, also experienced a period of stagnation. Nadia had earlier flourished under the patronage of Sena kings of Bengal as a centre of intellectual refinement. It gave birth to a distinct school of Indian Logic and Linguistics – the *navya-nyaya*. After the Muslim conquest, individual zamindars patronised schools in Nadia. Rani Bhabani of Natore (c.1716- 1795) and Raja Krishnachandra of Nadia (1710-1782) were influential patrons of Sanskrit learning. Krishnachandra bestowed a scholarship of two hundred rupees per month to each of the scholars who studied in the tols of Nadia.[82] However, the economic crisis of the later half of the eighteenth century led to a depletion in the grants of rent-free lands and money which had sustained the schools for long.[83]

These changes are significant as many early nineteenth century Bengali prose writers belonged to families which were displaced from their native villages and towns. Bhavanicharan Bandhopadhyay's (born 1787) father, Ramjoy, had travelled from Narayanpur,Ukhra (Birbhum district) to Kolkata.[84] Similarly, Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar's (born 1820) father had travelled from Birshingha (Midnapore district), where his family had been living in misery, to Kolkata in order to earn his living. Vidyasagar's family consisted of several Sanskrit scholars, including his grandfather Ramjoy Tarkabhushan.[85] Ishwarchandra Gupta was born in Kachrapara (North 24 Parganas) in 1812. In his childhood, Ishwarchandra Gupta often travelled to his mother's paternal residence in Kolkata. After his mother's death, Ishwarchandra would settle permanently in the city.[86] Ishwarchandra Gupta's paternal residence was close to Triveni, a reknowned centre of Sanskrit learning. The migration of intellect from the small towns and villages to the city of Kolkata is one of the fascinating aspects of Bengal Renaissance. In order to understand the nature of Renaissance Bengali prose and the role of the early Orientalists and native prose writers, the displaced nature of the primary protagonists must be sufficiently comprehended.

William Adam's *Reports on Education* (1835- 1838) pointed out to the decay of the indigenous learning centres in Bengal and Bihar. Government assistance to the tols of Nadia was mainly in the form of subsistence allowance to the students. In 1829, the Collector of Nadia questioned the continuance of allowance to the students. Horace Hayman Wilson, the Secretary of the General Committee of Public Instruction, inspected the tols of Nadia and reinstated the allowance.[87] The 1811 Minute of Lord Minto proposed the opening of two new colleges, one at Nadia in Bengal and the other at Tirhoot in Bihar. This was proposed in order to initiate a plan 'for the restoration of Hindoo Science and Literature.' After several administrative setbacks and delays, the Sankrit College in Kolkata was formally opened on January 1, 1824.

Adam reported that the condition of traditional Islamic education was worse in Bengal. The Madrasa education hardly prepared the students for administrative, judicial and official duties in the English offices and law courts. The condition of the Calcutta Madrasa was appalling. Charles Lushington had remarked that 'its ample resources were dissipated among the superior and subordinate drones of the establishment.'[88]

Buchanan-Hamilton had earlier discussed about the teachers of the preliminary educational institutions. They were addressed as 'gurus'. They were a syncretic lot and used to belong to several castes or religions. They were 'poorly rewarded.' The teachers of these *pāṭhśālā*s were often not given any state support and depended entirely on the families of their students for subsistence.[89] The elementary Islamic education, provided in *makhtab*s, merely catered to the rural folk of Bengal. The elementary training in these schools often had a mere vocational usefulness. Arithmetic, book keeping, mensuration etc. were taught in the schools. This helped the students to acquire jobs in some office or shop.[90]

Adam remarked in his *Report* that in Bengal Proper (i.e. Lower Province of the Bengal Residency), Bengali was 'the language of the Musalman as well as the Hindu population'. Although Urdu and Persian were spoken by the educated Muslims of the upper classes, these languages did not serve as medium of instruction in schools. Urdu school-books were rare in Bengal.[91] Adam further noted the primacy of kayasthas as teachers in schools. He also witnessed an 'encroachment' by the lower castes[92]:

> [T]he time is not distant when it would have been considered contrary to all the maxims of Hindu civilization that individuals of Malo, Chandal, Kahar, Jalia, Lahari, Bagdhi, Dhopa and Munchi castes should learn to read, write, and keep accounts; and if some aged and venerable brahman who has passed his life removed from European contamination were told that these low castes are now raising their aspirations so high, he would deplore it as one of the many proofs of the gross and increasing degeneracy of the age. The encroachment of these castes on the outskirts of learning is a spontaneous movement in the native society, the effect of a strong foreign rule unshackled by native usages and prejudices, and protecting all in the enjoyment of equal rights.

Adam's observations reveal considerable changes in the indigenous system of education. While the traditional *tol*s were depleting in number, the inclusion of previously deprived groups in the educational system signaled a transformation in educational and vocational practices. The *navya-nyaya* strongholds at Nadia, Bikrampur, Triveni, Bhatpara, Khanakul-Krishnanagar and Bakla-Chandradwip followed a system of education which had focused on certain logical, linguistic and epistemological studies. Initiated by Gangesha Upadhyaya of Mithila in the treatise *Tattvacintāmaṇi* (13th Century CE), the *navya-nyaya* discourse developed a subtle and sophisticated linguistic framework for discussing important philosophical questions. Vasudeva Sarvabhauma had written a commentary on Gangesha's work. It was his pupil, Raghunatha Siromani (1475- 1550), who had established the sub-school of *navya-nyaya* in Bengal. [93] His famous commentaries, known as *Didhiti*s, served as authoritative texts for the school. A parallel intellectual tradition had already flourished in Bengal, which had been spawned by Jimutavahana's discourse on dharma, *Dayabhaga*.[94] The Nyaaya and the Smriti traditions of Bengal often overlapped, formulating the distinct views of the Bengal School.[95] Scholars like Ramabhadra (16th century), Vishvanatha Nyaya-panchanana (17th century), Mathuranatha (1600-1675 CE), Jagadisha (17th century) and Gadadhara (1604-1709 CE) were illustrious writers and commentators of this school.[96] In the eighteenth century, the *navya-nyaya* tradition became largely ossified into a system of study. Dinesh Chandra Bhattacharya provides us with a long list of *tol*s and *catuspāṭhi*s which were run by reputed *nyaya* and *smṛiti* pundits in pre-colonial Bengal.[97] It is this established tradition of philosophical-epistemological enquiry which suffered a decline in the colonial period. The traditional scholars lost their occupation as centres of learning closed down due to lack of resources, students and patronage.[98]

The polyvalent voices of the early nineteenth century Bengal were products of these significant changes. *navya-nyaya* texts like *Tarka-saṃgraha* (by Annambhatta) and *Bhāṣā pariccheda* (by Vishvanatha Nyaya-panchanana) or the Persian rhetorical and legal treatises (of *Firangi Mahal* school) had shaped the dialectical thinking of a generation of scholars and literati who were increasingly dissevered from their cultural and intellectual roots. This shift in dialectical thinking had important repercussions in the development of vernacular prose.

William Jones, in the discourse "On the Philosophy of the Asiaticks" (delivered on 20th February, 1794), had briefly discussed the traditions of *nyaya*. He identified the system with the rationalist, logical traditions of Europe. He further stated[99]:

> [I]t seems to be a system of metaphysics and logic better accommodated than any other anciently known in India, to the natural reason and common sense of mankind, admitting the actual existence of material substance in the popular acceptation of the word *matter*; and comprising not only a body of sublime dialectics, but an artificial system of reasoning, with distinct names for the three parts of a proposition, and even for those of a regular syllogism.

Jones mentioned an anecdote from the *Dābistan-e-māzaheb* (a mid-seventeenth century comparative study of South Asian religions) about a system of logic conveyed by the Brahmans to Callisthenes, which the writer of *Dābistan* thought to be source of the Aristotelian treatise on logic. Jones thought this to be 'one of the most interesting facts' he has encountered in Asia and assured his listeners that he had 'frequently seen perfect syllogisms in the philosophical writings of the Brahmins.' The eighth volume of the

Asiatic Researches included a translation by Francis Balfour of extracts from *Tahzeeb ul Mantik*, a Persian version of an Arabic treatise on Logic 'as a small supplement to the Arabic and Persian Grammar; and with a view to elucidate certain Points connected with Oriental Literature.'[100] Balfour emphasised on the fact that his translations were propelled by literary, rather than by metaphysical, concerns[101]:

> The discussion of these points, being in some degree curious, and not altogether unconnected with the pursuit of Oriental literature, may not be unacceptable to this Society… This is the motive that first induced me to take the trouble of translating them into English… not as a part of metaphysical learning, but as a more advanced stage of grammar and syntax… Whilst grammar and syntax teach only generally the various forms of words and sentences, logic, proceeding further, may be considered as the art of selecting words and arranging sentences into all the forms that are required, the different steps and operations of the reasoning faculty; and therefore as *the highest and most important degree* of classical improvement.

Balfour focuses on the important link between logic and literature, hence enabling us to comprehend the intricate relationship between the South Asian dialectical traditions and the literary compositions. While Jones had hinted at the syllogistic (hence, deductive) trends in *navya-nyaya*, Balfour focuses on the inductive properties of his text. He first mentions the common perception that Aristotle's system had retarded the growth of European thought by binding it by the 'fetters of syllogism' from which it has been liberated by 'the great Lord VERULAM, in his *Organum Novum*'. Yet, he concluded from the inductive nature of the *Tahzeeb* that Aristotle must have been acquainted with traditions of induction and it was his influence which had sipped into the Islamic tradition of rhetoric and logic.[102] Hence, Balfour wittily observes neither can Aristotle be blamed for ‘confining human mind for so long,’ nor can Bacon be bestowed with all the merits of liberating it.

Colebrooke read an exposition on *nyaya*, based on his account of Gautama’s *Nyāyasūtra*, at a Public Meeting of the Royal Asiatic Society in 1824. His exposition has been vastly influential. Like Jones, he focused on a parallel syllogistic tradition which could be favourably compared with the classical European tradition. This ‘discovery’ of Indian syllogism was perhaps unfortunate, because it led to significant misinterpretations of South Asian epistemological traditions. Colebrooke’s revelations were considered as a challenge to the European belief in its rational superiority.[103] This was however responded to by pointing out the evident *defects* of *navya-nyaya* syllogism.[104] Hence, the *navya-nyaya* discourse was first *imagined* as syllogistic and then *condemned* to be imperfect. Such tendencies in early Orientalist discourse reveal contrasting views and anxieties about rationality/irrationality. Such views would shape the contours of Bengali prose.

Bhavanicharan Bandopadhyay had initially supported Rammohan Roy in his debates against the missionaries and jointly published *Samvād kaumudī*. However, a rift arose between them as Bhavanicharan started differing from Rammohan’s liberal opinions about various social customs. Bhavanicharan started printing his own weekly newspaper *Samācār candrikā* from 5th March, 1822.[105] This was also the commencement of an eventful episode in the history of Bengali prose. Bhavanicharan’s prose writings, especially his satirical compositions, reveal the dialogic discourse of the liberals, reformists and conservatives of nineteenth century Kolkata. Through them we revisit the Oriental anxieties about linguistic subversion and illogicality.[106]

Bhavanicharan's *Kalikātā kamalālay* (1923) was written in the form of a dialogue between a Citizen of Kolkata (*nagarvāsī*) and a village Rustic (v*ideśī*; literally 'a foreigner'). The Rustic had recently arrived at the city. As he was unacquainted with the manners of the city, the Rustic initiates a conversation with the Citizen in order to know about the curious customs of the polis. The dialogue satirises urbane life, deflating its hypocrisy and criticising its immorality. The Citizen complains that the villagers arriving at the city eventually gain monetary prosperity and influence at the cost of the *original* inhabitants. They work for minimal wages, willingly do all kinds of jobs and gain the confidence of their masters. After their master's death, they often instigate his descendants to quarrel with each other; often supporting the rights of the minors and women in civil courts and hence cause eventual disintegration of the family. They acquire proficiency in diverse languages like English, Persian and Hindi. After gaining prosperity and linguistic expertise, the *nouveau riche* even indulge in criticiaing the dialect of the local residents.[107]

Sudden acquirement of wealth is hence paralleled by a surreptitious proficiency in acquiring languages. This, according to the Citizen, would disrupt the social order. Later, the Rustic discusses about the translations of Sanskrit *shastric* texts into refined Bengali ('sādhu bhāṣā') prose. Some of the wealthy people, says the Rustic, consider such translations to be unnecessary and feel irritated by the continuous pestering of the printers for subscription and patronage. The Citizen retorts by saying that the Lord has evidently deprived the Rustic of rationality[108]:

> Alas! What intelligence has Lord given you, O Mr. Rustic! You have not even passed through the realms where intelligent people stay…

The Citizen then explains the cause for people feeling reluctant to buy books. He says that if the printers approach ignorant people, then they should not expect to be successful in selling their books. What follows is a catalogue of the foolish people in the city – the ignorant brahmin, the grocer, the quack, the weaver, the *baniyan* businessman, the florist, the blacksmith turned jeweler, the barber – people from all social classes are deemed as ignorant and unsuitable as connoisseurs of books. The Citizen asserts that these people would not be able to appreciate a treatise on *nyaya*, a Bengali translation of *Prabodh candrodaya* (a 12th century Sanskrit play written by Krishna Mishra) [109] or even newspapers like *Samācār candrikā*. In other words, the city is filled with the social *Other*s, irrational people like the Rustic who are not deemed intelligent enough to read or appreciate books. The veneer of rationality which the Citizen had appropriated for himself seems to be threatened (and inscribed) by the multitude of irrational voices from the City. The discourse on *nyaya*, the prose writings in *Samācār darpaṇ*, and the allegorical dialogues of *Prabodh candrodaya* (the Sanskrit title literally means *The Rising of the Moon of Intellect*) seem to jostle actively in this ambiguous clash of signifiers.

At another instance, the Rustic is immensely puzzled by the syncretic speech of the City. They tend to mix *indigenous* words (*svajatīa bhāṣā*) with *foreign* words (*anya jatīa bhāṣā / yāvanik bhāṣā*). He feels that the urban folk have never conversed with a brahmin scholar. He wonders why people would use foreign words when there are plenty of indigenous substitutes. He then enlists about one eighty five foreign words and mentions the indigenous substitutes. For example [110]:

içfècK² g²çnç		oçbëg²çnç
K²èhöc	1	AÛ½ÅR, vë²aÆ, oçhçcÅ, céP±
K²k	1	iÛ»
K²kh	1	ôkLcé
K²oh	1	mdZ, èafÅ
K²oçB	1	óMçNÁ
K²oë³f	1	Ad³fçb, ŒµèT±

Bhavanicharan provides us with a matrix of signifiers, which engender meaning by their difference.

Bengali prose in the early nineteenth century evolved through such a dialectical interaction of signifiers. Often the contending, polyvalent voices would challenge the legibility/ rationality of each other. Yet, it is their difference that lent meaning to the social code/s. Orientalists actively participated in the scripting of these discourses, often establishing the framework and encoding the variant representations.

Notes

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6. Rammohan Roy, *Bhattācāryer sahit vicār*, in *Rāmmohan racanāvalī,* edited by Ajitkumar Ghosh *et al* (Kolkata: Haraf, 1973), 107.

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10. Henry Thomas Colebrooke, preface to *A Digest on Hindu Laws*, 3 vols. (London: Wilson and Co. Oriental Press, 1801), xi.

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17. Roy, *Bhattācāryer sahit vicār* , 107.

18. Cited in Kejariwal, *The Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 95

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22. For a detailed discussion on Panini’s *bhāṣā*, see Arthur B. Keith, *A History of Sanskrit Literature* (1928; repr., New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1993), 4-26.

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24. Paresh Chandra Majumder, *Bāṅglā bhāṣā parikrama*, vol.1 (Kolkata: Dey’s, 2008), 12.

25. Colebrooke, “On the Sanscrit and Pracrit Languages,” 200.

26. Ibid., 200-01.

27. Ibid., 202.

28. Ibid., 224.

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31. Henry Thomas Colebrooke, *Misacellaneous Essays*, vol. 2 (London: W.H. Allen, 1837), 35-36.

32. Henry Thomas Colebrooke, “On the Sanscrit and Pracrit Languages,” 219.

33. Ibid., 222.

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55. Amulyadhan Mukhopadhyay, *Bāṅglā chander mūlsūtra*, 8th ed. (Kolkata: University of Calcutta: 1989), 213- 218.

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99. William Jones, "Discourse the Eleventh. On the Philosophy of the Asiaticks," *Asiatic Researches* 4 (1795): 172.

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Wilson, Akshaykumar and Identities in Print in Nineteenth Century Bengal

In 1802, after an unsuccessful stint as a minister of the Church of Scotland, James Mill went to London. There he started to craft out his *magnum opus*, a Benthamite history of British rule in India which would eventually secure him the post of an examiner of Indian Correspondence of the East India Company. Mill had been schooled in the empiricist, Utilitarian radicalism of Bentham and disparaged aristocratic highhandedness. For him, the religio-philosophical basis of the hierarchical Indian society was significantly similar to the royalist ethos that he had been combatting in England. Mill hardly minces words when he has to describe the religion of Company's subjects, especially the 'hindus'[1]:

> Of so extensive and complicated a subject as the religion of the Hindus, a very general view can alone be taken … The task is rendered difficult by the unparalleled vagueness which marks the language of the Brahmens respecting the nature of the gods, the vast multiplicity of their fictions, and the endless discrepancy of their ideas. Hence it is, that no coherent system of belief seems capable of being extracted from their wild eulogies and legends; and if he who attempts to study their religion is disposed, like themselves, to build his faith on his imagination, he meets with little obstruction from the stubborn precision of Hindu expressions and tenets.

The target of the last part of Mill's caustic diatribe was Orientalism. He described the Orientalists to be romantically inclined, 'whose imagination had been powerfully affected by the spectacle of a new system of manners, arts, institutions, and ideas; who naturally expected to augment the opinion of their consequence, by the greatness of the wonders which they had been favoured to behold; and whose astonishment, admiration and enthusiasm, for a time, successfully propagated themselves.'[2] In other words, the Orientalists had imagined an order where there had not been any; the grandeur and sophistication of Indic thought that they were alluding to were a product of their fertile brains, or Mill would add with a wink, the Indian climate. Mill claimed to have gathered more knowledge about Indians in his English closet than the Orientalists did with their 'eyes and ears in India'. As far as Mill was concerned, it was impossible to extract an objective, coherent account of the religious practices of the Hindus.

The Orientalists in India were naturally instigated by Mill's jibes. When Mill's work had been published, the Orientalists had already pioneered considerable explorations of the religious practices of Indians. William Jones, the driving force behind the establishment of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, had himself delved into the varied social practices of the Hindus in his famous "Third Anniversary Discourse" (delivered on 2nd February, 1786). He had published several articles associated with Hindu religio-cultural practices, like "On the Gods of Greece, Italy, and India" (written in 1784), "On the Chronology of the Hindus" (written in January 1788), "On the Antiquity of the Indian Zodiac" (published in *Asiatic Researches* 2 in 1790), "A Supplement to the Essay on Indian Chronology" (published in *Asiatic Researches* 2), "On the Mystical Poetry of the Persians and Hindus" (published in *Asiatic Researches* 3 in 1792) and "Discourse the Eleventh. On the Philosophy of the Asiaticks" (published in *Asiatic Researches* 4 in 1795). He had translated important Hindu texts like *Gītagovinda* (published in *Asiatic Researches* 3) and *Manu smṛiti* (translated as *Institutes of Hindu Law*, 1794) and even wrote poetic hymns dedicated to Hindu deities (1784-88). Charles Wilkins had already translated

Bhāgavad Gīta (1785) and was busy compiling a Sanskrit-English vocabulary. Henry Thomas Colebrooke furthered Jones' exploration of Hindu Laws (*A Digest of Hindu Laws*, 1797) and wrote several essays which explored Hindu rituals and ceremonies. Samuel Davis published an essay "On the Astronomical Computation of the Hindus"(published in *Asiatic Researches* 2 in 1790) while Captain Francis Wilford narrated his fanciful reconstructions of Hindu mythology, history and geography in essays like "On the Chronology of the Hindus" (*Asiatic Researches* 5 in 1798). William Ward, the indefatigable printer of the Serampore Mission Press and a member of the Society had published *Account of the Writings, Religion, and Manners of the Hindoos* (1811) – an exploration of Hindu mythology and cosmology. These were the gang of scholars whom Mill scoffed at, accusing them of indulging in vapid lucubration on a pathetically inconsistent, degenerate and incoherent group of religious practices.

In 1817, Horace Hayman Wilson was elected as the Secretary of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. Evidently, he took up Mill's challenge of 'extracting a coherent system of belief' from the diverse religious and cultural practices of the Hindus. He, along with his native assistants like Ramkamal Sen and Rashamay Dutta, engaged in a systematic delineation of Hindu sects. This would eventually evolve as a two-part paper, a sketch of the various religious sects of the Hindus. The first part was presented at a meeting of the Society on 13th Dec, 1821 and was published in *Asiatic Researches* 16 (1828). The second part was presented on 2nd September, 1829 and was published in *Asiatic Researches* 17 (1832). This exhaustive study of Hindu religion was remarkable in its focus on implemented practices rather than on speculative aspect of Hindu philosophy. It was perhaps the first major socio-anthropological study of Hindus and as such, contributed to the construction of pan-Hindu identity, especially in the imagination of Europeans. It was published as a book by the Bishop's Press in 1846. By that time, Wilson had become the Boden Professor of Sanskrit in Oxford; he had been extending Mill's *History* to cover the period from 1805-1835 as well as editing and adding notes to Mill's work. *The History of British India* was published in its extended form in 1848. By that time, Wilson had already armed himself with a potent arsenal of researched facts about Hindu religion. On almost every page of Mill's history, he would add critical notes which would destabilise Mill's conclusions. For example, while discussing the religion of Hindus, Mill noted that the Hindu idea about creation 'carries the common analogies of production, in animal and vegetable life, to the production of the universe' and from this it can be safely concluded that their 'ideas of the Divine Being were grovelling.'[3] Wilson adds a curt note[4]:

> The system is not to be judged of by the only specimens within our author's reach, although, even from them it is unjust to infer that the Hindus had no high and noble ideas of that creative power which they describe being alone before all things, and as calling of its own will, existence out of chaos.

Mill exclaims at the incredibility of the Hindu creation story where a seed becomes an egg, a 'very extraordinary product'[5]. Wilson quips in his notes: 'Not in the least;-- the Hindus were better physiologists than the historian.'[6] Mill endeavours to prove the lack of historical consciousness of the Hindus by the absence of a credible narrative of Alexander's invasion in their books. Mill adds a footnote, alluding to a passage in Rennel's *Memoir*[7]:

> The modern Hindus, who make it a point to be ignorant of nothing, pretend, when told of the expedition of Alexander, to be well acquainted with, and say that he fought a great battle with the

> Emperor of Hindoostan near Delhi, …so that the remarkable circumstance of his sailing down the Indus, in which he employed many months, is sunk together.

Wilson retorts, adding a note to Mill's own[8]:

> The modern Hindus are much less inclined to make it a point to be ignorant of nothing than modern Europeans. …Important as we may consider Alexander's invasion, it was a matter of very trifling interest to the Hindus…it would have been regarded as the temporary predatory incursion of a barbarian…

Mill points out that when even Greek mythology and historiography fail to meet the modern, objective standard, much should not be expected from races that are 'confessedly and remarkably inferior to them'[9]. Wilson points out that Mill's conclusion was premature and as research had been still going on the Hindu system, judgement should not be spelt out about it. He also criticises Mill's opinions as outdated, and claims that latest research nullifies many of Mill's reservations about Hindus.[10] Obviously the research that Wilson was referring to was the one which enabled him to etch out the religious life of the Hindus.

For collecting this vast amount of data about Indic religious systems and practices, Wilson primarily depended on three important sources. First, he analysed (and often reshaped) the data collected by other Orientalists, especially William Ward's work on Hindu religion. It is obvious that Ward's intentions in delineating these practices would be different from Wilson's. Being a Baptist missionary, his primary aim was to expose the 'confused speculations' of the Hindus. Ward remarks[11]:

> I have found no traces of God's immaculate purity, or inflexible justice, in any part of the Hindoo writings, nor amongst the great number of intelligent Hindoos with whom I have conversed. On the

> contrary, I have been greatly shocked… at hearing God charged with all the crimes of his creatures… The effects which the knowledge of the divine perfections produces …are the most important and salutary. Hence Christians are said to "walk in the fear of the Lord"… All these most important benefits, produced on the heart and conduct of the true believer, are lost in the system of Hindoos…

Yet, Ward's *Account* proved to be a valuable source of information which Wilson (as well as Mill) resorted to, especially while describing customs prevalent in Bengal. The second source that Wilson makes use of are emic narratives elaborating upon the variant cultural practices of the sub-continent. These include polemical text like Madhavacharya Vidyaranya's *Sarva-darśana saṃgraha* (14th century) as well as hagiographic texts like Anandgiri's *Śaṅkara digvijayam* and Madhava's *Śankara vijayam* (14th century). He also incorporated legendary *vaishnava* biographies from *Bhaktamāla* (a late sixteenth- early seventeenth century Hindi text by Nabhaji, which had been subsequently edited and rewritten in the mid-seventeenth century by Narayandasa) with notes added by Krishnadasa in 1713. He made an extensive use of two recent Persian works on Indic religious systems that had been composed in Varanasi. The first was compiled by Sital Singh, munshi of the Raja of Benaras. The second was prepared by Mathuranath, the former librarian of the Hindu College in Varanasi.[12] Along with these written sources, Wilson also employed an intricate network of informants, which included British civil servants stationed in various Indian cities and towns as well as indigenous informants like Ramkamal Sen, Shivchandra Das, Rasamay Dutta and even, Raja Rammohan Roy. C.A. Bayley, in his *Empire and Information*, a study of intelligence and information gathering by the British authorities during the colonial era, aptly shows how the colonial authorities interpreted (and misinterpreted) the information extracted from their networks of 'native informants'. This *decentralised* information order, consisting of 'many overlapping groups of knowledge-rich communities'[13] led to the genesis of Wilson's essay. To comprehend the dynamics of Wilson's exploration of Indic faiths demands an awareness of these heterogenous faultlines which often shaped colonial encounters in South Asia. Otherwise the pitfalls of Saidian binarism await us.

One of the first hints of Wilson's extensive efforts to take up Mill's challenge appears in an 1819 letter. It is a reply to his queries about the historicity of Adi Sankaracharya, penned by Rammohan Roy. Rammohan conjectures that in order to find out when Sankara lived, one needs to trace the generations from Chaitanya to Sankara. He had himself consulted *vaishnava* sources in order to do this. As Chaitanya's contemporaries Kesava Bharati and Madhavendra Puri both belonged to the *dasnami* order instituted by Sankaracharya, Rammohan intends to trace the list of their spiritual progenitors. However, scanning through these lists, he discovers an inconsistency. He repents[14]:

> [B]ut the contradiction between these two lists is so obvious and unnacountable that I felt ashamed to send them to you. The former bears the names of 39 generations from Chaitanya to Vishnoo and the latter only twenty. With a view to correct this inconsistency I wrote about a month ago to an acquaintance of mine at Benares on the subject who has, I believe, a correct list of Sunkar's generations to the present time (they as far my recollection extends are thirty and odd number) but I have not received any answer from him. I therefore venture to send you those lists as a matter of curiosity and not as affording information to be relied upon…

Rammohan is an interesting choice as an informant. According to P. Thankappan Nair, Rammohan was never accepted as a member of the Asiatic Society solely because he was considered as overtly iconoclastic.[15] Yet, by 1819, Rammohan had established himself as a foremost interpreter of Vedantic lineage and philosophy. He had published his translations of the *Brahmasūtra* and the *Upaniṣads* from 1815 and had *written Sahamaraṇ viṣaye prabartak o nibartaker saṃvād* in 1818. While the latter work would situate Rammohan as an Anglicist sympathiser (he would write his famous letter to Lord Amerhst in December 1823, urging him to reconsider his decision to establish a Sanskrit College in Kolkata, of which Wilson would eventually be the Principal), his controversies with the missionaries and his exploration of Hindu traditions extracted praise from several Orientalists, including Wilson. And it is his admirers, the Tagores of Jorasanko (Dwarakanath, Prasanna Kumar and Shyamlal) and Duttas of Rambagan (Rasamay) who would prove to be important sources of information for Wilson.

Not all of Wilson's informants were, however, Rammohan sympathisers. Ramkamal Sen, who had been elected as the Collector of the Asiatic Society on 17th June, 1820[16], had been one of the vocal critics of Rammohan. He had been a compositor at William Hunter's Hindustani Press since 1808. Later, when Hunter left for Java, Wilson became the proprietor of the Press and Ramkamal worked as its manager. Ramkamal's allegiance to Wilson had been critical in the scripting of Wilson's "Sketch". Ramkamal was also the member of the Gaudiya Samaj, the bastion of the Kolkata conservatives who opposed Rammohan's reformist programmes. He was one of Wilson's favourites, was inducted as a member of the Society on 4th March 1832 (presumably due to his contributions to Wilson's researches) and soon became the Native Secretary of the Society on 12th December, 1832. Ramkamal's connection with the extensive social reform programmes of his day makes him one of the intriguing personalities of the Bengal Renaissance (he was the member of the Managing Committee of the Hindu College and the Kolkata School Book Society as well as Secretary and Superintendent of the Sanskrit College).

Pradyot Kumar Ray, in *Dewan Ram Comul Sen and his Times,* points out that Ramkamal's promotion within the Society was spurred by Wilson.[17] On 13th April, 1821, the members decided to increase Ramakamal's salary 'in consideration of the additional duty and responsibility'[18] that he bore. Evidently, Wilson's essay served as a fortuitous publication for Ramkamal, bringing him social prestige, influence as well as financial rewards.

Wilson had been stationed in the Upper Provinces from November1819 to April 1821. He had spent his time in Varanasi and even presented the Society with a panoramic painting of the city by a native artist in December 1820.[19] This gave him an opportunity to interact with the members of many of the sects described in the "Sketch", in which he repeatedly claims that Varanasi is favourable for such an exhaustive research on Hinduism. It is also in that same city that he encountered the Persian works mentioned earlier, from which he had drawn copiously. During these years, materials came pouring in from other members and contributors which further enriched his work. On 8th January 1820, William Moorcroft communicated to the society that he had procured 'the loan of four large sheets of copper with inscriptions relative to the theological history of the Hindoos'[20], from the temple of Badrinath. Dr. Nathaniel Wallich (1786-1854), the Librarian of the Society presented a Sanskrit manuscript from Badrinath, procured by Moorcroft and forwarded by Mr. Trail, the Commissioner of Kumaon. Captain Fell sent two illuminated manuscripts of the *Rāmagīta* and *Rāmakavaca* in April 1821.[21] On 13th April, Miss Tytler communicated the 'apparent coincidence between the suspension of images as practised amongst the Greek and Romans and the Charakh Puja of the Hindus.'[22] However, it would be a mistake to suppose that only the British participated in these explorations. For example, on 2nd September 1829, Shivchandra Das presented a 'Gorakh Danda', an iron rod carried by the *kanphata yogi*s. On that very day, Wilson read the second part of his "Sketch" before the society, in which, among other things, he also describes the *kanphata yogis*.[23] On 6th May, 1829, Ramkamal Sen presented the various implements that are used during *charak* festivities.[24] He also read a description of these instruments and an account of the ceremony. On 8th November, 1829, Shivchandra Das, presented a copy of *Hanumān caritra*.[25] It is evident that the *discovery* of Hinduism was a joint enterprise, not merely a projection of Western apprehensions on their subjects.

In the first part of his "Sketch", Wilson confesses that his work is 'necessarily superficial.' He further point out[26]:

> [I]t would, indeed, have been impossible to have adopted the only unexceptionable method of acquiring an accurate knowledge of their tenets and observances, or of studying the numerous works in Sanscrit, Persian, or the provincial dialects of Hindi, on which they are founded. I have been obliged to content myself, therefore, with a cursory inspection of a few of those compositions, and to depend for much of my information on oral report, filling up or correcting from these two sources, the errors and omissions of the two works… from which I have derived the ground work of the whole account.

He then goes on to describe the various sects of *vaishnava*s in the first part of his account. The second part contains an elaboration on the *shaiva*s and *shakta*s, along with cursory descriptions of *saurya*, *ganapatya* and other heterogeneous sects. His affiliations are often spelt out by an eagerness to distance himself from the missionary as well as reductionist views about Indic religions. For example, he concedes that the legends in *Bhaktamāla* are legendary and not historical, yet he notes that such legends exercise a 'powerful influence in Upper India… and holds a similar place in the superstitions of this country, as that which was occupied in the darkest ages of the Roman Catholic faith by the Golden Legend and Acts of the Saints.'[27] Jibing at the Catholics, he also keeps the missionaries at bay.

Mill's *History* not only stressed on the irrationality and incoherence of 'Hindu faith', it also stressed on its rampant immorality. In fact, these two (according to him) were related – the unabashed prodigality of South Asian religion as well as its irrationality point out to the sub-human condition of the natives. Indeed, their religious ideas are 'playsome whimsies of monkeys in human shape'[28]. Mill states further[29]:

> It is by no means unnatural for the religion of a rude people to unite opposite qualities, to preach the most hard austerities, and at the same time to encourage the loosest morality… [A] religion subjects to the eyes of its votaries the grossest images of sensual pleasure, and renders even the emblems of generation objects of worship; which ascribes to the supreme God an immense train of obscene acts; which has these engraved on sacred cars, portrayed in the temples, and presented to the people as objects of adoration, which pays worship to the Yoni, and the Lingam, cannot be regarded as favourable to chastity.

Much of Wilson's efforts in the "Sketch" are vested in trying to explain the presence of these obscenities. One of his strategies is to historicise this as degradation in Hinduism, unwelcome changes that have crept into the modern faith. Wilson laments[30]:

> [I]t is a feature that singularly characterises the present state of the Hindu religion, that if in some instances it is less ferocious, in others, it has ceased to address itself to the amiable propensities of the human character, or to the spontaneous and comparatively innocent feelings of youthful natures. The buffoonery of the Holi, and barbarity of the Cherak Puja, but ill express the sympathies which man, in all countries, feels with the vernal season, and which formerly gave rise to the festive Vasanotsava of the Hindus, and the licentious homage paid to Sakti and Bhairava, has little, in

> common with the worship, that might be supposed acceptable to Kama and his lovely bride, and which it would appear they formerly enjoyed.

It is in this context that Wilson conceptualises 'a golden age of Hindu idolatry' – it is imagined as a bygone era when Hindu rituals were not maligned by gross immorality and licentious excesses. Moreover, by emphasising the presence of a variant erotic archetype – Kama-Rati in contrast to Bhairava-Shakti – Wilson hypothises that *tantric* eroticism has been an unwanted degradation of earlier, purer expressions and celebrations of love. Ronald Inden points out how India had been imagined as the quintessential Other of the West 'as an essentially passionate, irrational, and erotic world', a land of 'disorderly imagination'[31]. In Wilson's case, however, this world is temporally multi-layered – and it is only its present, corrupted state that suffers from libidinal excesses. While discussing the evolution of *gaudiya vaishnavism*, Wilson states that Nityananda was popular amongst his followers in Bengal 'notwithstanding his secular character, and his being addicted to mundane enjoyments'. He quotes from Krishnadas Kaviraj's *Caitanya caritāmṛita* and points out to the heterodox practices of Nityananda, who, along with his son Virabhadra, is widely considered as one of the chief initiators of *vaishnava tantrism* and *sahajiya vaishnavism*. He also quotes a proverbial assertion, attributed to Nityananda[32]:

> matsyer jhol, kāminīr kol|
> ānandey torā sabey harihari bol|
> [Fish curry and hussy's lap –
> Rejoice uttering the Lord's name]

By associating Nityananda to ‘matsya’(non-vegetarian diet) and ‘kāminī’ (licentious women), tradition had ambiguously linked him with the conversion of *neḍa*s (Buddhist *tantric sahajiya*s) and non-brahmanical mass into the *vaishnava* fold.[33] These were considered to subvert ritual codes of sexual and gastronomical austerity, yet, Chaitanya’s catholic faith aimed at accepting them into the fold. Nityananda hence becomes an enigmatic preceptor. He is both an incarnation (*aṃsa-avatāra*) and a heterodox-rebel who partakes some of the qualities of the deviants whom he converts. Wilson interpreted this as the decadence of a purer faith, as the intrusion of hedonism and frenzy which has lamentably transformed the ‘pure’ Hindu faith. It is interesting how Wilson adapts Krishnadas’s categories to engender his own ideas about Hinduism.

It is curious that when Wilson does describe *sahajiya vaishnava*s, he evades the references to sexual transgression altogether. He merely states the similarities of their practices with those of *shakta tantric*s[34]:

> The remaining division of the Bengal Vaishnavas allow nothing of themselves to be known: their professions and practices are kept secret, but it is believed that they follow the worship of Sakti, or the female energy, agreeably to the left handed ritual, the nature of which we shall hereafter occasion to describe.

While discussing *kartabhaja*s, he points out to its ‘modern origin’ and asserts that the schism is overtly political – it merely intends to encroach on the old lineage of gurus and bestows a new family of preceptors with ‘spiritual power’. He also notes the affiliation of the sect to the socially marginalised fringes, the women and the lower castes. He claims that ‘they eat together,’ which proves their lack of social discrimination. He, however, avoids any reference to their so-called transgressive practices.

While discussing the *kanphata yogis* in Part II of his “Sketch”, Wilson does stress upon the fact that they are ‘vagrants… following the dictates of their own caprice’. A *yogi* might resemble a mountebank, yet, he has his accomplishments[35]:

> [T]he Jogi is frequently musical, and plays and sings; he also imitates animals into his business, and often travels about with a small bullock, a goat, or a monkey, whom he has taught to obey his commands, and to exhibit amusing gesticulations.

While describing *aghori*s, Wilson concedes that they indulge in ‘flesh and spirituous liquors’. However, these worshippers of some terrific forms of the Devi have dwindled and Wilson suggests that one only encounters *aghori*s in the pages of classical plays like *Mālatīmādhava* and fictional compilations like *Vrihat kathā*. Wilson assures us[36]:

> The regular worship of this sect has long since been suppressed, and the only traces of it now left are presented by a few disgusting wretches, who, whilst they profess to have adopted its tenets, make them a mere plea for exhorting alms. In proof of their indifference to worldly objects, they eat and drink whatever is given to them, even ordure and carrion. They smear their bodies with excrement…

As far as *kara lingi*s are concerned, Wilson accepts that Bernier and Tavernier had described them with evident horror. However, Wilson adds a note[37]:

> They were more numerous then, probably, than they are at present, and this appears to be the case with most of the mendicants who practised on the superstitious admiration of the vulgar.

While describing *shakta*s, he notes the distinction between *dakṣinācārā* and *vāmācārā* (the normative and the antinomian practices). He states that though Hindus in Kolkata claim to be *dakṣinācārī*, they actually follow the left-handed, antinomian path[38]:

> This festival, the Durga Puja, is now well known to Europeans, as is the extensive and popular establishment near Calcutta, the temple of Kali, at Kali Ghat. The rites observed in that place, and at the Durga Puja, however, almost place the Bengali Saktas amongst the Vamacharis, notwithstanding the rank assigned to them in the Dakshinachari Tantraraja…

The chaos of the metropolis, which threatened the centre of colonial encounter in India, is dissevered from the rest of the sub-continent as a zone of heretic practices. This subversion, recognised and yet not assimilated – secures the innocuousness of the rest. More importantly, for Wilson, it adds coherence to his narrative. Later, he asserts that Europeans are often befuddled by excesses like the *charak* puja, but these practices are not performed anywhere else in India except Bengal. Further, they are not recommended, even in the *tantra*s.

Wilson describes the 'scandalous orgies' of the 'Shri Chakra', quoting appropriate descriptions from *Rudra yamala* (an important text of the *trika* school of *Kashmiri shaivism*). Yet, he argues, such gross deviances are 'contrary… to all knowledge of the human character'. Though, such *shakta* practices 'may be sometimes performed', there are very few such ceremonies, and often it is nothing but a 'convivial party'[39]. He further adds[40]:

> It is only to be added, that if the promulgators of these doctrines were sincere,which is far from impossible, they must have been filled with a strange phrenzy, and have been strangely ignorant of human nature.

He refuses to accept the presence of the *kerari* (a *shakta* sect) because they still, purportedly, perform human sacrifice.[41]Wilson claims that Hinduism has undergone 'great and frequent modifications' and its 'present appearance is quite different from that which it originally wore.'[42] He downplays the centrality of the Brahmins in contemporary religion (which had been highlighted as a tyranny by Mill) and focuses on the development of *bhakti* and the growing important of *guru*.

Wilson has adopted myriad strategies to counter Mill's claims about the degenerated and stagnant condition of Hindu practices. He accedes that there has been temporary setbacks, but adopts myriad strategies to defend the scope of rationality in Hinduism. He either points out to a pristine practice which has subsequently degenerated, or points out to medieval deviances which have been corrected in contemporary practice. He has also denied the existence of several sects and prevalence of some practices. Like Mill, he has also characterised vagrants (like *yogi*s) as near brutes, often mimicking (and identifying) with animals. The most ambiguous explanation, something that we would expand on later, is the idea of subversive experience as 'phrenzy', which is deplored not because it is immoral – but because it exposes an incomplete understanding of human nature. He ends his essay in a positive note, hoping for the dawn of rationalism amongst the natives[43]:

> [I]t will have been seen from the notices of different sects, that scepticism is not unfrequent amongst the less privileged orders. The tendency of many widely diffused divisions is decidedly monotheistical ,and… attempts have been made to inculcate the doctrines of utter unbelief. It is not likely that these will ever extensively spread, but there can be little doubt that with the diffusion of education, independent enquiry into the merits of the prevailing systems and their professors, will become more universal… The germ is native to the soil: it has been kept alive for ages under the most unfavourable circumstances, and has been apparently more vigorous than ever during the last century. It only requires prudent and patient fostering to grow into a stately tree, and yield goodly fruit.

Wilson's prescription of 'prudent and patient fostering' is arrived at not through the strategy of non-engagement with Mill's reservations, but analysing, shaping and reinterpreting them. His Orientalist vision would be put to test in the domain of print in nineteenth century Kolkata, where the transgressions he aimed to contain would inevitably merge with the smudges of the printer's ink.

Orientalism in Bengal, however, had other problems do deal with. To start with, the Asiatic Society was suffering a financial crisis. The sale of Society's *Transactions* did not go beyond a couple of hundreds of rupees, as Members received their copies free of cost while learned institutions had them as presents.[44] Palmer and Co. acted as Society's Treasurer from 1810 to 1830. John Palmer, head of the firm, and a Member of the Society, was lauded as the 'Prince of British Merchants' in Kolkata. On 4th January 1830 – Palmer and Co. crashed, followed by appointment of new treasurers, Mackintosh and Co.[45] The Society barely survived from ending up in red. At a meeting of the Society on 13th December 1821, a letter from Colebrooke, presently Company's Agent in London, was read. Colebrooke enclosed statement of account furnished by their booksellers in London. He commented[46] :

> The expectation, which had been entertained of a more extensive sale, has in great measure been disappointed. In particular, I have to express my regret that the sale of the octavo reprint of the 12th volume of Asiatick Researches has not yet cleared the cost of the edition.

Such problems in recovering the printing cost of such a landmark publication as the *Asiatic Researches* is perhaps explained by the fact that there were several pirated editions in print. The Society once decided (16th September 1820) that after the publication of the fourteenth volume of the *Asiatic Researches*, they would endeavour to publish the transactions in London.[47] The manuscript papers approved by the Committee would be sent to an eminent publisher in London, who would procure the copyright of the same. This was however, not put to effect and after the resignation of Colebrooke as Agent in 1831, it seemed implausible. The Society received a small government grant in January 1829, just sufficient to cover the cost of printing the sixteenth volume of the *Asiatic Researches*.[48] Further, there was an alarming shortfall in the Society's collection of subscription from its members. On 17th June 1820, after Ramkamal Sen's appointment as the Collector – renewed efforts were initiated for collecting the subscriptions and arrears. The members absent from India were earlier not required to make payments and they often forgot (wilfully or otherwise) to pay their debts when they returned to India. The reports of the Collector for 1826-28 showed mounting arrears.[49] Even after receiving a donation of twenty thousand rupees from Nasir-ud-din Haider, Nawab of Oudh, the society could not recover from its financial troubles.[50] Not even after receiving two thousand pounds as a legacy from Dr. Charles Bruce was the Society financially secure (the amount was received in Calcutta by 4th July 1832). Ramkamal Sen's letter to Wilson entered in the *Proceedings* of 12th December 1832 predict an imminent financial crisis. The Collector had to give up the salary attached to his office and managed the collection without assistants.[51]

It was during such trying times that the society invited quotations from two Kolkata printers, Samuel Smith and Co. and Baptist Mission Press, for printing five hundred copies of its Researches in quarto in pica type. The Society decided to request Baptist Mission Press to lower its price, and even ask for quotations from Mirzapur Press.[52] Although the Society eventually settled to print the Researches by the Baptist Mission

Press, this vacillation reflects the straightened means of the Society. The sixteenth volume was printed at the Government Gazette Press, under the supervision of James Atkinson. G.H. Huttmann was the printer. The seventeenth volume was printed at the Bengal Military Orphan Press by the same printer. The printing of the seventeenth volume was indeed problematic, as the Society did not have sufficient funds. A resolution was adopted on 3rd September 1828 to print the materials already collected for the seventeenth volume without delay, opening a subscription amongst the Members to cover the cost of printing.[53] The financial fortunes of the Asiatic Society would be further threatened by the failure of Mackintosh and Co. in 1833.

Nor were the problems merely financial. . The Bengal Government decided to implement the educational suggestions of 1813 Act by establishing the General Council of Public Instruction in 1823. Wilson became one of the most influential constituents of GCPI. Rammohan's December 1823 letter was passed to the GCPI and was disapproved of by Wilson and his fellow Orientalists in the Council (among others, James Prinsep and J. C. C. Sutherland).[54] Wilson along with Ramkamal Sen and Radhakanta Deb, espoused a system of education which combined western learning with indigenous traditions. Wilson was personally interested in the establishment of the Sanskrit College. Under his influence, the introduction of English education had been slow. English was introduced in the Calcutta Madrasa and Sanskrit College, Benaras in 1829.[55] Wilson's trusted 'informants', Sen and Deb, launched the Dharma Sabha in order to counter Rammohan's reformist ideas. The 1830 Dispatches sent by John Stuart Mill to the three Presidencies of India, however, commended the modified policies of GCPI and applauded its efforts to introduce English Education. This was in direct contrast to Mill's 1824 Dispatches which had criticised the Oriental system of education. However, the arrival of Alexander Duff in Bengal in 1830 and his establishment of a successful English School caused a transformation of public opinion. When H. H. Wilson went back to England in 1833 to occupy the newly founded Boden Chair of Sanskrit, Bentinck appointed Charles E. Trevelyan to replace him as the Secretary of GCPI. Trevelyan, a reformist, would initiate a train of events which would ultimately result in the drafting of Macauleyan *Minute*. Macaulay's 1835 *Minute* would be a death knell for the Orientalist programme in Bengal. Wilson's "Sketch" was hence a desperate effort to defend the relevance of Orientalism in an administration that was increasingly veering towards the reformist paradigm.

While the Orientalists were perturbed by lack of funds to print the *Asiatic Researches*, the indigenous, urban inhabitants of the colonial city were establishing a firm hold on the world of print. John Clark Marshman, a member of the Society and a second generation Serampore missionary, started publishing *Samācār darpaṇ*, a weekly periodical from 23rd May 1818. Although Marshman supervised printing, the Indian members of the press were indispensable. The local pundits like Jaygopal Tarkalankar and Tarinicharan Shiromani were the backbones of the printing and editing process. A notice on 26th October, 1833 in the periodical runs as follows[56]:

> āmāder panditgaṇ agāmī somvār paryanta sva sva bāti haite pratyāgata haiben nā, atayev ei kāler madhye darpaṇe natun natun saṃvād prakāś nā hoātey pāṭhak mahāśayerā truṭi marjanā kariben|
> [Our Pandits would not return from their homes till Monday, thus till then the readers should excuse our inability to publish new material in the periodical]

Gangakishore Bhattacharya, the erstwhile compositor in Serampore Mission Press, started out as a publisher of popular books – his famous edition of *Annadāmangal* was perhaps the first illustrated Bengali book. Gangakishore started publishing books which were linked with Hindu religious traditions and practices --- *Gangabhaktitaranginī*, *Lakṣmīcaritra*, *Gītagovinda* were published, along with some of Rammohan's works.[57] Making brisk profit, he established his own press in 1818 and started printing a weekly periodical, *Bangal Gazetti*. Rammohan Roy's reformist mouthpiece, *Saṃvād kaumudī*, made its appearance on 4th December 1821 – with Bhavanicharan Bandyopadhyay and Tarachand Dutta as editors. As has been discussed earlier, a rift developed between Rammohan and Bhavanicharan. Bhavanicharan started printing and editing his own periodical, *Samācār candrikā,* from 5th May 1822. What seems to be remarkable is the prevalence of religious controversies in the early development of Bengali print culture. The pioneering editors and printers were interested in discussions about religion and religious texts – and the likes of Gangakishore realised that it was also a profitable business. Uma Majhi Mukhopadhyay points out the importance of Bhavanicharan and his successors in the development of Kolkata's public sphere[58]:

> The new style that Bhavanicharan popularised in Bengali journalism had its foundation in his personal life. He was an outsider to the newly established social life of Kolkata. His connection with the larger social sphere beyond the domains of Hindu College and Brahmo Movement, provided his prose a distinct voice which was different from the language of urbane committees. From this perspective, the professional journalists like Gaurishankar Bhattacharya, Ishwarchandra Gupta, Akshaykumar Dutta, Dwarakanath Vidyabhushan, who were his successors, might be compared to him.

It is important to evaluate figures like Bhavanicharan, Rammohan and Gangakishore in the context of this larger arena of traditional, pre-print culture. Ashish Khastagir reiterates that the relationship between the editor and the newspaper changed considerably during the third decade of the nineteenth century, when editors like Bhavanicharan[59] started to enjoy considerable independence. This evolution of a certain sense of editorial sovereignty was not merely a product of urbane reformed culture. Rather, it was a migration of subversive voices to Kolkata which brewed up this engaging polyphony of opinions. Like Wilson in 1820s, most of these voices were also discussing religious and cultural practices – often with a purpose of questioning, reforming and reinterpreting it. Ishvarchandra Gupta's efforts in *Saṃvād prabhākar* and Akshaykumar Dutta's association with *Tattvabodhinī patrikā* (1843-1855) reflect this overwhelming trend.

Akshaykumar's life (1820-1886) serves as an archetypal story of the Bengal Renaissance. Born in a remote village near Nadia in 1820, Akshaykumar migrated to Khidirpur when he was ten. His family wanted him to learn Persian, but he veered towards English. His early education had been quite irregular and misdirected, but he eventually became an illustrious student of Gaurmohan Adhya's Oriental Seminary. Desperate to earn for his family, Akshaykumar started teaching Geography and Physics in Tattvabodhini Pathshala, a school initiated by Debendranath Tagore (1817-1905) with an intention to reinvigorate the Brahmo faith (which had stultified after Rammohan's death in 1833). It was Ishvarchandra Gupta who took him to a meeting of the Tattvabodhini Sabha. When Debendranath decided to a periodical as a Brahmo mouthpiece, Akshaykumar was chosen as its editor. Shivnath Shastri recounts the stir that the periodical engendered, especially amongst the iconoclasts of Young Bengal[60]:

> Derozio's students like Ramgopal Ghosh did not even touch native newspapers in disdain. Yet, they were stirred when *Tattvabodhinī* [*patrikā*], published by Akshaykumar Dutta, started to be published. Ramgopal once told Mr. Lahiri, "Ramtanu! Ramtanu! Have you read solemn writing in Bengali? Here it is," saying this he gave him to read *Tattvabodhinī patrikā*.

Debendranath's decision to employ Akshaykumar as the editor was solely due to his lucid prose style. Debendranath explains in his *Ātmajīvanī* [61]:

> There was a need for an editor of the periodical. I analysed the writings of several members of the [Tattvabodhinī] Sabha. However, when I read Akshaykumar Dutta's prose, I selected him. In his writing, I could witness both positive as well as negative aspects. It was his strength that his prose was attractive and mellifluous; and it was his weakness that he had discussed in it about a matted-haired, ash-besmeared sanyasi who lived under a tree. I was against any external trappings of renunciation. I thought, if I would be cautious about his ideological predelictions, he could definitely edit the periodical.

It is interesting to note the apparent contradiction in these two narratives of reception. For the Young Bengal reformists, Akshaykumar's prose reflected grandeur, which suited their brand of rationalism. Debendranath, on the other hand, immediately discovered in him a predilection for the exotic, subversive and marginal which naturally challenged his urbane, reformist mysticism. Akshaykumar, who is considered as a scientific rationalist and sceptic, had described an itinerant *sannyasi*. This is not a simple dyadic conflict between rational and irrational impulses. Rather it is a discourse of variant intellectual approaches, where the domains of the rational and the exotic criss-cross each other. Debendranath tells us that he used to excise Akshaykumar's writings, wherever he found them to be inappropriate. He realised, however, the basic difficulty in convincing Akshaykumar about his spiritual views[62]:

> Where am I, and where is he! My quest is for my personal relationship with the Deity; and he was searching for the relationship of the external world with human nature – it's a world of difference!

For Debendranath, Akshaykumar was a neo-Baconian rational sceptic as well as a perturbing observer (and chronicler) of vagrants and mystics. Both these tendencies were at odds with the ideological predeliction of *Tattvabodhinī* as a mouthpiece of Brahmo faith, which stressed on the monist tendencies of Indic thought. The years that followed saw a widening of this rift between Debendranath and Akshaykumar.

It is interesting to note how these conflicting tendencies actually shaped the contours of the periodical. Like Wilson's edition of Mill's *History*, this dialogic exchange makes fascinating reading. Debendranath started printing excerpts from Vedic texts in the periodical. Just after those translations, however, Akshaykumar would chip in with his articles on natural history, geographical forms, human psychology and other aspects of science. For example,

Akshaykumar published this interesting vignette on chimpanzees[63]:

> sakal jantu apekṣā vanmānuṣ adhik aṅgśe manuṣyer tulya hay| tāhārā āfrikā khande vasati kare| tāhārdiger śarīr du tin hasta dīrgha hay, ebaṃ atyanta balavān hay| tāhārā e prakār sāhasi je anāyāse balavān manusyake ākramaṇ kare, ebaṃ dūr haite prastar nikṣep dvārāo āghāt kariyā thāke|

> tāhārdiger śarīr ye rūp manuṣyer ākriti, vyavahārādio anek bhāge tādṛiśa| tāhārā manuṣyer nyāy dandāyamān haiyā gamanāgaman kare, manuṣyer nyāy nidrā yāy, ebaṃ manuṣyer svarer nyāy śabda uccāraṇ kare| … tāhārdiger svabhāv e prakār dusta, ye srīlokdiger sahit vyabhicār kariteo śankā kare nā| emata śrabaṇo karā giyāche ye kāfriloker srīdiger prati tāhārā bhuyobhuyo atyācār kariyāche|

> [Amongst all animals, the chimpanzees resemble man the most. They live in the continent of Africa. Their body stretches for two to three *hasta*-s [the traditional unit of *hasta*, which equals 18 inches; two *hasta*-s would be one yard], and are immensely strong. They are so undaunted that they effortlessly attack even powerful humans, and even hurt them by hurling stones from a distance. Just like their physical dimensions, their behaviour resembles that of humans. They walk on their legs like humans, like humans they sleep, and they utter sounds like humans do. .. They are so mischievous that they indulge in sodomy with women. It has been reported that they repeatedly attack women of the South African tribes.]

This is preceded by an address given in the meeting of Brahma Samaj as well as translations from the *Kaṭhopaniṣad*. The article is not only remarkable because it is about the natural world (Akshaykumar would make this quite a norm for *Tattvabodhinī*, with physical and biological ideas being explained in what was primarily a religious publication); it blurs the distinction between the human and the brute which we had encountered in the writings of Mill and Wilson. It must also be noted that the transgression referred to is sexual in nature. Yama and Nachiketa might go on conversing about the transcendent nature of human spirit in the "Second Valli" of *Kaṭhopaniṣad* (in Debendranath's translation preceding Akshaykumar's article); Akshaykumar's vignette is about mundane, ever-present human fears about the ambiguities of sexual passion, transgression and the dread of being maligned and abused. Another article from four months earlier, describes human sacrifice practiced by Gonds. Akshaykumar states that because humans cannot possibly know the Divine, they indulge in brutal pursuits to please him. However, for Akshaykumar (quite unlike Mill), involvement in such brutal action characterises religion not only in India, but throughout the world.[64] Akshaykumar concludes by asserting the need of Vedanta in countering such sinister propensities in man; the disturbing note of uncertainty had, however, already been established. Akshaykumar's scepticism and his depiction of the exotic had destabilised the celebratory optimism of reformist Brahmo faith.

In the Bhadra 1770(August-September1848) edition, Akshaykumar started to print discussions about different religious sects of India. In a note, he acknowledges his debt to Wilson's "Sketch". He claims that he would primarily adapt Wilson's account of the *vaishnava* and other sects; however, he would also imbibe information from other sources.[65]

Throughout his tenure as editor of *Tattvabodhinī patrikā*, Akshaykumar would continue publishing articles about various Indic sects. The immediate reason for his publication of these articles is perhaps associated with the publication of Wilson's article in the book form, published by the Anglican Missionaries from Bishop's College Press in 1846. The Anglicans probably thought that Wilson's descriptions of the myriad practices of the Indians would act as a reference text, which could be suitably used by the college students. The arrangement of the contents in alphabetical order hints that the text might have been adopted for such a purpose. On 18th May 1819, Thomas Fanshawe Middleton proposed the establishment of a Mission College in the vicinities of Calcutta for the purpose 'of instructing Native and other Christian youth in the doctrine and discipline of the Church in order to their becoming Preachers, Catechists and Schoolmasters'[66].

Middleton, who had been the Vice-President of the Asiatic Society from 1815-22 (and was present at several meetings that we had earlier discussed), was closely involved in the construction and setting up of the Mission College. Reverend W.H. Mill from the Trinity College joined in as the Principal in early 1821.[67] Mill (who later contended with Wilson for the Boden Chair) joined the Asiatic Society on 13th April 1821 and was its Vice-President from 1833-1837.[68]

In 1833, Bishop Wilson arrived in Kolkata and was inducted in the Asiatic Society on 12th December 1832.[69] In 1836 there were differences of opinion between Bishop's College and Church Missionary Society. This was part of a complicated three-cornered controversy between Bishop Wilson, the parent society of C.M.S. and their Corresponding Committee in Kolkata. Bishop Wilson was a strong Evangelical who had given warm support to C.M.S. from its beginning, but as Bishop he found them by no means easy to deal with and he was a strong supporter of Bishop's College. The Corresponding Committee, influenced by one of the C.M.S. missionaries, Haeberlin, wished to establish a Head Seminary independent of Bishop's College, for the training of their own workers, of which Haeberlin hoped to become the Principal.[70]

The inflections of these contending forces had telling effects on the youth of the colonial city, who were drawn to Christianity through the liberal, iconoclastic views of Young Bengal. In 1832, the conversion of Maheshchandra Ghosh and Krishnamohan Bandyopadhyay created quite a stir in Kolkata.[71] At the end of 1839, Arthur Wallis Street of Pembroke College, Oxford arrived as the Principal of Bishop’s College. He was sympathetic to Tractarian views and hence was opposed by Bishop Wilson, who was a champion of the Evangelical cause.[72] Bishop Wilson’s relationship with the College deteriorated and he being seriously ill with malaria, had to return to England for an eighteen month leave in 1845. Interestingly, it was during his period of absence that Wilson's *Sketch of the Religious Sects of the Hindus* was published from the Bishop's College Press.

It might be conjectured that for the Christian missionaries, Wilson's "Sketch" was not merely a study of Indic faiths – it was also an exposition of the 'degenerated practices' of the Hindus. After being converted, Krishnamohan was placed in charge of the C.M.S. school in Amherst Street and joined the Anglican Church. He joined Bishop's College as an ordinand, and was made a deacon by Bishop Wilson in 1836.[73] As a Brahmo periodical, *Tattvabodhinī patrikā* had conflicting identities – on one hand, it often bore articles which countered the assertions of missionaries about Indic culture and religion; on the other hand, it was a mouthpiece of liberalism, free-thought and rationalism, attributes that were often associated with Christianity, especially by the likes of Krishnamohan. Akshaykumar's adaptation and extension of Wilson's scheme was also an effort to contest the missionary appropriation of Wilson's "Sketch", emphasising its status as an empirical study of religious sects.

Although Akshaykumar follows the Wilson's scheme, he adds description of several religious sects. Akshaykumar elaborately describes many contemporary *sahajiya* and heterodox varities of *vaishnavism*, a realm largely left untouched by Wilson. He informs us about *fakirs*, *darvesh*, *sai*, *nyara*, *gaurvadi*, *ram-ballabhi*, *aul*, *khushi-biswashi*, *sahebdhani*, *keurdas*, *sakhibhavak*, *harishpanthi* and several other indigenous sects. His empirical analysis often refers to the non-normative practices, with a dispassionate gaze of an observer. For example, here is his description of the ‘cāri candrabhed,’ an occult practice of the *bauls*[74]:

> Under *prakṛiti-sādhanā* is a rite named ‘cāri candrabedh’[lit. piercing the four-moons]. People consider this rite to be a hideous one, yet, bauls believe this to be the way to the supreme aim of life. They say that people derive these four moons [‘cāriti candrake’], i.e. the bodily engendered products -- blood, semen, faeces and urine from father’s seed and mother’s womb, hence they should not disperse these but reintegrate them in their body.

Unlike Wilson, he has no qualms about discussing the *sahaji*-s i.e. the *sahajiya*s and their unorthodox practices. While Wilson had assumed an ambiguous silence, Akshaykumar continues with description and enumeration[75]:

> According to the Bauls, the two means of refuge [‘āśray’] i.e. refuge in love[‘premāśray’] and refuge in the essence[‘rasāśray’] are of primal importance. This essence is embodied in the sexual union of the adepts [‘nāyak-nāyikār sambhog-svarūp’]. It is of two types, marital [‘svakīya’] and extra-marital [‘parakīya’]. The master and the female disciple take refuge in these two and think of themselves as Krishna and Radha, they indulge in the play of essences [‘rasalīla’] like Radha-Krishna. This is called the *sahaj* rite [‘sahaj sādhanā’].

Like Wilson, Akshaykumar also notes the egalitarian nature of many of these popular religious sects which were often prevalent among the lower strata of Indic society. He not only notes the transgressive sexual practices of *darvesh*, he also notes their essentially syncretic character.[76] He is aware of the origin of the *kartabhaja* sect amongst the marginalised castes.[77]

He accedes that the aims of the founders of *kartabhaja* movement had been quite liberalminded. However, he also points out that the sect had degenerated due to its licentious engagements. He recognises that infidelity and wantonness had been chastised by the *gurus*; yet, the fact that the males and females of the community live together, had 'inevitably' led to moral degradation. It should be noted that unlike most social reformers of the nineteenth century, Akshaykumar does not criticise *kartabhaja* doctrines; he merely criticises their actual practices, which, (according to him) had lamentably fallen short of their ideals.[78] He also describes splinter groups like *ramballavi* and *sahebdhani*. Akshaykumar describes the *āuls* as 'sahaj kartabhajā'. He asserts that their practices are extremely liberal ('udār'). He doesn't flinch from describing the 'simplicity' of their religious pratices[79]:

> It is not sufficient for them to enjoy the companionship of only their wives to achieve their supreme aim ['paramārtha-sādhan']; whether overtly or covertly, several married women and prostitutes are involved in the accomplishment of their practices. As a result, how can I express the extent of their simplicity? I have heard, even if they see their own wives in loving companionship with others, they do not express even a bit of envy or disgruntlement.

Although he describes certain practices as terrible/ hedious ('bibhatsa'), he bars himself from expressing moral sanction on these rites. Wilson historicises religious practices, in order to point out to some as inauthentic. Akshaykumar on the other hand, describes the socio-political context and situates the practices in everyday life. When his sketches were published in book-form (Volume 1 in 1870 and Volume II in 1883) he added a two-part Preface to his work. In these, he discusses the ancient religion of the vedic people and the evolution of the Indic philosophical systems. Even in the essays, he hardly misses an opportunity to bring out the subversive nature of mystical religious practices, which often alluded to vedic rituals in an unorthodox manner. He discusses about the 'gayatrī-kriyā' of the *paltudasi*s, *aapapanthi* and *satnami*s – which bears resemblance to the 'cāri candrabhed' rites of the bauls, though it is named after an orthodox brahminical rite.[80]

Like Wilson, Akshaykumar also emphasises the presence of myriad monotheist orders like the *kabirpanthis*, the *dadupanthis* etc. and stresses on their anti-caste predilections. Unlike Wilson, however, Akshaykumar exposes many of these sects to have developed an occult, subversive aspect. While discussing *vijamargi*s, for example, he underscores that they identify themselves as worshippers of a Creator-God devoid of form, hence aligning with mainstream vedantic sects. Curiously, revelations about their occult practices destabilise the assertions of some of the other purportedly monotheistic sects, including the Brahmos themselves. Akshaykumar most probably realises the irony of publishing this article in *Tattvabodhinī patrikā*. He adds a justification for indulging in such a frank discussion of these rites[81]:

> It was not my intention to degrade these articles by describing these myriad degraded practices. But what can I do; in this religiously inclinded Indian realm, several hideous heresies ['adharma'] have taken up the garb of religion ['dharma'] and is being practised covertly, how can I prevent myself from revealing these to the masses? How can the disease be detected without dissecting the bowels?

Wilson had intended his sketch as a defense for the inherent coherence of Hinduism. In order to achieve this, he had also grouped the divergent subversive practices as 'tantra'. Hugh B. Urban points out that it was only after the publication of Wilson's "Sketch" that 'a distinct set of texts called the tantras really emerges as a clearly defined and relatively unfied body of Indian literature.'[82] For Wilson, though *tantra*s are 'infinitely numerous', they are 'basically the same'. Inscribing a body of texts as sites of mystic and subversive power, had a telling effect on how religion came to be imagined in the succeeding years.

For Akshaykumar, however, the primal zone of emphasis is empirical data about practice. Hence, while Wilson searched for coherence – Akshaykumar analysed with a surgeon's precision and encountered remarkable heterogeneity. While Wilson thought of the non-normative practices from the perspective of synthetic, mystic 'phrenzy', Akshaykumar discovered in his elaborations a valuable typology of mental illnesses. Akshaykumar's discussion of the *sri-chakra* brings to the fore the idea of mystic experience of subversion as a psychological ailment.[83] He even thinks of it as brutish and inhumane. For Akshaykumar, scriptures were neither the absolute authority nor where they free from being tainted. Rather, they are shaped over time – shaped by what people might accept as sacred. Such a contingent view about scriptural authority made him adopt an inductive, empirical method. While Wilson looked for a unity, untainted by confused prattle of the public sphere – Akshaykumar listened to the vital polyphony of heterogenous practices.

Wilson's text would become ossified and suffer subsequent effects of standardisation. His "Sketch" would be published as the first volume of his *Works* in 1862 by Trubner and Co. Sanskritist Reinhold Rost edited this volume, adding notes and comments to the text. In his Preface, he confesses that transliteration of the names is difficult, as Wilson had quoted from various sources—Persian, Bengali, Sanskrit, and different dialects of Hindi. He points out that '[n]o improvement in this respect was aimed at in the reprint of this work, which appeared at Calcutta in the year 1846 (pp.238, in 8vo), and in which even the most obvious misprints of the original edition were reproduced with scrupulous fidelity.' However, in the present edition, he aims at standardisation[84]:

> Much care has, however, been bestowed in the present edition upon the orthography of Indian words… with a view to the maintenance of, at least, as much etymological consistency as shall

> enable the student to trace without difficulty their original forms. In some cases, slight but unavoidable discrepancies will be detected, occasioned, it is feared, by the want of ready communication between the editor and the printer.

Rost makes other subtle changes to the text. Wherever he could trace Wilson's sources, he put his comments in brackets after Wilson's text. This would connect Wilson's "Sketch" to other Indological endeavours, hence canonising it as a classic text of the genre. Moreover, the Bengali quotations in Rost's edition are printed in Devanagari, not in Bengali characters. 'Matsyer jhol' suffers these changes, brought about by a curious standardisation of orthography.[85]

In contrast, Akshaykumar's text has always incorporated some necessary chaos. In 1870, the articles on the *vaishnava* sects, originally published in *Tattvabodhinī*, were published as a book at the New Sanskrit Press. In 1883, a second volume was published, assorting his articles on *shaiva*s, *shakta* and other heterogenous sects. By that time, Akshaykumar had been debilitated by mysterious bouts of headache. His strange illness, which some suspect to be epilepsy and others to be triggered by psychological stress,[86] had enforced his premature retirement from public life. His theological differences with Debendranath had intensified over the years, and during a Brahmo prayer meeting in 1855, he suddenly lost consciousness. Two days later, while working at the Tattvabodhini office, he was revisited by the strange headache and subsequent loss of consciousness.[87] The last thirty years of his life had been a struggle against this recurrent illness. His misery was exacerbated by rifts with his family members. Shifting to a country-house in Bali, Howrah – Akshaykumar focused on developing a geological museum, a botanical garden and a laboratory. He also distanced himself from deist inclinations of his youth and veered towards agnosticism and atheism.[88] While preparing the influential Preface to the second volume of *Bhāratvarṣīya upāsak sampradāy* , he had to dictate it to his secretary. Saradacharan Mitra recounts[89]:

> I arrived at Bali within a few days. When I arrived there, Akshaykumar had been dictating the Preface to the *Bhāratvarṣīya upāsak sampradāy* to Sri Ram. Each day he would dictate five or ten paragraphs, which Sri Ram [his secretary] used to pen down… After dictating a few paragraphs, he used to be exhausted and the headache used to recur…

Akshaykumar recounts his own helpless condition in the Introduction to the second volume.[90] Akshaykumar confesses that there had been inevitable printing errors which he could not correct because of his illness. This had saddened him terribly, yet, he pleads to his readers to be empathetic about his shortcomings and forgive these errors.

Other carnivalesque uncertainties soon crept in. Akshaykumar describes the *keurdas* and *nareshpanthi* sects in the second volume. Yet, he adds an Announcement ("Vigñāpaṇ") at the beginning of his book in which he expresses grave doubts about the existence of these sects. He asserts that Rajendranath Dutta, a resident of Raina, had informed him about these sects. However, a thorough investigation had convinced Akshaykumar that *nareshpanthi*s are but *kartabhaja*s (whom he had already discussed) while the very existence of the *keurdas* sect seems doubtful. Yet, the first edition of the book includes the description of both these sects. Most probably, the rest of the book had already been printed by the time Akshaykumar found out about the fraudulent reports. However, description of these sects was yet again published in the second edition of the second volume (1907), several years after Akshaykumar's death. Moreover, Akshaykumar's text was accretive – hence the first edition of the second volume (1883) contained a considerable addendum to the first volume. Some of these were rearranged in the second edition of the first volume (in 1888). Interestingly, this addendum to the first volume is left out in the modern editions of the text. Neither Binay Ghosh (1969, Pathabhavan) nor Baridbaran Ghosh (1987, Karuna Prakashani) prints it. Besides, the 1969 edition leaves out the influential Preface. The second edition of the first volume (1888) contains several additions, some of which were not compiled by Akshaykumar. The publishers explain that Madhavchandra Tarkasiddhanta and Brajanath Mukhopadhyay had collected descriptions of *vaishnava* fairs, congregations and attire – which were added at relevant parts of the text. Besides, Tarkasiddhanta had collected an account of Mastaram Babaji's *akhara*, the authenticity of which is disputable. Due to this uncertainty, this has been placed in the addendum.[91] Akshaykumar's text seems to have embodied much of the dissonance that it ventured to described and analyse. Akshaykumar, the positivist-turned agnostic, the disciple of Bacon and Comte, had intended to explore the psychological illness that pervades in the religious traditions of India. Yet his text bears traces of the blurring of the subject/object schism, of the necessary disintegration of the seamless, empirical observer[92]:

> sannyāsī, satnāmī, vījamargī, paltu dasī, āpāpanthī prabhṛitir gūḍha mantra o guhya byāpār yerūpe saṃgṛihīta haiyāche, tāhā ki baliba? erūp kārya sādhan karite haile, sakalkei viśeṣ yatna, samadhik pariśram o yatheṣta artha vyay karite hay| aamaake tadatirikta ei jīvanmṛita śarīrero svāstha-kṣay svīkār kariyā atma-sannidhāne aparādhī haite haiyāche| ei samasta aṅgīkār kariyāo, yadi janasamāj-viśeṣer kon antarbhūta mānasik roger viṣay kichu nūtan jānite pāriyā thāki, tabe seti āmār saubhāgyer viṣay balite haibe|

> [What can say about how the mystic mantras and occult practices of [the groups like] *sanyāsi*s, *satnāmī*s, *vījamārgī*s, *paltudāsī*s and *āpāpanthī*s were collected? To accomplish this, a lot of effort and money have to be spent. Moreover, I had to be guilty of degrading the health of my fatally-affected (*jīvanmṛita*) body. Even after pledging all this, if I have been able to know anything new about the psychological ailment (*mānasik roger*) of any community, I must be deemed as fortunate.]

It is ironic that his analysis was itself fretted by psychological agony (which Ashish Lahiri compares to Ramakrishna's *bhāvonmād* state)[93] and the inevitable buffeting of cultural/ material forces which transform his text in print.

Wilson and Akshaykumar's efforts were indeed symptomatic of the intellectual life in nineteenth century Bengal, when surveillance, control and categorisation served as methods to contain and discipline the domain of religion. Tapti Ray narrates the changing dynamics of this discourse of power and gaze.[94] Roy's study emphasises the popularity of religious literature. Her study quotes data from Jatindramohan Bhattacharya's *Bāṅglā mudrita granthādir tālikā*: *1743-1852*[95] and describes the steady rise in the popularity of religious literature in print. In the period between 1844-1852— when Akshaykumar published most of the descriptions of the sects in *Tattvabodhinī* – religious scriptures and mythologies emerged as the largest category of printed books in Bengali (18.26 percent). There was a considerable increase in the printing of *vaishnava* literature[96]. Shri Pantha considers that the greatest contribution of Battala printers was the publication of religious literature, especially cheap editions of *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata*, *Purāṇa*s and several adaptations of religious scriptures.[97] Almanacs evolved as an extremely popular genre of books and contained information about auspicious dates as well as other nuances of religious practices. James Long's bibliographical survey of contemporary Bengali publications reiterates the popularity of almanacs, even in the remote villages of Bengal[98]:

> In the villages where no other Bengali book ever penetrates, there is the Almanac to be found, the Hindu cannot marry, make a journey or execute any important work without its aid, as lucky days are given in it, when the child is first to eat rice, put on the paita, have the ear pierced, go to school, begin marriage negotiations, hence we need not be surprised that 100.000 copies of Almanacs are published annually in Calcutta, and spread by book hawkers over the country.

Jivananda Bhattacharya makes an interesting observation about the dissemination of education in this eventful phase of Bengali Renaissance. He quotes Saudamini Debi, who in her memoirs, reminiscences that a *vaishnavi* was her first teacher. She used to come to her house, and used to read *Rāmāyaṇa* to her. She had also taught her how to write letters, and had introduced her to primers. Bhattacharya remarks that it was these *vaishnavi*s who would often copy Sanskrit texts for Battala editors. Long tells us of a *vaishnavi* who used to earn her living by copying Sanskrit manuscripts.[99] Evidently, these figures moved inconspicuously from one world to the other – they were the ones who served as a bridge between literate, pre-print manuscript culture and the print culture of the Bengal renaissance. Akshaykumar remarks that the *kartabhaja* cult has been spread by its female adherents, who would often convert elite housewives into their fold[100]:

> This sect has secretly gained in strength. Though it has been heard that many learned men also adhere to it, yet, the majority [of the followers] are the lowly and the women. The followers of the Master[the *kartabhaja* term for the Divine] increase the disciples of their fold by easily entering the inner quarters of the households without the patriarch(grihasvamī) knowing about it.

It is evident that Saudamini's *vaishnavi* was at once a prototypal representative of renaissance knowledge as well as a disseminator of occult, subversive gnosis. The world of print had brought these schismatic worlds together – engendering inevitable conflicts and rifts. Sudhir Chakraborty recounts [101]:

> In the dark, superstitious world of nineteenth century Kolkata … middle-aged female *gosai*-s entered the inner quarters (*antahpur*) of the prosperous. They spread literacy and education amongst the women. They sang *kīrtan*s and songs relating to *dehatattva*.

Swapan Chakravorty points out that the world of nineteenth century Bengali print culture was constantly threatened by the loss of purity in print.[102] The publication of religious literature and its reception were both permeated by agents who belonged to heterodox, transgressive domains. The subsequent censorship of obscenity in print, spearheaded by bourgeoisie Hindus and colonial administrators, was incessantly threatened by this amorphous, carnivalesque sphere of print. Wilson and Akshaykumar both tried to define the boundaries of this domain, objectifying it by their academic gaze – yet both were irrevocably entrenched in the material and cultural discourses of their times. The transgression that they tried to contain outlived them and thrived in print. Anindita Ghosh discusses how marginalised communities of nineteenth century Bengal appropriated print in order to shape popular discourse and express their non-conformist world views. Hugh B. Urban's study of the *kartabhaja*s shows how Print enabled the adoption of the tactic of disguise and resistance. The very year Akshaykumar published the first volume of his work (1870), Chaitanya Chandrodaya Press published *Kartābhajār gītāvalī*, edited by Navinchandra Chakravarti. In 1882, Aurora Press published *Bhāver gītā*, a canonical collection of *kartabhaja* songs. The initiation of *vaishnava* revivalism can be seen as a reaction to the extensive permeation of *kartabhaja* and other heterodox sects.

We might conclude with a discussion on the effects of Wilson's "Sketch" and Akshaykumar's essays on the subsequent development of nationalism. As we have already discussed, in *Kṛiṣṇa caritra* (1886), Bankimchandra endeavoured to situate Krishna in history and upheld a reformist interpretation of Hindu scriptures and traditions. Bankimchandra had to counter the view of several European Sanskritists who had branded *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* as mere fables. Amongst this group of eminent Sanskritists (which includes Colebrooke, Lassen, Whitney, Weber, Max Mueller among others), Bankimchandra also places Wilson. Although Bankimchandra criticises the interpretations of the European indologists, he also recounts his debt to these Sanskritists in the Preface to the second edition of this work. He also lists Akshaykumar along with them. He asserts that although he had criticised these scholars, their works have helped him to sculpt out his own[105]:

> I have deprecated European scholars several times in this book, yet, it isn't untrue that they have provided me with sources and have assisted me. Wilson, Goldstucker, Weber, Muir – I am compelled to express my gratitude to them. Among the indigenous writers, I am bound to Rameshchandra Dutta, C.I.E., the pride of our nation; Satyabrata Samashrami and the [recently] deceased savant (*mahātma*) Akshaykumar Dutta. Akshaybabu is an excellent compiler (*saṃgrahakār*)…

The patronising tone in which Bankimchandra damns Akshaykumar with faint praise, referring to him merely as a compiler of facts (*saṃgrahakār*), is remarkable. It also exposes the ambivalent discourse of Indian nationalism – its apparent status as a derivative discourse of Western nationalism, and yet, its quest to carve out its own distinctive niche. Wilson and Akshaykumar are witnesses to this necessary polyvalence – which had gradually shaped itself throughout the nineteenth century. Their sketches are also living testaments in print of the paradoxical nature of this 'discovery'– witnesses of its orthodoxy and subversion, its restraint and transgression, its rational clarity and lived ambiguity.

Notes

1. James Mill, *The History of British India*, vol.1(London: Baldwin, Cradock and Joy, 1817), 198.

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Beames, Orientalism and the Birth of Nation(s)

The involvement of the Orientalists in the development of Bengali prose was considerably affected by Macaulay's *Minute on Indian Education* (1835). The adoption of the New Education Policy in 1935 led to the spread of English education in India. The indigenous educational traditions, which had continued their existence in the first phase of British colonialism, fell into disuse. It is vastly significant to note that certain sections of the society in Bengal, welcomed this change. Rammohan Roy, in his letter to Lord Amerhst (then Governor-General of India) in December 1823, had discouraged the establishment of the 'new Sangscrit School' in Kolkata. He said that the natives were expectant when they came to know that a seminary of learning would be established. They had wished that the natives of India would be taught 'Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy and other useful Sciences'[1], which had made the Europeans superior to the inhabitants of the rest of the world. Rammohan stated that 'Sansgscrit' is extremely difficult and 'almost a life time' is necessary in acquiring proficiency in it. He considered it to be a highly unprofitable enterprise to induce 'young men to consume a dozen of years of the most valuable period of their lives in acquiring niceties of the Byakarun or Sansgcrit Grammar'[2]. He doubted whether much improvement can be achieved through the study of *nyaya*. Rammohan could think of a European parallel[3]:

> If it had been intended to keep the British nation in ignorance of real knowledge the Baconian philosophy would not have been allowed to displace the system of schoolmen, which was best

> calculated to perpetuate ignorance. In the same manner the Sangscrit system of education would be best calculated to keep this country in darkness if such had been the policy of the British Legislature.

Rammohan did not merely express his preference for an education system, he was also declaring his preference for the Baconian, inductive method. Francis Balfour's claim of inductive reasoning being already prevalent in indigenous South Asian traditions (this has been discussed earlier) has been transformed in Rammohan's letter.

Rammohan's letter however failed to generate much enthusiasm among the British officials to implement a monolithic policy of western education. His letter would be disapproved of by the Orientalist members of the GCPI, headed by Wilson. It would however serve as the prelude to the eventual drafting of Macaulay's *Minute*.

It was in these eventful times that two influential Bengali newspapers would come into being. One of them was the *Saṃvād prabhākar* (published from 1831) which was edited by Ishvarchandra Gupta. The other was the *Tattvabodhini patrika* (published from 1843). We have already delved into Akshaykumar Dutta's role as an editor of the *Tattvabodhini*. Ishvarchandra Vidyasagar, Akshaykumar's close friend and collaborator, had also revised many of Akshaykumar's essays published in the periodical.[4] The prose style of these two periodicals differed considerably. While the style of *Tattvabodhini* had a solemn grandeur, Ishvarchandra Gupta's style was light, witty and colloquial. Ishvarchandra Gupta is recognised as one of the crafters of Bengali journalistic prose. [5] Gupta used to compose *kabiwālā*-songs and even published a compilation of them in the *Samvād prabhākar* (1853-55). His connection with the indigenous bardic genres, especially with the poetry of Ramaprasad Sen (c.1723-1775) should be noted. In one of his editorials in the *Samvād prabhākar* (31st March 1848), Ishvarchandra Gupta discusses the Education Debate that had lately caused quite a furor[6]:

> Recently there has been much furor over the question whether Bengali or English should be the medium of instruction for the natives so that they can distinguish themselves in their studies… Changing the speech of a nation is not easy, this can only be accomplished by the transformation of the beauty of the cosmos, which takes place over a period of several aeons, directed by Divine Providence.

The shift from indigenous to English education is perhaps epitomised by Ishvarchandra Vidyasagar. Vidyasagar had learnt the rudiments of English during his days as a student in Sanskrit College (1829-1841). Only after he had joined as the Head Pundit in Fort William College in 1841, he endeavoured to learn Hindi and English.[7] His first significant publication was *Vetāl pañcaviṃsati* in 1847 (a translation from the Hindi-Hindustani version, *Vaitāl PNaccisi*, by Lallu Lal). The cycle of stories had been derived from Somdeva's *Kathāsaritasāgara* (11th century CE). Shivdas Bhatta, Jambhaldatta and Ballavdas had subsequently retold the story in verse and prose-verse (*campu*) forms. Vidyasagar also translated portions from J.C. Marshman's *Outlines of the History of Bengal* into Bengali. He described the events in Bengal from the ascension of Siraj-ud-daula in 1756 till Bentinck's return to Britain in 1835. This was published as a textbook on regional history – *Bāṅgālār itihās:dvitīya bhāg* (1848).[8] However, it was Vidyasagar's appointment as the Assistant Secretary to the Sanskrit College (1847-1849) which brought him in direct conflict with the older, conservative personalities like Rasamay

Dutta, one of Wilson's trusted 'informants'. When Vidyasagar was reinstituted as a Professor of Literature in December 1850, the Education Council asked him to submit a report about the standards of education in the College. Rasamay Dutta retired from his post and Vidyasagar was appointed as the Secretary in January 1851. This was an important change, as Vidyasagar would suggest a thorough transformation of the curriculum in his *Report* (1850) and in his "Notes on the Sanscrit College" (April, 1852).[9] The impact of the new course which would be introduced in November 1851 has already been discussed in an earlier chapter.

Vidyasagar would envisage the importance for studying western philosophy and mathematics. He also opposed what he considered to be an inordinate emphasis on Sanskrit grammar. Vidyasagar pointed out that the mere cribbing of Vopadeva's *Mugdhabodha* did not help the students to develop proficiency in Sanskrit. Hence, he wrote Sanskrit grammar treatises like *Upakramaṇikā* (1851) and *Vyākaraṇa kaumudī*(1853). Vidyasagar's reforms would not only affect education but it would considerably impact the evolution of Bengali prose.

Vidyasagar introduced several innovations. He was the first prose writer who had consistently used punctuation in Bengali. Through subsequent revisions of his text, he often added more intricate punctuation schemes.[10] He has also been considered, by Rabindranath Tagore, to be 'the first genuine artist of Bengali prose.'[11] As we have observed earlier, it was largely through Vidyasagar's efforts and contributions that refined speech (*sādhu bhāṣā*) was established as the normative literary and prestige dialect. Vidyasagar countered the excessive dependence on Sanskrit vocabulary and syntax, which had been evident even in Rammohan. Rammohan, in his introduction to the *Vedānta grantha*, drew attention to the uniqueness of Bengali syntax[12]:

> One should carefully consider the beginning and the end of a sentence. In order to complete the sense of a sentence, the relative pronouns should be properly associated. As long as one does not arrive at the verb, one should not consider the sentence to have been completed. Be careful in ascertaining the relationship between particular nouns and their verbs, otherwise the meaning of the sentence would not be comprehended.

Although Rammohan's compositions show the effect of sententious, sanskritised prose – his delineation of the S-O-V structure would be later accepted as the normative syntax of Bengali sentence. Vidyasagar's prose would epitomise the virtues of this classic style. However, Vidyasagar would consciously avoid the excesses of the persianate, sanskritised or the colloquial registers of Bengali. He would mould the Refined Style as a conscious synthesis of the sanskritised and the colloquial forms. His prose abounded with the use of verbal nouns. Unlike the prose in *Tattvabodhinī patrikā*, his translations of literature would often have traces of the colloquial style but he would avoid rustic levity and regionalism. An example from *Vetāl pañcaviṃsati* would be illustrative of the simple dignity of his style[13]:

> Jayaśrīr gñānoday haila| takhan se priyatamake mṛita sthir kariyā sakhīr nikate giyā pūrvāpar samasta vyāpār tāhār gocār kariyā kahila, sakhi! āmi ei viṣam vipade paḍiyāchi; ki upāy kari, bala| gṛihe giyā keman kariyā pitāmātār nikaṭ mukh dekhaiba| tNāhārā kāraṇ jigñāsile, ki uttar diba|

> [The realisation dawned in Jayashree. Realising that her lover had died, she went to her companion and after describing the entire incident, began to lament, “O friend! I am in a deep predicament; tell me a way out. How can I ever meet my parents again! If they demand a reason, what would I say?”]

Vidyasagar’s prose and his educational reforms would formulate a definitive aesthetics of the vernacular prose. These efforts were suitably paralleled by the rise of neo-orientalism.[14] By the late 1840s, both the Anglicists and the Orientalists began advocating the teaching of the general population in their own languages. The new paradigm focused on ‘engrafting’ Western knowledge onto the village schoolboy. Lancelot Wilkinson and Brian Houghton Hodgson were the primary figures who advocated this idea. Hodgson, a member of the Asiatic Society, had helped in the development of a collection of Buddhist manuscripts in the Asiatic Society which he had gathered from Nepal. He had been a student of Carey at Fort William. While being the Resident of Kathmandu, Hodgson wrote a series of letters criticising the new education policy. What was new in his brand of Orientalism was not so much an espousal of Sanskrit learning, but a demand for the spread of vernacular education. In the preface to the reprint edition of his letters, Hodgson criticised the policies adopted by Macaulay and Trevelyan and applauded the early Orientalist-colonisers like Hastings and Wellesley.[15] Hodgson’s appreciation of vernacular literature had significant connotations in the development and reception of Bengali prose.

For Bengali prose in the 1850s had already started to prioritise a given form of Refined Speech. Yet, the chaotic, polyglossic underbelly of its syncretic culture had still not lost its vitality. Ishvarchandra Gupta’s prose had maintained its umbilical link with the indigenous traditions. In another portion of his 31 March 1848 Editorial in *Samvād prabhākar* (an excerpt from this has been quoted above), Ishvarchandra Gupta praised Hodgson for his spirited criticism of Macaulay's reforms. At about the time Tarashankar Tarkaratna translated *Kādamvarī* (1854) and Vidyasagar was busy with his translation of *Śakuntalā* (1854) – Ishvarchandra Gupta published an account of the life of Ramprasad Sen (December 1853). While the first two efforts clearly reveal the mediation between the Sanskrit source and modern vernacular, Ishvarchandra Gupta's biographical account displays his attachment to the colloquial, syncretic roots. It was also about this time that Pyarichand Mitra published *Ālāler gharer dulāl*, in a serialised form, in the newly established *Māsik patrikā* (1855).

Pyarichand Mitra's *Ālāler gharer dulāl* (published as a book in 1857) is a satirical novel which describes the bohemian lifestyle of its protagonist, Matilal. Pyarichand used short, loosely connected sketches in this composition which is partly caused by its serialised form of production. The language of the novel seems to be a curious mixture of sanskritised, persianate and colloquial registers. It avoided the use of compound verbs (which had been widely used by Vidyasagar). It used plenty of *tatbhava* and colloquial words. He avoided compound words and used plenty of Arabic-Persian words. Pyarichand also employed idiosyncratic verbs, often derived from refined speech – for example 'catkātechen' rather than 'catkāitechen'; 'bhāvtechen' rather than 'bhāvitechen'. He frequently used dashes as punctuation marks.[16] Pyarichand used different dialectical registers to represent different members of society (and their sociolinguistic affiliations). He would infrequently write in Refined Speech[17]:

> Śikṣār pradhān tatparya ei ye vayaḥkram anusāre maner śaktir o bhāv sakal chālita haibek| ek śaktir adhik chālanā karā karttavya nā|
>
> [The significance of education lies in the exertion of mental energy and emotions according to one's age. One should not exert more than one's capability.]

However, Pyarichand could also shift to the mixed dialect. His novel was written primarily in this syncretic register:

> chele ekbār bigḍe uṭhle ār suyut haoyā bhār|
>
> [Once a lad gets spoiled, it is immensely difficult to mend him.]

Pyarichand also used the standard colloquial dialect of regions adjoining the Bhagirathi river:

> Bāburām bābu! tumi kāhār buddhite e samandha kariyācha? tākār lobhe gele ye! – e āmādiger jeter dosh|
>
> [Babu Baburam! By whose wits were you goaded to engage in this relationship? You were ruined by greed!—This is the fault of our people.]

Perhaps the most controversial use was the frequent use of colloquial lect, apparently spoken by Muslims, with a significant presence of Arabic-Persianate words:

> moder nasib baḍa burā – morā ekevāre meti halum – phikir kichu beroy naa, mor śir theke matlab peliye geche _
>
> [We are ill fated—we are completely ruined – I cannot think of a plan, I have lost my wits—]

One of the debates that raged amongst the neo-orientalists was about the nature of the register which should be chosen as the standard for modern, vernacular education. Historically speaking, Bengali writers did not directly appropriate the language of *Ālāler gharer dulāl*. Even Pyarichand, in most of his other compositions, had used the Refined Speech. Pyarichand's *Alali* language would rarely be adopted in literature, though Kaliprashanna Singha,in *Hutom pNyācār naksa* (1861-63), also uses colloquial language. With the arrival of John Beames in Bengal in 1861, the debate assumed a wider, diverse connotation.

Beames, in *A Comparative Grammar of the Modern Aryan Languages* (1872-1879), praised *Ālāler gharer dulāl* as the epitome of Bengali literature. In his overview of Bengali literary scene, Beames would express[18]:

> Babu Piari Chand Mittra, who writes under the *non de plume* of Tekchand Thakur, has produced the best novel in the language, the Allaler gharer Dulal, or "The Spoilt Child of the House of Allal." He has many imitators, and certainly stands high as a novelist; his story might fairly claim to be ranked with some of the best comic novels in our language for wit, spirit, and clever touches of nature. Michael Madhusudan Datt, a Christianized Hindu, has also written a great many works, some of them very good. And "Hutam," as he calls himself, or Kali Prasanna Singh, must be mentioned as a vigorous and clever, though occasionally coarse, painter of the manners of his countrymen. There are many more, too many perhaps for a country which has so recently emerged from semi-barbarism; but civilization, or a curious imitation of it is a plant of fast growth in India, and all we can do is to hope that much that is worthless may die out, while what remains may be strengthened and pruned.

Beames's overview does not even mention Vidyasagar and other important figures who had laid down the foundations of Refined Speech. If we leave aside Madhusudan, who is probably mentioned for his poetry, the two Bengali writers whom Beames mentions in his exhaustive study of modern Indian vernacular languages are Pyarichand Mitra and Kaliprashanna Singha. Both these figures are known to have devised a polyglossic colloquial register which has not been accepted as the normative style of Bengali prose. It is also significant that three of Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay's novels – *Durgeśnandinī* (1865), *Kapālakundala* (1867) and *Mriṇāliṇī* (1869) had already been published when Beames had scripted his overview. The rift between the neo-orientalists and vernacular prose writers in the last quarter of the nineteenth century becomes evident.

Beames (1837- 1902) was the born to Reverend Thomas Beames, preacher of St.James Church, Picadilly and an enthusiastic leader of the Society for Improving the Dwellings of the Working and Poorer Classes.[19] Beames was educated in Merchant Taylor's School and later in Haileybury College. He served the Punjab regiment from 1859 to 1861. In the Bengal Presidency, he became a Collector in 1867 and a Commissioner in 1881. He was also a Member of the Asiatic Society of Bengal and published several important articles in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society*. His *Outlines of Indian Philology* (1867) was a pioneering work which stimulated the study of North Indian languages. His magum opus, *A Comparative Grammar of the Modern Aryan Languages* was released in three volumes in 1872, 1875 and 1879. Besides this, Beames also published his memoirs (*Memoirs of a Bengal Civilian*) and several articles in *Indian Antiquary* and other philological journals.

While placed in Champaran, Beames published his first paper [20] in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society* (*JASB* 35). The paper was named "Outlines of a Plea for the Arabic Element in Official Hindustani" and was received by the Society in April, 1865. Beames said that it has been the general trend then to condemn the language used in the law courts of India. Such a language is condemned as ‘a medley of heterogeneous elements, a pedantic clumsy unintelligible jargon’. Beames states that after seven years’ of daily experience and use of the language, he intends to defend it against the criticisms heaped on it. He asserts his belief that Hindustani is the most progressive and civilised of all the modern Indian vernaculars. He further states about Hindusthani[21]:

> Not only is it compendious, eloquent, expressive and copious, but it is the only form which is the legitimate development of the speech of the Gangetic tribes could show itself… To object to the free use in Hindustani of words derived from Arabic and Persian, is as absurd as to object to the free use of Latin and Greek derivatives in English. As a merchant, by skillful trading with borrowed capital, may become a millionaire so English by readily borrowing and making good use of its borrowed stores, has raised itself from an obscure low German patois to the most extensively used medium of communication between distant countries.

Beames’s defence of Hindusthani has evident links with his praise of *Ālāler gharer dulāl*. Just like Hindusthani (‘a medley of heterogenous elements’), Pyaricharan’s *Alali* language is heterogenous and borrows elements from Arabic and Persian. Again, Beames connects his defence of Hindusthani with a wider idea of ‘commerce’ in language; an exchange of words which might suitably profit the borrower. By stating this, Beames is not only problematising the unilateral discourse of Bengali (or Indian) nationality, he is also challenging the monolithic idea of British nationhood. He points out that English is a dialect of Plate-Deutsche (Low German/ Low Saxon). Yet, it has modified itself suitably as it came in contact with other languages. Beames reminds us that pedants were always endeavoring to arrest the import of new words in English language. Chaucer had been ridiculed, Beames tells us, for introducing French words in his poems. Yet, English had been always receptive towards foreign words. Beames compares English with German. He point out that while English always tended to imbibe words, German absorbed little of Latin or any other foreign elements. Germany has, Beames informs us, tried to ‘meet the wants of civilization and progress by combination of indigenous words rather than by borrowing.’[22] The result has been disastrous. Although modern German has expressiveness, its usefulness as a practical, working, everyday speech is inferior to English or any other European language.[23]

After mentioning the European parallel, Beames claims that Hindusthani would meet its practical demand only by borrowing words from ‘semitic sources’, rather than sticking to its indigenous roots. In order to validate his claim, he explains that in German or Sanskrit accretive compounds can easily be formed. These compounds are often uncomfortably long and hence cause difficulty in pronunciation. In Arabic (or Hebrew) however, each word arises from a trilateral root, which limits the length of words within three radical letters. Thus, Semitic languages have a capability of expressing more in lesser number of letters than the Indo-European languages. Beames offers us the example of the word ‘nazir’ (inspector, overseer) to clarify his point. Sanskrit words which express the same idea are ‘adhyaksa,’ ‘upadrista’ or ‘adhikari.’ In Greek it is ‘epistates’ while in Latin it is ‘inspector.’ Corresponding German word would be ‘aufseher’, ‘inspektor.’ Beames would continue[24]:

> To be able to express ideas of a complex nature by short and simple words is an undeniable advantage. When a language has two or more sources from which it can draw, native sources giving it only long cumbrous compounds, foreign ones giving it neat and convenient uncompounded words, it

> is only natural that the latter should be chosen. The Bengali, like the German, has chosen to trust to its Indian resources; and the result is a collection of "sesquipedalian verba" of the most alarming description, and what is more to the purpose in these practical days, it is yielding visibly to the more progressive Hindustani.

Beames establishes an analogical comparison – English: German:: Hindusthani: Bengali. Beames perceived that the inability of accepting *foreign* words is making Bengali more obscure and unpopular. On the other hand, Hindusthani would become more popular if it is allowed to remain syncretic.

Along with this linguistic defence of Hindusthani, Beames also offers a historical reason for the use of the *foreign* words. Hindi originates from Sanskrit which, Beames reminds us, has a 'substratum of Turanian elements'[25]. Beames pointed out that fresh Turanian influences were exerted on Indian vernaculars after the Mughal invasion. In the same manner, Persian, Pushtoo and Arabic influences also became effective on the vernaculars. Turanian was a broad term of classification, now obsolete, by which the linguists generally pointed out non-Indo-European, non-Semitic and non-Hamitic languages[26] like Altaic, Uralic, Dravidian, Korean etc. Interestingly, Beames uses the idea of Sanskrit already containing Central Asian words, in order to defend the incorporation of Perso-Arabic words in Hindusthani. He also used a religious and cultural argument. He correlated the Perso-Arabic influence with the Islamic invasion, which swept across India from Punjab and 'western Hindustan' and gradually penetrated the whole country[27]:

> Whole provinces were converted to a religion whose most sacred duties can be expressed only in Arabic. Offices were created on the model of those in Cabul and Persia, systems were introduced which long flourished in Central Asia among the Mantchus and the Kirghis.

This mixture of different socio-cultural elements ultimately resulted in the development of Urdu, the camp language. Beames thought this language as one for the 'palace, the court, the camp, the market'. The genesis of this language had been hybrid[28]:

> Its father the Hindi, its mother the Arabic, it borrows freely from both its parents.

Beames's espousal of Hindusthani was evidently linked to his criticism of Bengali. Bengali, according to Beames, could not affirm its hybrid roots and hence became regressive. He further asserted that many denounce Indo-Arabic words because of their corrupted forms. However, Beames asserted that transformation of words is quite natural, and Arabic had also evolved as a language. He concluded[29]:

> [W]e have no right to compare the Arabic used in modern Hindustani with the Arabic of the classical writers, and to condemn it, if it does not agree with theirs. Still less have we any right to compare it with elaborate Arabic of the grammarians.

Beames also asserted that the Indo-Arabic words in the Hindustani vocabulary are wrongly considered to be incomprehensible. This is similar to the charge laid on *Alali* language, when it veers to an excessive use of Perso-Arabic words. For example, Arun Kumar Mukhopadhyay writes in his treatise on the evolution of Bengali prose style[30]:

> [T]he *Tekchandi* style is not an easy, colloquial style, it is the overloaded Persian style. It is difficult to ascertain whether Bengalis in 1855-60 ever talked in this dialect. *Tekchandi* style is replete with unfamiliar, Persian words. The reader has to stumble at every step.

Beames would assert that the charge of unintelligibility is ‘partly true, partly false’. Court language is the highest and most cultivated form of Hindusthani. Hence, Beames says that it is intelligible to the people ‘in exactly the same proportion as their education’. Educated people understand the language perfectly, while to the illiterate rustic it is unfamiliar. However, Beames forcefully claims, a similar variation of comprehensibility happens in ‘any language that can boast of a literature.’ The literary style (according to Beames) ‘must be’ beyond the comprehension of the masses. The language of a common villager is however not entirely devoid of Arabic words[31]:

> The ideas of the Indian rustic do not soar above the petty wants and homely occupations of his every-day life, except in a few instances. When they do, he uses Persian or Arabic words to express them. His own Hindi does not help him. A considerable number of simple Arabic and Persian words enter into the vocabulary of the peasant… Some exist side by side with the words of Sanskrit origin, and have a special sub-shade of meaning attached to them. Others stand alone, having no equivalent in the Hindi.

Beames initiates a discussion about Hindi dialects and sociolects. He says that Hindi is not a single language; it varies from one region to another. Some people wish to avoid Arabic and Persian words in order to draw from ‘the well of Hindi undefiled’. Beames rhetorically questions, which dialect of Hindi would be accepted as the Standard Dialect. He runs down a catalogue of modern Indian vernaculars (including Gujarati, Marathi, Sindhi, Dogra, Kashmiri among others) and concludes that ‘there is no such thing as a Hindi standard of speech.’ Only Urdu provides the speakers with some degree of standardisation. Beames wittily compares this with a parallel situation in his own country[32]:

> Just as in England, if we threw aside our classical English tongue with all its foreign importations, we should find ourselves in a chaos of Hampshire, Somerset, Yorkshire, Lowland Scotch and other jargons; so would be in India.

Beames ranks Hindi among the progressive languages of the world which also include English, French, Italian, Spanish, Turkish (obviously Bengali is not considered to be progressive enough). Hindi’s progressiveness lies in its ability to assimilate *foreign* words, which is best revealed in the dialect of Hindusthani. Beames states that most of the languages of the word have arisen from ‘a fusion of cognate dialects’ just as tribes have been formed by ‘kindred tribes’. Hence, there should not be any reservations about accepting words from Perso-Arabic sources in Hindustani.

Beames’s essay is a passionate espousal of Hindusthani as the standard dialect of Hindi. If the wider context is considered, Beames expresses that the Perso-Arabic element in any of the modern Indian vernaculars should not be considered as undesirable. Rather, it is this very element which empowers the vernaculars and enables them to rise above the ‘level of grihasthas and gevalas’. In the second part of essay [33], Beames tries to ascertain the qualities of Hindustani as the ‘future general language of India’. Considering the influence of Islamic culture in the Indian sub-continent, Beames states[34]:

> If Hindustani, adopted by us as the future general language of India, is to be a language and not a jargon, it must become so by means of its alliance with Persian, the speech which all Indian Mahomedans have at their heart, and use as their feeder…for all the abstract thought, their politics, science and poetry.

Beames' upholding of a syncretic form of the Indian vernacular was thus vested with a political purpose. A *general* language of India must have Persian words, as it would help in the effective amalgamation of the Islamic sections of the populace. There were individuals, however, who were opposing this view. S.W. Fallon, whom Beames rebukes as the 'vigorous partizan of the Hindi school', asserts in the preface to his *An English-Hindustani Law and Commercial Dictionary of Words and Phrases* (1858)[35] that the Urdu language should be suitably directed and Europeans themselves should perform the task. Fallon upholds the cause of purifying Hindi by suitably sanitising the Perso-Arabic corruption.

Fallon chastises the Orientalists for their misinterpretations of Persian and Arabic. He was especially critical of H. H. Wilson's *Glossary of Indian Terms* (1855). Fallon says that this is just the book one expects from a Boden Professor, full of erudition but lacking in practical knowledge and 'familial intercourse with the natives'[36]. Fallon criticised Wilson for omission of words which were generally used in everyday speech. Wilson had himself commented on the lack of philological knowledge of the Company servants, but according to Fallon, he is himself open to that very charge. Fallon goes on to say[37]:

> Among Literary quackeries, those of Orientalists may claim a prominent place. So long as Oriental scholars are few, extravagant pretensions have every chance of enjoying, undisturbed, their fictitious fame. The Boden Professor stands high as a Sanskrit scholar. But one could scarcely say he was a profound Persian or Arabic scholar.

In his “Dissertation” preceding the main section of the work, Fallon says that Hindi is the chief element of Hindusthani. It stands in same relation to Hindusthani as Saxon does to English. He further adds that Hindi is nothing but Sanskrit ‘without its harsh, redundant consonants, its many syllables, its multitudinous inflexions and its elaborate grammar’[38].

He notes, unlike Beames, the difference between the Saxon/English and Hindi/ Urdu parallel[39]:

> Urdu, like English, is a composite language. But, unlike the Saxon element in English, Hindi, the base of Urdu, has not obliged foreign terms which it admits, to bend its own genius and character, and to appear as natives of the soil. It is not composite like the English of the present day, but rather like English which preceded the age of Chaucer [.]

For Fellon, one cannot possibly equate the influences of Hindi and Persian/Arabic on Urdu/Hindusthani. ‘Hindi is the warp of the texture: Persian and Arabic are the woof’- he asserts. He goes on to criticise the ‘present style’ of Urdu as something being introduced by foreigners. He compares it with the erstwhile degenerated state of English language, corrupted by Norman French and Latin with a minimal number of Anglo-Saxon words. He states that Persian has long been upheld as the language of the Courts in India and this has caused its continual encroachment on ‘indigenous’ Hindi.[40] Neither does Fallon ignore the religious cause for the preeminence of Arabic in Persian, and even in the 'present style' of Urdu. He declares that nearly all that the native press produces are 'elaborate trifles and pompous nothings,' spawned by the religious bigotry of Muslims.[41] Fallon states that a considerable amount of good Hindi words are systematically excluded from the legal courts 'by ignorance or bad taste ,or, worse still, from corrupt design'. He further asserts that though the language in which people commonly converse has been left out of the normative discourse, it would still continue to survive[42]:

> Beaten off from the courts and public offices, native Hindi still lives in the busy mart, and in the familiarities of social and domestic life. In the pithy sayings, proverbs, and national songs of the country, dwells a spirit and an influence beside which the foreign and less familiar speech seems feeble and flat.

Beames mockingly states that Fellon's remarks are 'very eloquent' but they are based on false assumptions. Fellon seems to have forgotten all the differences in rank and education in India. He is proposing an acceptance of the 'barbarous and antiquated jargon' of the peasants as model of Hindusthani speech and as a medium of subtle argumentation and thought. Words of Sanskrit origin do exist in the language, but they are so immensely altered from the original that they have become new words. Beames further politicises his argument by saying that Indians considered themselves to be at the centre of the world and hence did not assimilate words from other languages. This has caused dearth of appropriate words for requisite ideas. Beames also pointed out the phenomenon of linguistic diversity in India[43]:

> In the present day an inhabitant of the Punjab just manages to make himself intelligible to a man of Patna by the virtue of those few words which are now common to all Indian dialects, namely those of Persian origin, and the Hindi verbs and particles which have, thanks to the Mahomedans, become familiar all over the country.

Persian and Arabic, according to Beames, have bridged the linguistic diversity of India. He also responded to Fellon's central accusation of the incomprehensibility of Perso-Arabic by stating that Arabic 'lay at the heart' of even the humble sections of Hindi-speaking Muslim people. If they are spoken to in Hindi they respond in Hindi. However, when addressed in Urdu, they immediately put in a futile, yet spirited, effort to converse in chaste Arabic and Persian[44]:

> The rustic father sends his son to school to the village pedagogue, to learn what? not Hindi, but Arabic and Persian. And then we are told that these languages do not lie near the hearts of the people! Why, I believe if the votes of the whole Mahomedan population could be taken, an overwhelming majority of them would prefer to abandon Hindustani altogether and make Persian the language of the land.

Beames, in the second part of his essay, not only points out the linguistic necessities of the Perso-Arabic element but also the socio-political inevitability of it. This is an obvious jab at Fellon, who had stated that Perso-Arabic is elitist and is not spoken by the common, rustic people. Beames would respond[45]:

> The language to quote Dr. Fallon once more, "in which men buy and sell and transact business" is *not* Hindi; it is Urdu. If *man* and *ser* and *chitank* are Hindi, *kimat* and *nirakh*, *mal*, *sauda*, and *saudagar*,

> *jins, rakm, bazaar,* and *dukan* are Persian. If *hat* is Hindi *ganj* is Persian. *Sadak, bail,* and *gad*i are Hindi, but *pul*, *sardi* and *manzil* are Persian.

Beames's efforts to delineate the importance of Perso-Arabic words in Hindustani were given a theoretical foundation in *Outlines of Indian Philology* (1867). Beames begins his pioneering discussion of the philology of Indian vernacular languages by naming the various language families of Asia. He briefly mentions the Semitic languages, but then states that it need not be discussed in this treatise, as 'no Semitic languages are spoken in India.'[46] In a footnote, however, Beames would state that the Arabic element, 'which enters so largely in the spoken dialects of INDIA', is not an exception to this rule. This is because Arabic words used in these languages are not inflected according to the conventional rules of Semitic grammar. Beames further asserted, much like Jones had done, that the 'original' inhabitants of India spoke in Turanian languages. These Turanians, according to Beames, were driven by the invading hordes of Aryan tribes. Yet, in spite of this expulsion, Turanians still held on to certain impenetrable forest and hilly tracts. Further, some of the Turanians stayed back in the Gangetic valley and retained certain characteristics of their speech with dodged *obstinacy*. Beames claims that certain idiosyncrasies of modern north-Indian vernaculars owe their origin to Turanian influence, especially the use of Hindi post-positions.[47]

Beames then etches out the four stages of development which are observable in languages.[52] It is important to note that Beames does not merely consider these stages as evolutionary stages. Rather he considers that an increased felicity of speech and expression is acquired as languages pass from one stage to the other. The primordial linguistic stage is termed as Collocational or Syntactical. Languages in this stage (Beames provides the example of Chinese) tend to be monosyllabic and the inflections are regarded as separate words which are not incorporated in the root in anyway. The next stage, the Agglutinated Stage, is detectable in languages (Beames refers to Turkish) in which the inflections have lost their meanings as separate words, but still continue to exist as independent lexical entities. The third stage is the Inflectional Stage. In this stage, the inflections are so thoroughly incorporated in the word, that it is difficult to identify them separately, except 'by patient scrutiny and elaborate analysis.' Beames groups Sanskrit, Greek and Latin as Inflectional languages. The last and most advanced stage of linguistic development is the Analytical Stage. The stage displays an increased ability to express logical and systematic thought and is epitomised by English and modern European languages. Beames delineates[49]:

> The analytical languages exhibit many of the same characteristics as the inflectional; the chief difference is that many of the forms of the latter have ceased to exist in their fullness, and their place has been supplied either by pre- or post-positions or by combinations of words, technically called 'auxillaries.'

In the Indian context, Beames groups three of the Turanian sub-branches (Thaic, Himalayic and Lohitic) as belonging to the Syntactical Stage while two other sub-branches (Kol, Dravidian) are categorised as belonging to the Agglutinated stage. Most of the modern Indo-European languages in India (including Bengali) are labelled as Inflectional. Hindi is sometimes conceived as a language, but mostly as a conglomeration of dialects. Among them, Hindustani (‘Arabicized Hindi’) is termed as an Analytical language[50]:

> In a general way it may be stated that the most inflectional are Bengali, Assamese, Oriya and Guzeratti; and the least so, Hindi and Mahratti, while Arabicized Hindi or Urdu is almost as analytical a language as English itself.

Beames seems to have considered this as a continuum stretching between the Inflectional and Analytical polarities. Bengali lies closest to the Inflectional pole, while Hindustani lies closest to the Analytical pole (He would later reformulate these polarities as ‘early’ and ‘late’ inflectional). He directly compares Hindi to Bengali. When he does so, he conceives of Hindi as Hindusthani[51]:

> The quasi-Sanskrit case-endings and verbal forms are found in greater frequency in Bengali than in Hindi; and Bengali is therefore less advanced than Hindi; the latter being in any respects an analytical, the former almost purely inflectional; … tahar is inflectional; uska is analytical, dekhilam is inflectional, dekha tha analytical.

It is interesting to note that Beames had stated earlier that the post-positions which characterised Indian vernaculars were remnants of Turanian languages. Yet, it is these post-positions which are now conceived as rendering analytical characteristics to Hindi/ Hindusthani. He also indicates that the reduced use of verbal nouns and compound verbs are characteristic traits of analytical languages. These preferences would perhaps indicate why Beames considered the *Alali* language to be the epitome of Bengali literary expression.

Native commentators would react in different ways to Beames's assertions. Shyamacharan Ganguli, in his 1877 essay in the *Calcutta Review*, would criticise the artificial form of *written* Bengali and would vociferously support the use of *spoken* Bengali as the medium of normative, literary discourse. However, Shyamacharan's spoken Bengali was not necessarily colloquial Bengali. He recognised that spoken and written registers could never be completely identical, as writing is a 'higher instrument'. He championed the cause of the 'metropolitan dialect' as an ideal medium for prose[52]:

> The grammar of written Bengali differs considerably from the grammar of current Bengali. For familiar words, understood by all, everyone who learns to read has to learn Sanskrit substitutes, and in many cases old Bengali substitutes likewise, which, having dropped out of colloquial speech, still retain their place in the language of books.

Ramgati Nyayaratna, in his *Bāṅgālā bhāṣā o bāṅgālā sāhitya viṣayak prastāv* (1873), would uphold that Bengali should maintain the purity of its sanskritised register by avoiding the persianised, anglicised and other polyglossic forms of diction. Nyayaratna criticised the language of *Ālāler gharer dulāl* and *Hutom pNyācār naksa*, claiming that it was unfit to be a medium for all kinds of literary expressions. Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, in his essay "Bāṅgālā bhāṣā" (1877) in the *Baṅgadarśan*, sums up these two contrasting views and upholds his own ideas about the standard literary prose.

Bankimchandra praises *Alali* language, as a revolutionary change that had transformed the drab, sanskritised Bengali prose of its predecessors[53]:

> Tekchand Thakur first struck at the roots of this poison tree. He was well versed in English; he had been familiar with and had comprehended the colloquial written style of English. He thought, "Why should not Bengali prose be also written in colloquial speech?" He had written *Ālāler gharer dulāl* in the language in which everyone converses. From that day, Bengali language became enriched.

Bankimchandra also criticised sanskritised Bengali as pretentious, especially because it violated the ideals 'simplicity' and 'clarity'. He also considered that the opinions expressed by Shyamacharan in his essay were mostly sensible. Yet, Bankimchandra's appropriation of the polyglossic paradigm is conditioned by occasion and purpose of the specific literary *performance*. Bankimchandra concedes that the *Alali* language is perhaps not suitable for public reading (except with one's wife or friends). It is also not suitable for school textbooks. He points out that the *Alali* language cannot possibly be a medium for 'serious and elevated or thoughtful subjects.'[54] Further, he distinguishes *Hutomi* language from *Alali* language. He disapproves of Hutom's colloquialism as lacking in vigour and restraint. He considers it to be obscene and quips, 'Books should not be written in *Hutomi* prose.' He voiced out a *performative* aestheticism, focusing on the utility of prose as an effective device for education and inspiration[55]:

> First, you must consider which language would convey with utmost clarity what you want to say. If *Tekchandi* or *Hutomi* language proves to be the most effective in that respect, then you should use them. If the sanskritised speech, exemplified by Vidyasagar and Bhudevbabu [Bhudev

> Mukhopadhyay], seems to be more expressive and beautiful— then leave aside colloquial speech and resort to that language. If that does not suffice, elevate [your style] even further.

Hence, aptness of the Refined (*sādhu*) and the Other discourse (Bankimchandra uses the phrase 'apar bhāṣā' for colloquial speech) depends upon the literary discretion of the writer. This was also perhaps inherent in the *Alali* construct. Each edition of the *Māsik patrikā* used to bear the following words as an inscribed declaration of editorial policy[56]:

> This newspaper has been printed for the commoners, especially for women. All the compositions would be written in the language in which we generally converse. If the learned pundits want to read it, they can, but this newspaper has not been written for them.

Pyarichand had written many of his other compositions, like *Jatkiñcit* (1871) and *Abhedī* (1871) in Refined speech. Bankimchandra further censures Shyamacharan for being rigid about not using any words derived from Sanskrit. He says that dogmatic adherence to such a rule would not facilitate expression. If words derived from Sanskrit (either *tatsama* or *tadbhava*) are popular and familiar, there should not be any reason for not using them in vernacular prose. Bankimchandra hence differs considerably from Beames and Shyamacharan in his delineation of what should be the ideal form of Bengali prose.

Beames's *A Comparative Grammar of Modern Aryan Languages of India* (published in three volumes in 1872, 1875 and 1879) is justly considered as his *magnum opus*. In the book, he traced the development of modern Indian vernaculars and laid down the basic principles of comparative philology. He acknowledged 'spoken Sanskrit' to have been the ‘fountain’ from which all Indian languages have originated. Yet, Paninian Sanskrit had fossilised itself. Local dialects continued their stages of development (they can be, according to Beames, traced back to *spoken* Sanskrit) and had eventually achieved the characteristics of their present forms. Hence, the so-called dependence of the languages on Paninian Sanskrit is not, according to Beames, a simplistic tracing back of its roots. The earliest forms existed in Sanskrit because it had intentionally fossilised itself. The vernacular forms, some of whom are perhaps older than Sanskrit, went on evolving. Hence, any trace of the earliest remnant of a particular noun or verb is traced back to Sanskrit.[57] Beames also considered the dramatic Prakrits to be exaggerations of the *lingua franca* spoken in ancient cities of India[58]:

> A Bengali Zamindar employs men from the Panjab and Hindustan as guards and doorkeepers; his palanquin-bearers come from Orissa, his coachmen and water-carriers from Nothern Bengal, and so on. Similarly an ancient Indian king drew…his soldiers from one province, his porters and attendants from another, his dancers and buffoons from a third. These all when assembled at the capital would doubtless strike a common language[.]

Beames asserts that each of these people would speak the common language with their distinct accents, resulting in the various urban dialects and registers. What is revealing is the fact that when Beames chooses a parallel for such a *lingua franca*, he mentions Urdu and not Bengali (even though his *zamindar* is Bengali). It is Bengali accent, in his illustrative parallel that ‘corrupts it [i.e. Urdu] by an admixture of words and forms.’

Beames further compares the relative merits of Hindi/Hindusthani and Bengali. He confesses that in India there is a sense of rivalry between Hindi, Marathi and Bengali, 'each considering itself superior to the others'[59]. He describes the 'resuscitation of Sanskrit words' in Bengali, often replacing popular *tadbhava*s. He initiates a socio-cultural justification for the 'poverty' of Bengali. Bengal, he reminds us, was always at the fringe of the pan-Indian brahminical culture. Hence, words which were used in the heart of the Aryan settlement had very little use in Bengal. This obfuscated growth in Bengal, while in the heartland Sanskrit words, which remained alive in common speech, went through inevitable transformation and simplification. Beames's criticism of Bengali hence has a cultural connotation which must not be overlooked[60]:

> Although in the present day Bengal surpasses all the cognate languages in literary activity, yet, the fact of its comparative rudeness until very recent times admits of no doubt. Even within the memory of Bengali gentlemen now living there was no accepted standard of the language, the dialects were so numerous and so varied. Since, the vernacular literature has received such an immense development, the high-flown or semi-Sanskrit style has become the model for literary composition.

Beames hits at the central idea of Bengali cultural supremacy. He points out that British had landed up in Bengal, forced by circumstances. The colonial empire was established, ironically, at the periphery of the Indian cultural scene. The early Orientalists did not have any idea about all this, and wrongly propagated a simplified idea about Bengali's indebtedness to Sanskrit[61]:

> The discovery of the existence of the Sanskrit language… excited the imagination of the few learned men who at that time resided in Bengal, and they readily gave credence to the assertion that this glorious and perfect language, which they had recently found to be the sister, if not the mother of Greek and Latin, was also the mother of Bengali [.]

The Orientalist discourse has inscribed a full-circle. Beames accuses ‘Carey, Yates and their brethren’ of stifling the development of Bengali prose, puzzling students with all the mysteries of *sandhi*. He mocks the standardised written Bengali (and Oriya as well) of being ‘overgrown children’ of Sanskrit. They frequently return to suck their mother’s breast, when they ought to be self-dependant. It is interesting that Beames classifies modern Bengali writers into two classes, the Sanskritists and the Anglicists. His classification can be compared with that of Haraprasad Shastri, who would classify Bengali prose (in his 1881 essay in *Baṅgadarśan*) into sanskritised Bengali, persianate Bengali and Anglicised Bengali. Shastri says that the Bengali prose writers simply imitate these various literary styles, without endeavouring to exploit the resources of Bengali language. Shastri, like Beames, blames the early Orientalists/ translators for this deplorable state of contemporary Bengali prose.[62] Shastri hints at a pre-colonial ideal, a decidedly syncretic style, which was unaffected by these aberrations. Beames, interestingly emphasises on the lack of such a tradition. However, he hopes at that ‘Tekchand Thakur and his light-armed troops’ would eventually improve Bengali prose by adopting words from local, colloquial dialects and by adopting a standard universal system of spelling. Perhaps these troops were also conceived to be the crafters of Beames’ proposed Bengali dictionary, which would be so authoritative that words not found in it would be avoided by the writers.[63] Beames' *Grammar of the Bengali Language: Literary and Colloquial* (1891) was a step in that direction.[64]

Beames would also enter into an interesting debate about Oriya and its relationship with Bengali with several leading Bengali academics. The debate would be initiated by Beames's notes on the history of Orissa, presented before the Asiatic Society in March, 1883. Beames confesses that the facts collected had been compiled about a decade ago, when he had been a Collector in the district of Balasore (1869-1873).[65] Beames, in the article claimed a distinct identity for Oriya as a language, which was considered as a dialect by most Bengali academicians. Bengali academicians protested against the adoption of Oriya as a medium of instruction in Odisha, claiming that this would make it difficult for the students to learn English and Bengali. They claimed that not learning these languages would thwart the students from being acquainted with valuable literature and would prevent their improvement. Beames claimed that Oriya is a more archaic form of Magadhi Prakrit and had acquired a standardised form earlier than Bengali. He states[66]:

> That they [i.e.Oriya people] are not an offshoot of the Bengalis is proved by the fact that their language was already formed as we now have it, at a period when Bengali had not yet attained a separate existence, and when the deltaic portion of Bengal was still almost uninhabited. So that in fact they could not have sprung from the Bengalis, simply because therre were no Bengalis to spring from.

Beames asserted that Odisha has been not been colonised from Bengal, but from Bihar. He posited that Bengal and Bihar had been separated by a impregnable forest till the fifteenth century. Rajendralal Mitra responded to Beames's paper. He stated that Beames' Notes have been superseded by later work (Hunter, Blochmann and Toynbee's descriptions)[67]:

> Coming to a history of Orissa after reading these works [i.e. Hunter, Blochmann and Toynbee's writings], one naturally expects something new, or some information as to what is taken from these authors and what is original discovery. But Mr. Beames supplies no such information, and systematically avoids all reference to his predecessors, making no distinction between what he has taken from old records, and what is based on mere local tradition of the present day.

He also argued about the period of colonisation and settlement in Odisha. Rajendralal criticised Beames for wrongly assuming that the history of Balasore was the history of the entire realm of Odisha. He also endeavoured to prove, alluding to accounts of Fa Hien and Hiuen Tsang, that Odisha was approachable from Bengal much before the fifteenth century. Rajendralal's line of argument is tersely summarised in the Proceedings[68]:

> The fact is, Dr. Mitra thought, that Mr. Beames, having started the theory of the Uriyas having had no intercourse with the Bengalis, has been obliged to create this forest barrier to prove that there could have been no former intercourse. The philological arguments to which he had incidentally referred were not tenable.

Beames replied to Rajendralal's riposte and restated his assertions.[70] He also expressed that his recent studies in Midnapore have reaffirmed his former convictions that 'Orissa was colonized from Behar and not from Bengal, and that Ooriya is more archaic form of Magadhi Prakrit than Bengali.'[69]

These were not merely philological issues. The development of Oriya and Bengali nationalisms, with the canonisation of literature, led to a schismatic definition of linguistic identities. This would eventually lead to the formation of a separate province of Bihar and Bengal in 1912, which the Bengali nationalists vociferously protested against. On the other hand, Utkal Sammilani (found in 1903) spearheaded the reification of Oriya identity.[70] When M.M. Chakravarti would publish his essays on Oriya literature in the *Journal* in 1897-98, the cultural-linguistic identities of these contiguous provinces had already been demarcated. Thus, Chakravarti would accede that Oriya is a direct offshoot of Magadhi and only 'a sister of Bengali and Eastern Hindi'[71]. He accepts that Bengali had wielded some influence on Oriya, but this has been a comparatively recent influence[72]:

> Since the Musulman Conquest a brisk trade and a frequent intercourse had been going on bentween Bengal and Balasore; and many Bengalis settled or came to reside in the District Under the English rule this intercourse has grown more intimate and the greater facility of communication continues to attract a number of Balasore people to Midnapore and Calcutta. Furthermore the literary activity of the Bengali race and the gradually increasing number of good Bengali books are doing their effects on a less literary race.

Beames, in his essays and books, criticises the constructions of Sanskritised and Refined forms of Bengali prose. His espousal of a syncretic indigenous Bengali prose dialectically interacted with the *fin de siècle* constructions of Indian (and Bengali) nationalities. The foundation of The Bengal Academy of Literature in 1893 (later renamed as Bangiya

Sahitya Parishat) was one of the important results of this interaction. As identities would crystallise, the differences in languages and cultural forms would also be emphasised. Beames' overgrown children were all set to slouch towards the fateful tryst with destiny, on a certain August midnight.

Notes

1. Rammohan Roy to Lord Amherst, Kolkata, 11 December, 1823, in *Rāmmohan racanāvalī*, eds. Ajitkumar Ghosh *et al* (Kolkata: Haraf, 1973), 434.

2. Ibid., 435.

3. Ibid., 436.

4. Chandicharan Bandyopadhyay, *Vidyāsāgar*, rev. ed. (1895; Kolkata: Dey Book Store, 1997), 154-155.

5. Arunkumar Mukhopadhyay, *Bāṅglā gadyarītir itihās*, rev. ed. (Kolkata:Dey's, 2000), 89.

6. Cited in *Sāmayik patre bāṅglār samājcitra*, vol.1, ed. Binoy Ghosh (Calcutta: Viksan, 1963), 294-95.

7. Biharilal Sarkar, *Vidyāsāgar*, rev. ed. (1895; Kolkata: Oriental Book Company, 1991), 72-76.

8. Asit Kumar Bandopadhyay, introduction to *Vidyāsāgar racanāvalī*, vol.1, ed. Debkumar Basu (Kolkata: Mondol Book House, 1966), 28-29.

9. Srikumar Acharya, *The Changing Pattern of Education in Early Nineteenth Century Bengal*(Calcutta: Punthi-Pustak, 1992), 48-49.

10. See Asit Kumar Bandopadhyay, introduction to *Vidyāsāgar racanāvalī*, vol.1, 22.

11. Rabindranath Tagore, *Vidyāsāgar-carit*, rev. ed. (1909; Kolkata: Vishwabharati, 1993), 8.

12. Roy to Amherst, *Rāmmohan racanāvalī*, 7.

13. Vidyasagar, *Vidyāsāgar racanāvalī*, vol.1, 45.

14. For the use of the term, see Christopher Alan Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780- 1870* (New Delhi: OUP, 1997), 257-267.

15. Lynn Zastoupil and Martin Moir, eds., *The Great Indian Education Debate* (London: Routledge, 1999), 62.

16. Sukumar Sen, *Bāṅgālā sāhitye gadya* (Kolkata: Ranjan Prakashanalaya, 1934), 58-59.

17. This and subsequent examples of Pyarichand's prose have been taken from *Bāṅgālā sāhitye gadya*, 60-61.

18. John Beames, *A Comparative Grammar of the Modern Aryan Languages of India* (1872-79; repr., Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1966), 86-87.

19. See Kate Flint, ed., *The Victorian Novelist: Social Problems and Social Change* (London: Routledge, 1987), 135; Rev. Thomas Beames had written the first analytical study of London's slums – *The Rookeries of London* (1850).

20. Originally published as "Outlines of a Plea for Arabic Element in Official Hindustani," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 35, no.1(1866): 1-13. The version that is referred here is John Beames, "Outlines of a Plea for Arabic Element in Official Hindustani," in *Outlines of Indian Philology and Other Philological Papers* (1867; repr., Kolkata: Indian Studies, 1960), 45-53.

21. Ibid., 45.

22. Ibid., 46.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid., 47.

25. Ibid., 48.

26. Abel Hovelacque, *The Science of Language: Linguistics, Philology, Etymology*, trans. Augustus Henry Keane (London: Chapman and Hall, 1877), 144.

27. Beames, “Arabic Element in Official Hindustani,” 48.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid., 50.

30. Mukhopadhyay, *Bāṅglā gadyarītir itihās*, 128.

31. Beames, “Arabic Element in Official Hindustani,” 51.

32. Ibid., 53.

33. Originally published as “On the Arabic Element in Official Hindustani. No.2,” *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 36, no.1(1867): 54-60. The version that is referred here is John Beames, “On the Arabic Element in Official Hindustani. No.2,” in *Outlines of Indian Philology and Other Philological Papers* (1867; repr., Kolkata: Indian Studies, 1960), 54-60.

34. Beames, “On the Arabic Element in Official Hindustani. No.2,” 54.

35. S.W. Fallon, *An English-Hindustani Law and Commercial Dictionary of Words and Phrases* (Kolkata: Thacker & Spink, 1858).

36. Fallon, preface to *An English-Hindustani Law and Commercial Dictionary*, iv.

37. Ibid.,vi.

38. Fallon, “Dissertation”, *An English-Hindustani Law and Commercial Dictionary,* xi.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid., xii.

41. Ibid., xiii.

42. Ibid., xiv.

43. Beames, “On the Arabic Element in Official Hindustani. No.2,” 56.

44. Ibid., 58.

45. Ibid., 58-59.

46. John Beames, *Outlines of Indian Philology and Other Philological Papers* (1867; Kolkata: Indian Studies, 1960), 13.

47. Ibid., 17.

48. Ibid., 22-25.

49. Ibid., 29.

50. Ibid., 26.

51. Ibid.

52. Shyamacharan Ganguli, “Bengali, Spoken and Written,” *Calcutta Review* 65, no.2 (1877), 395.

53. Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, “Bangala bhasha,” in *Bankimchandrer sahitya granthavali* (Kolkata: Basumati, n.d.), 281.

54. Ibid., 285.

55. Ibid.

56. Cited in Mukhopadhyay, *Bāṅglā gadyarītir itihās*, 129.

57. Beames, *Outlines of Indian Philology,* 5.

58. Ibid., 7.

59. Ibid., 31.

60. Ibid., 36.

61. Ibid., 37.

62. Haraprasad Shastri, “Bāṅglā Bhāṣā,” in Satyajit Chaudhuri *et al*, eds., *Haraprasād Śastri racanā samagra*, vol.2 (Kolkata: Paschimbanga Rajya Pustak Parshad, 1981), 561.

63. Swapan Chakravorty, “Purity and Print: A Note on Nineteenth-Century Bengali Prose,” in *Print Areas: Book History in India,* ed. Swapan Chakravorty and Abhijit Gupta (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004), 213.

64. John Beames, *Grammar of the Bengali Language: Literary and Colloquial* (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1891).

65. John Beames, “Notes on the History of Orissa under the Mahomeddan, Maratha and English Rule,” *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 52, no.1(1883): 231.

66. Ibid.

67. *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society* (1883):69.

68. Ibid.,71.

69. Ibid.,142.

70. Joy K. Samal and Pradip Kumar Nayak, *Makers of Modern Orissa* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1996), 48.

71. M.M. Chakravarti, “ Notes on the Language and Literature of Orissa,” *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 66, no.1(1897):318.

72. Ibid., 325.

Grierson's 'epic song': Meaning and Subversion at the Margins of Identity

'Rangpur is and always has been a border country,' writes George Abraham Grierson in an article on the lect of Rangpur, published in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society* in 1877.[1] Grierson, an Anglo-Irish Dubliner of the second half of the twentieth century and the son of the Printer to the King, evidently knew his bit about being in a border country. Grierson's schooling was immaculately English; he studied at St.Bees, West Cumbria and later at Shrewsbury School, Shropshire, under the tutelage of eminent classicists like Benjamin Hall Kennedy and Henry Whitehead Moss. The young Grierson, surprisingly for a great future philologist, was rather interested in mathematics. He landed up eventually to study mathematics at Trinity College, Dublin, where he came under the influence of another Anglo-Irishman, Robert Atkinson. Atkinson held the Chair of Sanskrit and Comparative Philology and fuelled Grierson's interest in Sanskrit, modern Indian vernaculars and *jujutsu*.[2] Grierson won the University Prize for Hindusthani in 1873, just before he left to join the Indian civil service. Atkinson propounded to him a 'life-task', a mission of mapping the languages of the subcontinent.[3] The study of the Rangpur dialect was Grierson's first step in that direction. As a District Collector in a comparatively remote part of Bengal (and going through the 'usual experience of transference from station to station'), [4] it was quite natural on Grierson's part to be desirous of connecting with the epicentre of Oriental studies in Kolkata. He joined the Society on 15th November, 1876.[5] Grierson's paper, like much of his later work, would be influential in determining the boundaries of liminality in language and identity.

Grierson did not merely intend to define a language; he also introduced certain important ideas about the ethnographic identity of the people of Rangpur. He described it as being surrounded by the ‘Koch State and the Bhutan Dvars on the north, the wild tribes of Asam [sic] on the east, the advancing tide of Aryan civilization, and subsequent Muhammadan conquest pressing on from the west, and, worst of all, the hated Vangala from the south’[6]. He recognised that such disparate assemblage of civilisational elements left ‘deep traces of storm and turmoil’ on the inner lives of Rangpuri people. It is important for us to notice the various strands of ethnographic traces that Grierson found in Rangpur. He asserted that the district was a part of the ‘Krauncha or Koch Bihar kingdom’ and the people recognised themselves as descending from the Ksatriyas who had escaped the genocidal ire of Parasurama. While ignoring the details of the mythic narrative, Grierson could decipher that the region had witnessed early Aryan immigration. He could discern the presence of ‘aboriginal inhabitants’, who had been spared from proselytisation by the Hindus (whom Grierson pointed out as ‘the least missionary religion in the world’)[7]:

> The wild savages were allowed to retain their demon worship, their “Hudum Deo”, and their rites of almost Tantrik obscenity, and were formed into a caste of Dasas with their own customs (flesh-easting, widow marriage, polygamy, and even polyandry), their own gods and their own language. In process of time, other and even lower castes were formed, Chandalas and Bhumi-malis for instance, and the Dasas taking up the name of their former Raja-putra masters, called themselves, or were called by their humbler brethren, Raja-vamsyas. Such is the story of the Rajbamsi caste, which now includes within its bond sixty per cent of the Hindus of Rangpur.

Grierson hesitates to fix dates for such a ‘legendary history’. He, however, mentions that the earliest king whose reference he has found in the local songs is Manikchandra, a pre-Muhammadan ruler. As a proof, he refers to Damant’s paper in *JASB* 43(1874), which had discussed about the Persian manuscript of *Risālat-us-śuhadā*, written by Pir Muhammad Shattari (c.1633). The manuscript narrates the life and martyrdom of Shah Ismail Ghazi, an Arabic saint-warrior who had come to Bengal during the reign of Sultan Ruknuddin Barbak Shah (1459-1474) and had led his army in successful expeditions against the Odishan and Kamarupa kingdoms. According to *Risālat*, Bhandsi Rai, the Hindu Governor of Ghoraghat, became envious of Ismail’s achievements. He falsely reported to the Sultan that Ismail had conspired with the ruler of Kamarupa to set up an independent kingdom. Ismail was beheaded; his head is said to have been buried at Kantaduar at Rangpur while his body was buried at Mandaran in the Hughli district.[8] There are atleast six shrines dedicated to the memory of Ismail Ghazi; one each at Mandaran and Ghoraghat and four at Pirganj in Rangpur, of which the one at Kantaduar is the most prominent.[9] Damant collected the manuscript of *Risālat* from a fakir at Kanta Duar, who told him that it was in the ‘possession of his family for many generations, but he was unable to read it and was quite ignorant of its contents.’[10] Grierson confides that he has collected an ‘epic poem,’ *Manik-Chandra-Rajar-gan*, and it does not bear any trace of Ghazi’s invasion. Thus, he must have been a ruler of the ‘good old days’, ‘when saints were many, and sins were few.’ This, according to Grierson, places him decidedly before the Islamic invasion.

Grierson considers the invasion as a watershed mark in shaping the multi-ethnic identity of the people of Rangpur. He states[11]:

> This invasion was another important factor in forming character and language of the people. Rangpur was for years the battle-ground between the Krauncha Hindus, and the invading Yavans from the west. We have traces of this existing in the topographical nomenclature of the present day: there are Maghal Bacha where a Hindu General escaped from the enemy, and Maghal hat, where one of the numerous treaties of peace was signed, and several other similar names throughout the country. But perhaps the most pregnant sign of the magnitude of the forces which were insensibly moulding the condition of Rangpur for future centuries is the existence to the present day of a vast dyke extending right across the district from east to west.

He considers this dyke as being initially built to prevent the Islamic invasion. When it was toppled, another was built further north. South of it were 'bearded strangers, bringing a new language and a new religion, and armed with all the hatred for the Kafirs which a strange language and a strange religion can give.'

Grierson establishes two distinct typologies for people belonging to the either side of the dyke. The tribes south of the dyke consist primarily of moderately wealthy Muslims, 'descendants of the followers of Ismail Ghazi and his compatriots', as well savage *raiyat*s whose fetishist practices are 'worthy of the pen of a Burton or Cameron'. They extract money from strangers and run away from law by hiding in jungles. Grierson points out the difficulties that European officials had to face with the villagers of this area. He confides that he himself had ventured to their villages and could hardly get anyone 'brave enough' to talk to him. This area is, unsurprisingly, also rich in 'aboriginal folk lore' – mostly worshippers of tribal deities like Hudum Deo and Burhi Deo. He describes the orgiastic worship of Hudum Deo by women, who set up a plaintain tree at a crossroad, 'and dance naked round it singing songs of the most horrible obscenity.' In contrast, the people belonging to the region lying in the north of the dyke reflect a culture of freedom and Hindu pride. Grierson confesses that they hardly follow any customs of the Indians who are nearer to ‘the source of Aryan civilization in India, situated so far to the west,’ but the majority of the population is Hindu, ‘at least in name.’ Grierson establishes the critical typological difference[12]:

> Although degraded, the people are not so degraded as their brethren of the south… [O]ne thing has been ineradicably stamped in their character, they know that their ancestors fought for their religion, whatever it is, and were able to retain it. There has thus been begotten amongst them a sort of local patriotism, which, if it has occasionally been a bar in the way of attempts made to help their progress, has at the same time had an effect which cannot have been otherwise than invigorating.

Moreover, this ‘invigorating’ patriotism, though sometimes parochial, has a convenient effect. The people of the North ‘see that under the English Raj there is a reign of law which is same for the poor man and the rich.’ Unlike their brethren of the south, they are amenable to the benevolent tyranny of the British Raj.

Significantly for Grierson, this difference between the residents of the northern and southern parts of Rangpur, is reflected in their literature. The songs of northern parts are reminescent of *Mahābhārata* and the *Purāṇas*. Some of them are ‘really ambitious productions…which might please even a fastitioud taste.’ He then describes the ‘epic song’ which he had collected – one of considerable length, about seven hundred and fifty verses, handed down orally in a ‘family of *Yogins*,’ who earn their living by performing it. He has taken down a copy from the *yogi*s as they recited it and hopes ‘at some future date to be able to give a full account of it’(he fulfils his promise in the next installment of the *Journal*). In contrast, the songs belonging to the southern parts are short erotic lyrics ‘of which the less said the better,’ or obscene hymns sung in the honour of Hudum Deo or at the Kartika puja. According to Grierson, these songs lack wit and ‘poetic feeling’ and might disgust even the ‘most unimpassioned and impartial investigator’. After this, Grierson charts out a short description of the phonological and morphological characteristics of the Rangpur lect. He appends three specimens of the oral literature that he had collected in Rangpur, in Devanagari alphabet, in order to make it ‘accessible to a wider number of readers’. The first specimen is “Gorakh nāther gān” – a song filled with *hathayogic* allusions which Grierson mistakes for ‘nonsense verse, not unlike some of our nursery rhymes at home’[13]. The second specimen is an ode to Sonaray, the tiger-god, while the third one, ‘Kiṣter janmāṣṭhamī’, describes the birth of Krishna.

It is interesting to trace the ideological underpinnings in Grierson’s depiction of the multi-ethnic, multi-lingual situation at Rangpur. At present, Rangpur is a district in northern Bangladesh, bound on the north by Nilphamari District, on the south by Gaibandha, on the east by Kurigram and on the west by Dinajpur district. Grierson is however, referring to what is presently called the Rangpur Division – comprising of the entire northern stretch of present Bangladesh and bound by West Bengal in West and South; by Assam in North-east; by Meghalaya in the West; and by Rajshahi and Dhaka Divisions in the South. Rangpur was a part of the Kamarupa Kingdom (c.350-1140 AD), ruled by several successive dynasties – the Narakas, the Palas and the Khens. This is the kingdom whose reference Grierson discovered in the *pauranic* text and the *Mahābhārata*. At its height, it extended over the entire Brahmaputra valley (bound by Sadiya in the east), North Bengal (the western boundary being the river Karatoya), Bhutan and northern parts of present Bangladesh (to the border of modern districts of Dhaka and

Mymensingh).[14] Nilambar, the last ruler of the Khen dynasty, was defeated by Allauddin Hussain Shah of Gaur(1494-1519) in 1498. The *bara bhuiyan*s wrested the territory from Hussainshahi control and Bisu, an obscure tribal chieftain (later rechristened as Viswasingha), made an efficient use of the power vacuum to unite the Koch, Bodo, Garo and other tribal groups of the region to sculpt out the Kamta kingdom in about 1515. The Kamta kingdom consisted of western parts of the erstwhile Kamarupa, while the Kacharis, Sutiyas and Ahoms established their control over the eastern half. According to Nagendra Nath Acharyya, Bisu 'made himself the master of a dominion extending as far as the Karatoya in the west and the Barnadi in the east. He made a magnificient city in Kochbehar as his capital.'[15] Bisu's kingdom was further extended during his son Naranarayan's reign (1526-1584), spurred by successive victories of Shukladwaj (Naranarayan's brother) against the Ahoms, Kacharis and the rulers of Jayantia, Tippera and Sylhet.[16]

After Naranarayan, however, the kingdom divided into two parts – ruled by the families of Koch Bihar (the western part, from river Karatoya to river Sankosh/ Gadadhar) and Koch Hajo (from the river Sankosh to river Bhareli/Kameng). The Koch Hajo faction, under Raghudevnarayan, tried to resist the Mughal aggression. He allied with Isa Khan, one of the *bara bhuiyan*s, and dealt temporary setbacks to the advancing Mughal troops. Durjan Singh, son of Man Singh (the subahdar of Bengal), was killed.[17] Raghudevnarayan even attacked Koch Bihar, then under the control of his cousin Lakshminarayan, who was compelled to make negotiations with the Mughals. Man Singh married Lakshminarayan's sister, Padmeshvari, and transformed Koch Bihar into a vassal state of the Mughals.[18] Parikshit, Raghudevnarayan's son, was eventually defeated by

Islam Khan I in 1612.[19] Rangpur, which belonged to the Koch Bihar faction, saw a gradual increase in Mughal dominance. Three of its *chakla*s—Fatehpur, Kazirhat and Kakina— were conquered in 1687 during the rule of Mahendranarayan (regnum 1682-1693) by Aurangzeb's general, Ebadat Khan[20] The *chakla*s of Boda, Patgram and Purubhag were nominally ceded to the Mughals in 1711, but continued to be held by Shantanarayan, a cousin of Rupanarayan(regnum 1693-1715), the ruler of Koch Bihar. As Hunter states, 'The fact that, although Mughals forced the cession, they never wrested the chaklas out of the hands of the Kuch Bihar Raja, accounts for the irregular nature of the boundary that exists between them and Kuch Bihar proper.'[21] The 'Kuch Bihar proper' is the portion that the Koch rulers held onto, comprising of the modern Koch Bihar district of West Bengal.

The British took control of Rangpur as it acquired the Nawabi of Subah Bangla from the Mughals in 1765. The British included the Mughal *chakla* of Baharbandh (consisting of the parganas of Baharbandh, Goalbari and a portion of Bhitarbandh) in the newly constituted Rangpur district in 1772. Baharbandh had been previously conquered by the Mughals from the Koch Hajo. The British collection of revenue was hindered by peasant uprising in the district, commonly termed as the Sannyasi-Fakir rebellion. The rebellion was spurred by the Famine of 1770 and lasted for about thirty eight years.[23] The settlement of tax collection rights in the area was disrupted by ambivalence about the rank of the feudal chiefs and the proper delineation of the border. As Glazier, the officiating Collector who preceded Grierson at Rangpur, notes in his report:

> In considering the position of the zamindars prior to the Permanent Settlement, it must be borne in mind that the term *zamindar* is a very wide one, including different classes of owners, the origin of whose rights is vaious. Thus in Rangpur we have… semi-feudatory estates like Baikunthpur, and *chakla*s of Boda, Patgram, and Purubbhag, held by the Raja of Kuch Behar; the sub-feudatory estates, or the rest of Kuchwara, held by the descendants of the Kuch Behar officers, who had a century before been inducted by the Mughuls as *zamindar*s; the new purchasers, such as the Baharband and Swaruppur *zamindar*s, who could pretend to no rights beyond the limitations might have chosen to enter into their deeds of possession; the large *zamindar*s, owners of what had been principalities, like Idrakpur and Dinajpur; and lastly, the smaller *zamindar*s, who were generally holders of taluks which had been separated from larger estates.

The 'vague and undefined' rights of ownership of the land were an important source of ambivalence – reaffirming the blurred overlapping domains of ethnicity and religion. Grierson's delineation of this dichotomy as a simplistic conflict between conquering Muslims and Rajbanshi Hindus was simplistic, but it would have a decided influence on the ossification of identities in the future. Moreover, Grierson's description of the Rangpuri lect would also shape the contours of Bengali linguistics and philology. Both these would contribute to the Bengali prose traditions, often empowering contesting ideations of language, religion and identity.

Grierson notes certain phonological features of the Rangpuri lect. The elision of the initial rhotic consonant (alveolar approximant); the lengthening of the subsequent vowel (Grierson uses the term 'vriddhied'); the interchangeability of the lateral approximant (l) and the dental nasal (n) – especially in the initial and terminal positions; the aspiration (and vice versa) of corresponding phonemes in the Standard dialect; elision of medial surds; the frequent omission of 'i', resulting in the formation of conjuncts (bNādhite >

bNādhte); the change of the voiceless aspirated palatal(ch) into a dental sibilant (āche > āse); the pronunciation of the dental sibilant as a retroflex (s > ṣ); the transformation of the voiced palatal stop (j) into a voiced alveo-palatal sibilant (z) – are all meticulously noted. What Grierson does not point out is that many of the above-mentioned traits are encountered in other Bengali lects as well and all of them cannot be accepted as diagnostic markers of language change (the only observation he makes in this direction is when he concedes that the following transformations are also encountered in standard Bengali – y >j and v > b).[25] His discussion about conjuncts represents further confusion as he confesses, 'I know of no rule under which these can be brought. They are made and decomposed ad libitum.'[26] Grierson refers to relevant sutras in Vararuchi's *Prākṛit prakāśa* and Hemachandra's *Śabdānuśāsana* and considers the 'exception[s]' in the Rangpuri lect. That he uses texts dealing with dramatic Prakrits to outline the contours of a New Indo-Aryan language (and then notes that the lect often deviates from the norm) is reflective of an overarching attitude of the Orientalist philologists.

Grierson then lists the morphological declensions of nouns and pronouns. He does not comment upon the distinctive declensions of the Objective, Dative or Locative but merely notes the terminations. The use of postpositional suffixes is also noted in Instrumental, Ablative, Genitive and Locative. Grierson comments about the use of 'hāmi' to denote first person singular. He considers this as a 'missing link' between the Hindi 'ham' and Bengali 'āmi.' These are plural honorific forms, which eventually have morphed into singulars due to repeated use. Thus, a new word, 'hāmrā,' is used in the Rangpuri lect to denote first person plural. Grierson quips, 'I may mention that *tomrā* is also used in a similar singular sense for "you" in the north-west of the District.'[28]

Grierson notes that pronominal forms in many languages share the 'original Aryan pronominal inflexions' and terminations which have been subjected to similar phonetic decay.

Grierson concludes that the 'main scheme of the Rangpuri conjugation is founded on that of classical Bangali.'[29] Such a statement imagines Standard Bengali as a prefigured norm from which the particular dialect is a deviation. Grierson compares the two lects (Standard Bengali and Rangpuri) in parallel columns in order to emphasise this dependence. He notes these forms as 'Book form' and 'Rangpur form' – outlining the precedence of the canonized form as one inscribed in print. This contrast between orality and print is of consequence in Grierson's delineation of cultural and linguistic identities. Grierson's 'book-Bangali' had become the receptacle of regularised morphological forms, though Grierson's perceptive gaze immediately notes a paradoxical exception. He points out that the verb 'jaon' ('to go') and 'āon' ('to come') have irregular conjugated forms in Standard Bengali ('giyā' instead of 'jāiya,' 'cilām' instead of 'acilām'). However, the regular forms are preserved in the oral literature of Burdwan and Rangpur.

Other uncomfortable disruptions soon became predominant. Grierson remarks upon the distinctive use of 'kār' as a genitive suffix, which he associates with similar forms (kā, ke, kī) in Hindi. This form is not merely limited to the pronoun but seems to have been used with nouns. Grierson observes[29]:

> Curiously enough, when in Tirhut in the year of the famine, I was thrown much amongst uneducated classes, I noticed, amongst other forms in which a relationship to Bangali might be traced, a similar use of the word kār and instead of kā, which then not having been in Rangpur, I could not understand.

Thus, what was now recognised as a distinctive trait of the Rangpuri lect was first encountered in Tirhut in North Bihar (in the year of the famine, i.e. in 1873-74) which immediately challenges the ossification of the lect as a regional form of Bengali. In fact, people in north-east Bihar speak Surajpuri, a lect closely associated with Rangpuri language. Recent researchers like Michael Toulmin consider the two to be virtually identical.[30] As confusion sets in, Grierson concedes that his imposition of linguistic order is necessarily arbitrary and lacks diagnostic value[31]:

> With reference to the above Rangpuri forms, I would mention that in the course of my reading I have met many of them in plays, in the conversation of persons who are not supposed to inhabit Rangpur. I do not for a moment pretend either that the forms I have given are all necessarily peculiar to Rangpur, or that I have by any means suggested all the possible varieties. I have only given the forms usually current amongst the lower orders of the District.

The provisional thrust of Grierson's observations curiously morphed into ossified identities with time, as his linguistic observations came to be accepted as canonical.

It has already been noted how Grierson misunderstood the contents of "Gorakh nāther gān". Gorakshanatha (c.11-12 century) was a medieval mystic who had played an important role in the formation and systemisation of the *nātha sampradāya*, an occult *shaivite* tradition of yoga. Narratives about Gorakshanatha seem to be partly legendary; presenting an intriguing plethora of contradictory, mythic strands.[32] The group of closely associated ascetic orders which revere him identify him as a yogic expert who had popularised the practices of *haṭhayoga*, a medieval yogic tradition which focuses on physical techniques (*āsana*, *mudrā*, *bandha* etc.) to achieve liberation. These traditions are widespread in various parts of South Asia – India, Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan and consist of both ascetics as well as householders. The monks of many of the *natha* sub-sects wear conspicuous ear-rings and ritually split their ears during the initiation.[33] Liberation, however, was not merely considered as an otherworldly goal but also consisted of the attainment of worldly potencies called *siddhi*-s.[34] Gorakshanatha's tradition is traced back to Matsyendranatha, a figure rapt in further ambiguity and legendary haze, who is often identified as Gorakshanatha's guru. Matsyendranath is refered to in *shaivite* and *shakta tantric* literature (among others, by Abhinavagupta in *Tantrasāra*) and considered as the founder of *yogini kaula*, a distinct occult sect associated with erotico-mystical practices involving female practitioners called *yogini*s.[35] Matysendranatha is also associated with Buddhist *siddha* traditions which had flourished during the heydays of the Pala Empire (8th – 11th century CE) in Northern parts of Bengal. He is listed as one of the eighty-four *mahasiddha*s of the Vajrayana traditions and is often denoted as Luipada or Minapada. Moreover, the *natha* tradition has recognised several other influential adepts like Kaṇipa and Jalandharipa/Haḍipa who are also recognised in the Buddhist cannon. The post-Gupta era flourishing of *shaiva* traditions like *kapalika* and *pasupata* overlapped with the mortuary ground practices of the Buddhist and *natha siddha*s.[36] Gorakshanatha, according to traditions prevalent in Bengal, was a Buddhist named Ramanavajra, who had later adopted *shaivite* practices.[37] The 'epic song' which Grierson would publish in the next instalment of the *Journal* would bear several references to this mystical world of overlapping topographies – a world were not only religious affiliations and historical boundaries but also linguistic connotations and national / regional identities collapse into a diversity of ambivalent possibilities. In the article on the Rangpuri lect, Grierson revealed his ignorance about these mystical traditions by conflating Gorakshanatha with Krishna. This is probably due to the name of the preceptor, Goraksha suggesting 'protector of cows', which Grierson identified with Krishna, the cowherd. Grierson's collection of these oral traditions, however, would play an important role in documenting an alternative current of cultural, religious and linguistic traditions in Bengal.

In "Gorakh nāther gān", such ambivalent possibilities are hinted at. The song enumerates a series of paradoxes, which encouraged Grierson to think of this as a 'nonsense' verse. The opening lines are:

> Kāne kāne kathā kay|
> Tin gNao tār ilām pāy||1||
> Dui gNao to bhaṅgā curā|
> Ek gNao to mānuse nāi||2||
> Je gNao ānat mānus nāi|
> Tāte basie tin jan kāmār|
> Dui jan to jāne nā|
> Ek jan to banāe nā||3||

Grierson's translation of the lines is literal[38]:

(1) Let me whisper a tale in your ear. I got a present of the three villages.

(2) But two villages were all waste land, and in the third there was not a single man.

(3) In the village in which there was not a single man sat three blacksmiths. But two of them did not know their business, and the third did not make anything.

It is evident from Grierson's comment that he does not decipher the esoteric significance of this *whispered* tale. The three villages allude to the yogic idea of the three *nāḍis* or psycho-spiritual channels in the human body: *iḍā, piṅgalā* and *suṣumnā*. The central vacuity of the *suṣumnā*, the perfect balance between the lunar *iḍā* and solar *piṅgalā*, is believed to interpenetrate the cerebrospinal axis from the perineum to the juncture of the lamboid and sagittal suture of the cranium. The smiths may refer to the three stages of respiratory exercise (*prāṇāyāma*) – in-breathing (*pūrak*), out-breathing (*recak*) and breath-retention (*kumbhak*).[39] The gust of air from the bellows used by a smith might have contributed to this extended metaphor. The third stage represents a stage of apparent inactivity but paradoxically leads to the rise of the *kuṅdalinī* (the vital energy) to higher levels of consciousness. The use of triads, the emphasis on inaction, the idea of non-existence and the inherent vacuity of things dominate the thematic landscape of *tantric* mysticism. Grierson's border country had indeed spilled out liminal expressions of language which suggests the manifestation of a new hermeneutics.

Interest in the languages of North Eastern India in general and North Bengal in particular had been spurred by the separation of Assam from Bengal Presidency in 1874. It was renamed as the North East Frontier and became a non-regulation province under a Chief Commissioner. The new province included five districts of Assam proper (Kamrup, Nagaon, Darrang, Sibsagar and Lakhimpur), Garo, Khasi-Jaintia and Naga Hills, Sylchar-Cachar as well as the Goalpara regions. Interestingly, Coach Bihar and Rangpur, which had been culturally connected to the Goalpara region, were not included in this new province. The Assam Province had been initially ceded to the British by the Burmese during the First Anglo-Burmese War in 1826.[40] The 1871 Census resulted in an increased interest in the ‘non-Aryan’ languages / people and generated an urge to classify them. The increasing demands of separating ethnology from philology was decipherable from 1870s as ‘the two kinds of knowledge congealed into separate specialist disciplines.’[41] This would eventually result in the resolution passed on 25th August, 1892, in a monthly meeting of the Society to publish a third part of the *Journal*.[42] In the 1870s, however, philology and ethnology were still intricately connected. Robert Needham Cust (1821-1909), an erstwhile Home Secretary to the Government of India, presented a paper “On the Non-Aryan Languages of India” in January, 1877. The scope of the paper covered all those languages in India which were categorised as neither ‘Aryan’ nor ‘Dravidian’. Cust first discusses the languages of Punjab and Kangra, were he had spent his years as a civil servant. He then discusses the Bhutan, Nepali, Bhutiya and Lepcha languages (‘the Himalaic group’). Cuss goes on to discuss the ‘Lohitic’ group, which he confesses to be a ‘fanciful and inappropriate name’ after a tributary of Brahmaputra (the Lohit river). Brian Houghton Hodgson had suggested that these languages were Tamulian but Caldwell had suitably demonstrated that they had little similarity with the Dravidian group. Cust discusses the Bodo, Kachari and Dhimal languages of which Hodgson had published grammar and vocabulary. He surveys the languages of the Naga, Khasi-Jaintia and the Garo hills. His discussion about the ‘Kooch language’ reflects much of the confusion of Grierson’s borderland[43]:

> … the inhabitants of Kooch Behar have abandoned their ancient agglutinating language, and adopted a bad Bengali: they have become partly Muhammadan and partly Hindu: a small section have clung to their ancient faith and language, which is known as Pani-Kooch, and an examination of this

> residuum of an almost extinct unwritten language has led Col. Dalton to found the opinion, that it belongs to the Dravidian family, and has no connection with the Kooch.

Cust goes on discuss about the ‘Kolarian’ languages i.e. the Austroasiatic languages of the Chota Nagpur plateau. His delineation of the ‘non Aryan’ linguistic map would be of significance for the ethnographic study of the Indian languages in the forthcoming decades.

In the introduction to his translation of “The Song of Manik Chandra”, Grierson gives us valuable information about the historical and social background of the ‘epic song’ and the circumstances in which he had collected it. He confesses that the task of translation had been ‘more difficult than [he] anticipated.’ He does not doubt the historicity of either Manik Chandra or his ‘terrible wife’ Mainamati but could admittedly gather ‘few grains of truth’ from the ‘legendary chaff’ that had accumulated about them. He states the popular tradition that Manikchandra’s brother was named Dharmapala, who was often identified with the illustrious Pala emperor of the late eighth century (reg. 770-810).[44] Yet, Manikchandra was not a Pala as the song refers to him as a *baniya* while Grierson came to know from Abul Fazl (through E.V. Westmacott’s article on the Pala Kings in *The Calcutta Review* 59) that the Palas were Kayasthas. Grierson’s reference to the so-called popular legend had been derived from Francis Buchanan-Hamilton’s survey of Rangpur.

Buchanan-Hamilton himself was not sure whether it was proper to identify Dharmapala with the illustrious Pala emperor; however, he conceded that the local legends about him seem to portray a person of ‘some power’, so much so that even ‘the works attributed to relations and dependents of his family possess some degree of magnitude.’ Buchanan-

Hamilton then goes on to summarise the local tradition which he had collected from 'itinerant bards' who entertain the 'people of Kamrup' by singing their songs about Manikchandra, Mainamati and renunciation of their son, Gopichandra. These bards belong to the 'low caste called Yogi' and their poem is called *Sibergit* (literally, the Song of Shiva). Buchanan-Hamilton would have offered Grierson the first reference to this tradition of songs in 'the vulgar language' which was sung for 'four or five Hindu hours for two days'[45]:

> [Dharmapala] is said to have had a brother named Manikchondro, who seems to have died early, and to have left the management of his son and estate to his wife Moynawoti. This lady makes a conspicuous figure in the traditions of the natives, and is said to have killed Dhormo Pal in an engagement near the banks of the Tista; at least the Raja disappeared during the battle of his troops and those of his sister-in-law. Moynawoti's son, Gopichondro, succeeded his uncle, and seems to have left the management of his affairs to his mother, and for some time to have indulged himself in the luxury of 100 wives, among whom the two most celebrated for beauty and rank were Hudna and Pudna, one of whom, if not both, was daughter of a person of considerable rank named Horischondro. When Gopichondro had grown up, and probably when he had been satiated with the pleasure which women bestow, he wished to interfere in business. His mother had then the art to persuade him to dedicate his life to religion; and having placed him under the tuition of her spiritual guide (Guru) Haripa, a religious mendicant (Yogi) of remarkable sanctity, this prince changed from voluptuousness to superstition, adopted the same manner of life with his instructor, and is supposed to be now wandering in the forests.

Buchanan-Hamilton's reiteration of the 'local tradition' about the strife between Dharmapala and Mainamati would not go unchallenged. In the fifteenth volume of the *Sāhitya Pariṣat patrikā* (1909), Vishveshwar Bhattacharya criticises the historical veracity of this event. He claims that Buchanan-Hamilton had referred to a spurious tradition and Vishveshwar himself could not trace the legend among the *yogi*s of Rangpur. He points out that a parallel tradition records Manikchandra to be the grandson of Dharmapala and antagonism between these two dynasties could not have engendered such a legend. He blamed the British administrators – Buchanan-Hamilton, Glazier and Grierson – for perpetrating a pseudo-history which had been latched onto by Bengali novelists with hasty (and careless) alacrity.[46] Thus, by the first quarter of the twentieth century, Grierson's translation had already engendered a rival discourse, based on fresh researches into the same oral tradition by the likes of Bishveshwar Bhattacharya, Dineshchandra Sen, Nalinikanta Bhattasali, Munshi Abdul Karim and Vaikunthanath Dutta.

To accept the presence of this dissidence cannot bar us from appreciating the remarkable revelations in Buchanan-Hamilton's survey. He is the first European surveyor who discusses about 'Dharma paler garh' – 'the remains of a fortified city, said to have been built by Dhormo Pal Raja,' about two miles from the town of Dimla in Rangpur (presently in the Nilphamari district). He also describes 'Mainamatir kot'—the ruins of the supposed residence of Mainamati on the west bank of the Deonai river, 'about two miles west from the fort of Dhormo Pal,and built on the same plan with that of her brother-in-law.' Vishveswar Bhattacharya locates these ruins at the Harinchara and Atiabari villages of Dimla. These ruined fortifications are near Patkapara, which Bhattacharya associates with the Patikanagar described in the oral tradition.[47] For Grierson, this was actually the city of Manikchandra, from where he ruled 'over half dozen square miles of territory which considered him the *rajadhiraja*'[48]. Buchanan-

Hamilton also discussed about 'Harishchandra Pat,'a mound like structure located south of 'Mainamatir kot'[49]:

> I have no doubt, that this is a tomb, and there is no reason to suppose, that it did not belong to Horischondro, whose daughter was married to Gopichondro, the son of Moynawoti…

Discussions about these sites and their association with the 'epic song' which Grierson had translated would continue in the succeeding decades.

Buchanan-Hamilton also provides us with one of the earliest ethnographic discussion about the *yogi* community in Rangpur. According to him, the *yogi*s (or *jogi*s) consisted of about 1200 houses. Some of them were weavers, whereas others subsisted by burning lime, by begging or by singing the 'epic song' of Gopichandra. They seemed to be reluctant to take up agriculture. Buchanan-Hamilton hypothesised that the *yogi*s were perhaps remnants of the old priesthood who carried out sacral priestly duties during the reign of Gopichandra's dynasty. He connects them to an earlier strata of *tantric* worship but 'except the aversion to labour, and inclination to beg, the Yogis retain nothing of their original profession.' He remarks about the fact that they still assume the title of Natha, a title which he took literally to mean 'Lord or Proprietor' rather than associating it with the *shaivite* order of ascetics.

Buchanan-Hamilton encountered two major division in the *yogi*s of Rangpur – the *heluya*, the weavers and cultivators, and the *thelaya*, those who 'retain theircustoms entire, as they live as much as possible by begging and the idle art of rehearsing cyclic poems, to which as their claims for alms are not great, they add the art of making limes from shells, and a very few have betaken themselves to the plough.'[50] Buchanan-

Hamilton notices that these two groups do not intermarry and it is the thelaya yogis who outnumber their brethren. The yogis were considered to be ‘impure feeders’ by other Hindus and they drink ‘spirituous liquor’. Unlike the other Hindus, they bury their dead – a custom which Buchanan-Hamilton takes to be a confirmation of the hypothesis that they were the erstwhile priests of the region when funerary mounds, like the one in ‘Harishchandra Pat,’ had been set up. He refers to a legend popular amongst the members of the *natha* sect that they had been ostracised by none other than Sankaracharya. Buchanan-Hamilton also notices that *yogi*s might have been a ‘sub-sect’ of the Buddhists, noticing the fact that the Palas had been avowed Buddhists. He further notices the heterodoxy of the order[51]:

> The Theluya Yogis have in general no connection with the Brahmans, and have among them certain families, which still abstain from all labour, and are entirely dedicated to God. Although these persons marry, they are called Sannyasis. They have no books, and their learning consists in some forms of prayer, which they have committed to memory, and repeat on different occasions. These act as the religious instructors (Guru) and priests (Purohits) of the labouring classes… The burners of lime who adhre to their Sannyasis pray to Sib, and offer sacrifices to all the gods of villages, Some however pray to Boloram and Krishno, and have received instruction(Upodes) from a person called an Odhikari; but so sunk are they in ignorance, that they do not know whether this instructoris a Brahman or a Vaishnov.

This connection of the *yogi*s with the *vaishnava*s is quite remarkable, given the *shaivite* background of the *natha* sect. Such an association, however, has also been remarked upon by Grierson. Buchanan-Hamilton describes his association with Kamalakanta, a *vaishnava* Goswami in Rangpur, from whom he collected information about the various religious sects. He describes that the Goswamis of Bengal serve only the rich people of 'pure birth.' The 'lower persons of pure birth' employed the Adhikari Brahmins. The Rajbanshis and the lower castes, however, have *sudra* priests, 'partly Vaishnov, and partly Khyen and Rajbonshis'[52]. These heterodox *vaishnava*s are called 'Vairagis' in Rangpur. Evidently, it is this group of ambiguously defined priests who seemed to be associated with the *yogi*s. Buchanan-Hamilton also notes a certain degree of Sanskritisation – the Rajbanshis, and even some Khens, had started employing the *goswami*s from Bengal as their family priests. The 'itinerant bards' were losing their jobs, and also much of their stature, in the early nineteenth century Rangpur. Elsewhere, Buchanan-Hamilton discusses how 'careless' *vaishnava*s are in arranging their marriages and how they are continually infested by a group of vagrants[53]:

> In this district there are only about 50 convents (Akras) of Vaishnom, who have left their families (Udasin); but there are a good many vagrants, who without having any just claim, pretend to belong to these institutions. The Vaishnom here, who have deserted their females to live in Akras, are usually called Brokot, and often Vairagis, while those who have families are often called Songjogis…

It is this world of vagrant deviants – ambiguously identified as householders as well as ascetics, associated with the *natha*s as well as *vairagi*s and in some cases with the *madariya* order of *fakir*s – it is in this ambiguous world of *tantric* heretics whose antinomian practices were variously associated to tribal animism and Buddhist *siddha* hermeneutics, that Grierson's 'epic song' had been sung for centuries.

It is remarkable to note the extent to which Grierson's 'discovery' of the song had been a part of the imperial ethnographic project. His introduction to the translation is shaped by the earlier surveys of Rangpur by Buchanan-Hamilton (1807-1809) and Glazier (1873) and by William Wilson Hunter's *A Statistical Account of Bengal* (Volume 7, dealing with the districts of Maldah, Rangpur and Dinajpur was published in 1876). His observations on Rangpur and the *yogi*s would, in turn, influence Herbert Hope Risley's *The Tribes and Castes of Bengal* (1891), Edward Albert Gait's *A History of Assam* (1906) and *North Eastern India* (1929), J.A. Vas's *Rangpur* (1911) and Arthur Coulton Hartley's *Final Report of the Rangpur Survey and Settlement Operations* (1940). While Buchanan-Hamilton and Hunter had done pioneering work (Hunter published the *Imperial Gazetteer of India* in 1911), Risley and Gait would eventually serve as Census Commissioners in 1901 and 1911 respectively.

It was Grierson who elaborated why Mainamati is considered as 'terrible'. That epithet was first used by Glazier, who informed that 'Dharma Pal had a terrible sister-in-law, Minavati…,' who was not prepared to leave the 'guddee' to her son and hence 'readily part with authority.'[54] Grierson realised that Mainamati's motives could be explained by her proximity to the sect of the *natha siddhas*. He explained that she was 'deeply skilled in magic, an art which it appears in those days, though unlawful for a man, was lawful for a woman.'[55] She is described as the pupil of a 'mighty sorcerer' who was a *siddha* ('had acquired immense powers'). This was Hadipa/ Jalandharipa, the famous *natha* exponent whom we have already mentioned. Grierson emphasises the antinomian background of this occult teacher. *Hādi*s act as 'sweepers in Bangal,' and '[i]n Rangpur its impurity signifies nameless abomination.' Rangpur itself, according to Grierson, is a land of heterodoxy with special codes of its own – enumerated in texts like the *Yoginī Tantra*. On 26th June, 1884, the Philological Committee of the *Society* would accept Grierson's proposal to edit and publish this interesting text in the Bibliotheca Indica series.[56] Grierson's interest in the text reflects his curiosity about the heterodoxical practices he had first encountered in his 'epic song'. In June 1893, however, the Society eventually gave up the idea of publishing the *Yoginī tantra*, hindered by 'want of funds or other reasons'[57]. This abandonment is also significant and in many ways reflective of the change in Orientalist attitude towards the traditions that Grierson had unearthed in the song.

Grierson states that the local traditions identified Hadi *siddha* / Hadipa as a *vaishnava* and Mainamati 'was also of the same sect.' Grierson, however, considers this to be 'highly improbable' and realises that the tradition has been moulded under the influences of 'followers of Chaitanya'. Throughout his life, Grierson had displayed a predilection for the *vaishnava* faith, 'this beautiful, almost Christian, religion' which preaches 'the doctrine of the equality of castes; -- how every valley shall be exalted, and the rough places made smooth.'[58] He suspected that the 'ignorant and illiterate' *vaishnavas* recognised Hadipa as an exemplary figure, whose low birth and high sanctity stood as a potent justification of their egalitarian doctrine. He considers Hadipa as not in actuality being a Hādi but rather a 'follower of Hari' (though not a Gaudiya Vaishnava). He justifies his hypothesis by alluding to Max Muller's theory about phonetic decay as the source of false etymology of popular legends[59]:

> Now in the Rangpur dialect, *a* is frequently lengthened, and *r* is interchangeable with the *ḍ* so that the change from *Hari* to *Haḍi* is easy, and such a change, having once taken common currency, would have itself suggested the the idea so peculiarly Vaishnava to which I have before alluded.

Interestingly, Grierson associates Hadipa with Kanipa (who, according to him, was Hadipa's teacher) and eventually with Gorakshanatha. Contrary to what he wrote in the article on the Rangpuri lect, Grierson now seems to know about Gorakshanatha's association to the *natha* cult and correctly associates him with the traditions of 'Buddhistic Nipal'. He also mentions the prevalence of the *pashupata shaivism* in Assam. He suggests that the group of *yogi*s in Rangpur might be associated with either the *pasupata*s of Assam or the Buddhists of Nepal (who had appropriated the *shaivite* cult of Gorakshanatha). Within a year, Grierson had dug deep into the blurred margins of the popular mystical cults of Rangpur and had discovered the syncretic origins of his 'epic song'.

As has been already stated, Grierson initially accepted, what he called the 'universal tradition', of Manikchandra being a contemporary of Dharmapala, the Pala emperor. He realised, however, that the local chronologies did not match with those of Abul Fazl, who had discussed about the dissolution of the Pala empire in the eleventh century. The local chronologies link Dharmapala's dynastic line, consisting that of his Manikchandra and Gopichandra (the next two kings in line), to that of the last Khen ruler, Nilambar, who lived in the fifteenth century. Interestingly, this made him make another hypothesis. He suggested that 'it not necessarily be determined that Dharma Raja belonged to the great family of Pala kings'(the curious shift from 'Dharmapala' to 'Dharma Raja' might be noted at this point). According to him, he may belong to a vestigial remnant of the erstwhile dynasty. He saw Hadipa and the *natha siddha*s as a part of the gradual transformation of the Buddhist Pala empire into a Shaivite kingdom. Manikchandra might be ‘a powerful chief’ living in the realm of this later, less illustrious, ‘Dharma Raja’. Mainamati, an ‘ambitious and designing woman’, had endeavoured to usurp her brother-in-law’s kingdom and fought a pitched battle in which he miraculously ‘disappeared’. The exact chronology of these events would soon be a contentious flashpoint. While Grierson suggested that Dharma Raja was a historical personality of the fourteenth century, Indian researchers like Vishveshwar Bhattacharya thought that the reference was a conflation of legends about the earlier Pala emperor with a later dynasty of local rulers who reigned during the first half of the eleventh century.[60] This contention was significant because it introduced debates about the antiquity of the song itself. Grierson’s belief that the song was a late production immediately introduces syncretic linguistic possibilities, especially because he postdates its composition to the Islamic presence in Bengal. Dineshchandra Sen, on the other hand, states emphatically that Manikchandra ruled before twelfth century as ‘kadi’ was used as a currency in his realm (Sen thought this currency to be exclusively pre-Islamic). In the third edition of his *Baṅgabhāṣā o sāhitya* (1896), Sen informs us that Grierson, after reading the first edition of his book, had written to him and had expressed his approval of the pre-Islamic dating of the song.[61] Dineshchandra admits that there might be later additions or interpolations to the text but its core reflects a local tradition of Bengali, unaffected by either Sanskrit aesthetics or Perso-Arabic diction and reflecting an earlier Buddhist substratum. Nalinikanta Bhattasali, on the other hand, thought that the language was decidedly modern and would not be more archaic than the old *yogi* from whom Grierson had initially collected his 'epic song.'[62] These debates reflected differences in ideation of the Bengali language, its linguistic history and the myriads of identities encrypted by linguistic change.

The uncertainties about the lect used, its stage of historical antiquity and its relationship with standard Bengali were associated with its orality. Grierson recognised the song 'as a very specimen of the particular Rangpuri *patois*'. However, he pointed out its syncretic roots – for him 'it exhibits a curious, and most instructive lesson as to how a purely Saiva hero celebrated by men of a Saiva sect has given rise to a poem of Saiva foundation, but of Vaishnava superstructure, and sung by the descendants of these same men.'[63] He also notices that the 'Vaishnava interpolations or additions' have been 'written in a Bengali much more classical, than the rude language of the Saiva ground-work.' These uncertainties about the identity of the singers and the nature of the lect used was further aggravated in the succeeding decades as other versions of the same song came to be recorded and published. Dineshchandra Sen quoted excerpts from a version of the song ("Govindacandrer gīt") collected by Nagendranath Basu from the *yogi*s of Mayurbhanj Orissa in his *Baṅgasāhitya paricay* (first part published in 1914; pgs. 85-94 of Part 1). This version was originally written in Oriya character and the manuscript was judged to be two hundred year old.[64] Shibchandra Sil edited *Govindacandra gīt* (excerpts published in the *Sāhitya pariṣat patrikā* 6 in 1899, and later separately published in 1901) composed by Durlav Mallick in the seventeenth century, from a manuscript collected from Genraghata in the Burdwan district (the only recorded version of the song from the western region of Bengal).[65] Dineshchandra Sen published excerpts from a slightly different version of Durlav Mallick's composition, titled "Govindacandrer gān," in his *Baṅgasāhitya paricay* (1914; pgs. 102-110 of Part 1). A version of Bhavani Das's

Gopīcandrer pNācālī, composed in the eighteenth century, was collected by Vaikunthanath Dutta (in 1911) from Tippera district (Chakla Roshnabad i.e. the Comilla district of present-day Bangladesh) and edited by Nalinikanta Bhattasali (published by the Dhaka Sahitya Parishat in 1914).[66] Four other manuscripts of this version were collected and collated by Munshi Abdul Karim from Chittagong and edited by Vasantaranjan Ray (published in 1924).[67] Moreover, *Gopīcandrer sanyās* (also called *Yogīr pnuthi*), written by Abdul Sukur Mamud in the eighteenth century, was edited variously by Nalinikanta Bhattasali (published in 1925 from Dhaka) and by Dineshchandra Sen (published in 1924 by the University of Calcutta). Bhattasali's manuscript of the song was collected from 'a village near Balurghat in the District of Dinajpur'. Sukur Mamud lived in the village of Sindur-Kusumi in the Rajshahi district.[68] Vishveshwar Bhattacharya collected an oral version from Rangpur (about which he had discussed in *Sāhitya pariṣat patrikā* article of 1909), when he was a Deputy Magistrate of Nilphamari sub-division of the erstwhile Rangpur district. He collected the entire song from two aged *yogi*s and an incomplete version from a third one.[69] Excerpts from this text was initially published as "Maināmatīr gān" by Dineshchandra Sen in his *Baṅgasāhitya paricay* (1914; pgs. 95-101 of Part 1) and later published as *Gopīcandrer gān* from the University of Calcutta in 1924. These versions considerably differ from each other though they share structural and even textual similarities. There have been varied opinions about the identity of the lects used in these texts.

Further investigation revealed other important areas in Bengal, associated with the *yogi* sect and the historical cognates that might have engendered the song. These included the settlements of the Pala period discovered in the Lalmai-Mainamati hills, near the district centre of Comilla district of the Chittagong division. These sites date from seventh to twelfth centuries CE.[70] The Shalban vihara, the stupas at Kutila and Charputra Mura represent the heydays of Buddhism during the Pala reign. These also consist, according to local traditions, the mortuary mounds of Aduna and Paduna, the two wives of Gopichandra and the residences of Gopichandra and Mainamati. Hadipa is said to have resided near the Shalban vihara. Architectural evidence of a dynasty of Chandra rulers in the locality has also been collected. Many *yogi*s reside near the Lalmai hills. Patikara and Meherkul, places identified as the capital of Gopichandra in Sukur Mamud and Durlabh Mallick's texts as well as in the Rangpur songs, are also located near the Lalmai hills.[71] Mahasthangarh in the Bogra District, identified by Alexander Cunningham with the ancient capital of Bengal (Pundravardhana) in 1879, is also associated with *yogi* traditions.[72] A few kilometres from the site is the Yogir Bhavan, a settlement of the *natha sanyasi*s forming the eastern section of Arora village. In the volume of the *Journal* which bore Grierson's 'epic song', was published Henry Beveridge's article on "The Antiquities of Bagura". Beveridge not only connects the locale with the cult of Manasa and the ancient city of Chand Sadagar (which served as the vortex for another famous cycle of Bengali literary production, the *Manasāmangala*), but also provides us with one of the earliest descriptions of Yogir Bhavan[73]:

> Another antiquity of Bagura, the importance of which, however, is a good deal exaggerated by the people, is Jogir Bhaban, or the Ascetic's house. It lies some seven miles west of Bagura. It appears to have been an early settlement of the Gosains, or followers of Siva. The remains consist of some temples with elaborately carved wooden doors. One temple has the Bengali date 1089, and the name of Meher Nath Sadak, One of the doors has the date 1119,and the name of Shukhal Nath Gosain.

> There is one curious tomb with three monuments of different sizes. .. The jogi in charge of the temples gave me a curious instance of faith. There are several images inside one temple, and the jogi candidly said that he could not tell what god one of them represented. However, he said, as it was in the temple he accepted it and worshipped the unknown god.

Closely associated with these settlements of *natha*s was that at Yogighopa in the Dinajpur district, already discussed by Westmacott in an 1875 article in the *Journal*.[74] Grierson's translation – full of evocative references of rivers, towns and palaces – revealed a group of settlements which served as the basis of the mystic tradition which had engendered his 'epic song'.

Grierson also notes performative aspects of the song. The song was sung by four men, 'in parts, not in unison'. The narrative was sung 'chant-like', with the repetitive vocative phrase, referring to the relevant character (eg.'He! Raja!' or 'He! Mayana!'). Grierson represents a main melodic movement in staff notation with a 2/4 time signature (two quarter-note beats per bar). The last three notes of each line consist of the vocative phrase. Grierson also notes that there were harmonic innovations[75]:

> I do not give the harmonies of this, because I cannot. I tried to reproduce them on a harmonium, but though I believe I got the separate notes of each part correctly first on a violin, from the mouth of each singer, when I tried them together I got nothing but a common-place sort of chant, containing one or two consecutive octaves, and not a particle of the spirit of what I had just heard sung.

Grierson's confession is a remarkable one as it immediately makes us realise that there is an element of the song that one can never grasp by merely reading it as a text. The song is accompanied by what Grierson calls the 'saringa', a lute probably similar to saringda/

sarangi used in Nepal and Bengal. Later researchers refer to the use of *gopiyantra* or *ektara*.

The most remarkable acknowledgement of Grierson's vulnerability as a translator comes at the very end of his introduction. He concedes that the poem is 'unintelligible' at many places. His *yogi* singers would sometimes provide traditional explanations, sometimes they would not be able to provide (or perhaps, would not provide) an explanation. Grierson hence wants to be pardoned for offering a literal translation, which might at places seem to be 'arrant nonsense.' It is ironic how in future years Grierson's ambivalences would be quite forgotten and the song would be conceived of as a narrative with unambiguous linguistic, semantic and ethnic associations.

The central narrative of Grierson's 'epic song' describes the reign of a virtuous king, Manikchandra, the ruler of Meherkula.[76] He had several wives but went on to marry Mainamati, the daughter of a certain ruler called Tilakchand. The region over which Tilakchand ruled has not been mentioned. The name, however, bears resemblance to Trailokyachand, the early tenth century CE ruler of the Chandra dynasty of south-east Bengal, who rose from being a feudal lord to being a sovereign monarch of Harikela. Copper plates discovered at several sites in present day Bangladesh, including those found at Mainamati, also reveal that a certain Govindachandra (who ruled between c.1020 CE and 1050 CE, and was defeated by Rajendra Chola) belonged to the dynasty of Trailokyachandra. The epigraphical and balladic traditions, however, differ with each other concerning the names of the other rulers of Chandra dynasty. Thus, it is problematic to associate either Tilakchand or Manikchandra/ Govindachandra's dynasties with the historical kingdom of the Chandras.[77] Returning to the main narrative of the song, Mainamati isolates herself and starts residing in her own palace.[78] She had, in her childhood, received training of the occult.[79] This proved to be a further cause of estrangement from her husband who loathed her association with the practitioners of occult. Manikchandra's reign proved to be a period of utopaic stability, 'security, and light taxation' till he appointed a *diwan* from the Southern parts of Bengal. The *diwan* was exploitative and stringently extracted taxes from the peasants who were left devastated and forsaken by an ineffective ruler. The peasants assembled and complained to the local headman (*pradhan*) who took them to Shiva/ Mahadeva. Shiva listened to their grievances and led them to perform an occult ritual (dedicated to Dharma) in which they cast a dire curse of death on Manikchandra. The king's death was imminent, but Mainamati came to know about the curse and urged her husband to be an initiate in her occult circle. The king refused, denouncing what he called 'the feminine gnosis' ('strīr gñān'). Manikchandra was affected by fever for days (Grierson imagines this to be 'Rangpur fever' i.e. malaria[80]). When Yama's emissaries came to take his soul to the netherworlds, Mainamati dissuaded them through her occult prowess. When they eventually tricked her and took her husband's soul, she chased 'Goda Yama' ('the Lame Yama,' apparently one of the emissaries) through a series of mystic metamorphoses as they both reached Yama's Realm of Death. Eventually, Gorakshanatha intervened; he told Mainamati that death is irrevocable but informed her that she would give birth to a son, the successor of Manikchandra. This would be a miraculous birth; the son would remain in her womb for eighteen months (no wonder Mainamati was later accused of infidelity, even of a secret affair with Hadipa). Gorakshanatha prophesised that

Mainamati's son (Gopichandra) would die at the tender age of nineteen unless he becomes one of the occult initiates and accepts Hadipa as his Guru.

After the birth of the child, Mainamati shifted her base from Pherushanagar to Meherkula/ Patikanagar and ruled over her husband's kingdom. When Gopichandra was nine, he was married to Aduna and Paduna, the daughters of ruler of Savar, Harischandra.[81] Gopichandra now became the king but his mother had considerable administrative control. As Gopichandra approached his maturity, his mother forced him to become a renunciate and accept Hadipa as his Guru. Gopichandra expresses his unwillingness to renounce his hedonistic pursuits while his wives tried to prove that both Mainamati and Hadipa were charlatans. After witnessing their occult powers, Gopichandra realised the efficacy of a spiritual life. Renouncing his kingdom and his wives, he joined Hadipa and became an itinerant mendicant.

Before the king left his palace, his mother had secretly given him sixteen *kahan*s of *kowri*s (shell money) to help him in distress. Hadipa saw through this veil of secrecy and made his disciple promise twelve *kowri*s for buying some cannabis (like in various other mystical traditions, cannabis is an off-encountered ingredient in *natha* legends). When Gopichandra searched for the *kowri*s, he found them to have mysteriously disappeared. Unflinching in his desire to keep his promise, he asked Hadipa to pawn him for the money. Eventually, not getting a suitable customer in the market, Hadipa took Gopichandra to the palatial residence of Hira *nati*, the hetaira. As Grierson tells us, Hira was enamoured by the lustrous youth of the young ascetic[82]:

> Hira, of course, fell in love with the king, and being a woman of property, easily found it in her power to borrow the twelve kaoris from a neighbouring banker. The banker drew up the deed of

> transfer, conveying Gopi Chandra to the harlot’s sole use and possession for a period of twelve years, and she then and there paid over the money, and took delivery.

Hadipa left Gopichandra in Hīra’s residence, went on with his peregrinations and apparently forgot all about his disciple. In the meantime, Gopichandra refused to break his vow of celibacy to become Hīra’s paramour. Indignant and heart-broken, Hira decided to punish Gopichandra for his doggedness. She treated him as a menial and made him carry loads of water everyday from the Karatoya.[83] On the last day of the stipulated period of twelve years, Gopichandra’s strength failed him as he fell into the river while performing his daily ordeal. During all these years, Aduna and Paduna lived a secluded life in the palace. While playing dice, they discovered an inauspicious throw and immediately realised that their husband was in distress. Shuka , the legendary parrot often encountered in South Asian romance traditions (most memorably, as Vaishampayan in Banabhatta’s *Kadamvarī*),– consoled the queens and went in search of Gopichandra. Discovering him in distress, the bird conveyed the truth to his wives who immediately informed Mainamati about Gopichandra’s plight. Fuming with potent rage, Mainamati magically beckoned Hadipa and threatened him of dire consequences if Gopichandra was not rescued. Hadipa arrived timely to save Gopichandra, punish Hīra and eventually bring the young renunciant back to his kingdom. The various ordeals that he had been subjected to had made Gopichandra a fit vehicle for receiving the occult gnosis. Hadipa granted him this mystical knowledge and Gopichandra was saved from a premature death. Ascending to the throne once again, he brought back the Utopaic glory of his father’s reign.

What is immediately noticeable in Grierson's version of the song is the remarkable prominence of Mainamati. As the initiate of an occult, heterodox sect – Mainamati is hardly assimilated in the normative tradition. Mainamati's rift with her husband seems to have been precipitated by her involvement with the occult sect of the *natha*s. Manikchandra vociferously denies entrance into the sect:

raja boley suna Maina vākya mor dhar|
akhani mor Manik Chandra jamey laiyā jāok|
tāhāteo strīr gñān garave nā sunāuk|

(verse 60: Grierson 153)[84]

THE KING SPAKE.

60. "Hear, O Mayana: let Yama carry off me, Manik Chandra; but nevertheless let not the knowledge of a woman be heard by me."

(Grierson 204)

Yet, the point of the narrative is precisely that this denial leads to the king's undoing – the heterodoxical gnosis offered by the *tantric*/ *natha*-Buddhist mystics is presented as a salvific shield, an elixir of immortality.

Moreover, Mainamati's occult powers grant her a certain sense of bravado, a nonchalance which is not merely observed in her relationship with her husband, son, daughters-in-law, occult brother-in-arms / Guru Hadipa but even in his conversation with gods and supernal beings. She spares none. Though her quest for her dead husband's soul seems similar to that of Savitri or even Behula (Grierson notes the gender reversal in the South Asian versions of the Orpheus-Eurydice mythos), she lacks the reverential stoicism of Savitri or the diplomatic servility of Behula. She roars as she chases the emissaries of Yama:

tudu tudu kariyā Maina hunkār chādila|
chay māser dariyā chay daṇḍe pār haila|

(verse 90: Grierson 155)

90. Mayana uttered the words "tudu, tudu," and the journey of six months was accomplished in six quarters of an hour.

(Grierson 206)

Godā godā baile Mainā tuliyā chāḍe rāo|
jena mate goda yama Maināk dekhila|
tāti bhāniyā godā yama e daur karila|

(verse 99-100: Grierson 156)

99. "Goda, Goda," Mayana cried to him with a loud voice. As soon as Goda Yama saw Mayana he burst through the *tati* walls of his palace and ran away.

(Grierson 206)

The contrast between Mainamati's irreverent roar at Yama's emissary [literally referring to him as 'lamey' ('goda'), suggestive of his impotency] and Savitri's reverential address of 'O worshipful one'(*Mahābhārata* 2:295)[85] to Yama is quite stark. After Manikchandra's death, Mainamati decides to perform a sati. She sits with the ashes of her husband on the pyre for seven days without being burnt -- 'like unmelted gold' (verse 179; Grierson 210), she is unsinged by fire. Chand, the merchant – the antagonist of popular ballads of Manasa – makes a brief appearance in this other yarn (we have already seen how Mahasthangarh serves as a locus for both *yogi* mysticism and the

Manasāmangala mythos). Chand advises Mainamati's relatives to tie a heavy stone upon her chest and throw her into the stream (verse 190). They do so; yet, Mainamati severs the ropes and emerge out of the stream with her child. The chthonic origins of her character and the deviant female selfhood that she displays immediately distinguish Mainamati from other female protagonists of South Asian balladic traditions.

There are subtle changes in the portrayal of Mainamati in the myriad versions of the song. Grierson's 'epic song' does not specify the reason for her seclusion from her husband; Nenga, the emissary bears to her Manikchandra's epistle which informed her of her husband's illness. In the letter, the king pleaded for her return (verse 45-48). In *Gopīcandrer gān*[86], a later version of the oral song collected from the *yogi*s of Rangpur, the reason for seclusion is to avoid quarrel with the other wives of the king (Bhattacharya 1:2-8). In Sukur Mamud's poem, she performs *sadhana* in a cave (Mamud 257) and is oblivious of the fact that her husband has married off Gopichandra with the princesses of the neighbouring kingdoms. As we have seen earlier, Mainamati's esoteric knowledge is curiously identified as a 'female gnosis' ('strīr gñān,' verse 60; Bhattacharya 1:112; also see Das 643-647). This *écriture féminine* is written through the body as is evident in the other phrase used to allude to it – 'corporal gnosis' or 'wisdom of the body'('śarīrer gñān'). Mainamati pleads to the king to share her secret gnosis and hence overcome death:

> āmār śarīrer gñān neo bol sikiyā|
> āmār vaser nadī kande yābe sukhāiyā||

(verse 60; Grierson 153)

O learn the wisdom of my body!
The river of my years would dry up upon your shoulder.

Grierson's translation bears traces of hesitation and evasion. He avoids the critical *tantric* referent – 'śarīrer gñān':

> 58. "Hear, O king of kings. Learn the magical arts which I have acquired, and then the river of my life will dry up upon thy shoulder.

(Grierson 204)

In Bhattacharya's oral version, 'śarīrer gñān' is a part of a refrain – repeated to convey the earnestness of Mainamati's plea to the king as she urges him to partake of her esoteric wisdom (Bhattacharya 1:167-168, 1:205-206,1: 229-230, 1:280-281):

āiso, āiso, prāṇapati, bhitar andar yāi|
āmār śarīrer amar gñān tomāk śikhāi||

(Bhattacharya 1:205-206)

[O come, come, my sweetheart, let's go within,
I'd teach you the immortal wisdom of my body.]

Yet though this critical referent remains constant throughout the various versions, the nature of subversion which Mainamati embodies varies from one version to the other. In Grierson's 'epic song', Mainamati subverts the laws of nature and bears the child for eighteen months and eighteen days (verse 194-206; Grierson 163-164). In the later oral version from Rangpur, the child has the usual gestation period of ten months (Bhattacharya 5:374). In Mamud's poem, in contrast, Gopichandra's birth is not due to sexual union but due to a boon from Gorakshnatha, Mainamati's preceptor (Mamud 33-35; 1392-1393;1873-1876). Mainamati becomes a virgin mother; she requests Gorakhnatha so that she might not be blamed for her sterility. By Gorakshnatha's blessings, she conceives after drinking the 'sacred water' ('charanamrita', 'the ambrosia derived by washing one's feet with water') of her husband (Mamud 1943-1944). This shift in emphasis is not entirely absent in Grierson's oral version; it is Gorakshnatha who tells Mainamati about the birth of a child. However, Mainamati is clearly the creatrix who brings about this birth – in the later versions she is subservient to nature's law, a passive recipient of the 'sacred water' from the father.

In Mamud's poem, it is Manikchandra who arranges for the child's *annaprashana* (Mamud 72) and even plans his marriage so that he would not be an ascetic like his mother (Mamud 95). In Grierson's version, Mainamati asks a brahmin to arrange Gopichandra's marriage (verse 221; Grierson 165). In Mamud's text, Mainamati sits in her cave, oblivious of the fact that her husband sends three pandits – Durgaram, Navaratna and Haridev— as brokers to fix the prince's match (Mamud 90). In the Rangpur versions of the song, Mainamati tries to save her husband by first requesting him to be an esoteric practitioner and then chasing away Yama's emissary. In Mamud's poem, however, Mainamati and Manikchandra had already parted ways as he had refused to be 'servant of a woman'('nārīr sevak', Mamud 1445) right after their marriage. Mainamati is, in fact, elated at her husband's death (Mamud 325-326). In other words, in the oral versions of Rangpur, Mainamati's heterodoxical lifestyle does not preclude her from playing an important role in the affairs of the state and in shaping her son's life. On the other hand, Mainamati of the Tippera and Chittagong versions of the song can be a *yogi* because she has renounced her role as a generative mother(‘sṛiṇgār svāmī bine habe garbher sancār’, Mamud 1392). In these versions, she renounces her position as an administrator and had toned down her dominant role in the lives of her husband and son. In the Rangpur songs, Mainamati performs *sati* after her husband’s death. She is not consumed by the flames nor is she drowned in the river (verse 168-193, Grierson 161-162; Bhattacharya 1:589-810). Her relatives do not praise this miracle, her identity as an enchantress is proven by the fact that neither the fire nor water would consume her. In Bhavani Das’s song, however, Gopichandra questions her mother’s fidelity to her husband by demanding to know whether she had performed *sati*:

> rājā bole śuna māo Maināmatī āi|
> bāp saṅge gechilā ni sakṣī jānāo cāi||
>
> (Das 698-699)

> [The Raja says, “O mother Mainamati,
> Do you have any witness to prove that you went along [a Sanskritic reference to ‘sahagamana’] with my father?”]

For Das, the fact that Mainamati was unsinged in the funeral pyre proves her sanctity. Like in the famous episode of Valmiki’s *Rāmāyaṇa*, Mainamati’s virtuous life (and not her supernatural prowess) is vindicated by this trial by fire.

Matriarchal society in Mamud’s composition is encountered only as an object of curiosity; during his extensive travels in search of his *guru* Hadipa (who had been buried alive by Gopichandra in order to avoid joining him as an ascetic companion), Kanhupa lands up in the ‘land of the one-legged’ (‘ekṭhengiyā’). It is a realm where only women live. They travel to Kamarupa, conceive by copulating with its inhabitants (most probably priests) and kill any male child which might be born of this heterodox union:

> āścarya dekhilām sei rājyer vyavahār|
> srī bine nāhi rājye puruṣer sañcār||
> srī rājā srī prajā srī rājyer dewān|
> srī rājā hoiyā kore rājyer pālan||

(Mamud 729-732)

> [Strange were the customs of that land,
> There weren't any inhabitants but women.
> Women are ruler and subjects, even revenue officers,
> A woman administers the state and wields the sceptre.]

It is interesting to visualise Grierson's interaction with the oral tradition of the *yogi*s as a critical crossroad of these divergent understanding(s) of gender. This parallels an earlier transformation in the history of South Asian *tantric* traditions in which the *kula* practices of 'clan-structured tradition of the cremation-grounds' associated with the earlier *kapalika* and *yogini* cults – were reformed and domesticised through the 'banning of mortuary and all sect-identifying signs' through the shaping of *kaula* traditions.[87] As we have already noted, Matsyendranatha (the founder of *yogini kaula*) and Gorakshanatha had evidently played important role in that transformation. This is recognised by Abhinavagupta (c.950-1020 CE), the famous Kaula polymath (in *Tantrāloka* 1.7), who expresses reverence to Matsyendranatha (*macchendra vibhuḥ*) as a consummate master of the *tantric* path.

The early texts of *yogini* cult, like *Jayadratha yamala*, focus on antinomian rites performed by ascetics at specific congregations outside the boundaries of normative society. Here, the masculine hierarchy of deities 'was replaced by the ranks of wild, blood-drinking, skull-decked Yoginis.'[88] These rituals were associated with the power-seats (*piṭha*), connected with cremation grounds. Developing from the Gupta cults of the mother-goddesses (*matṛkāgaṇa*), these rituals often involved the use antinomian substances (*pañcamakara*) – including the production and ritual use of sexual fluids (*dravya*). Several ruined temples associated with these rituals are scattered throughout India – built by post-Gupta dynasties like the Chalukyas of Badami, the Chandellas of Khajuraho, the Kalachuris of Tripuri and Somavamsis of Odisha. The hyperetheral temples of Bheraghat (in Madhya Pradesh), Hirapur and Ranipur-Jharial (both in Odisha) are among the most prominent. Often receiving royal patronage, these sites were vortices of libidinal power to which the royals and aristocrats received privileged access through the mediation of the adept. The *kapalika* endeavoured to imitate the tutelary deity, Bhairava, through a 'ritual reenactment' of his mythological exploits.[89] Thus these circles involved the presence of women – who were human embodiments of earlier deified beings – the *matṛkā* /*vidyadharī* / *yoginī*s. As Alexis Sanderson points out[90]:

> The cult of Yoginis is not concerned with these protean powers only as the inhabitants of a theoretical and liturgical universe, and as goddesses enshrined in the cremation ground power-seats. For they were believed also to possess women and thereby to enter into the most intimate contact with their devotees. Of these incarnate Yoginis some, having been conceived in the inercourse of the consecrated, are considered divine from birth. Others appear in girls of eight, twelve or sixteen who live in the vicinity of the power-seats… Others are identified in untouchable women from the age of twenty-seven as Dakinis and other forms of assaulting spirit.

In Bengal, the Pala efflorescence and the spread of the Vajrayana led to a permeation of these practices into the Buddhist fold. Atleast from the eighth century, this led to the development of parallel sets of rituals amongst the Buddhist adepts.[91] While Sanderson conceives of the Buddhist traditions as mere adaptations of rituals enumerated in texts like *Brahma yamala-picumātā*, *Jayadratha yamala* and *Tantrasadbhava* – Ronald M.Davidson focuses on intertexuality and hints at other sources of the Buddhist practices.[92] This is of importance for us as Matsyendranatha is often associated with the Buddhist tradition of *siddha*s (he is identified with Avolokiteswara in Nepal) and seems to be played a significant role in the spread of esoteric practices (both Buddhist and shaiva / shakta) in Bengal, during the Pala period. Miranda Shaw emphasises on the fact that the practices of Buddhist *yogini* tantras upheld the salience of women as active receivers of gnosis, and the traditions grew out of a 'communal exploration' of the *cakra* (ritual congregation) in which both men and women participated as egalatarian partakers.[93] Early Buddhist Tantras like *Guhyasamāja tantra* (c. late eigth century CE) decribe in considerable detail these congregational practices. Mainamati's identity as a 'dākinī' (sky-walker, a term used for Buddhist female *tantric* adepts) in the Rangpur songs (for eg. Bhattacharya 1.263) situates her in this larger context of Buddhist and *shaiva* practices.

The shift from these early practices in which sexual fluids were used as sacred eucharistic objects to those which aestheticised the process of communion itself and focused on erotic pleasure ('mahāsukha') as the portal of sacred gnosis had been an important change, most probably initiated by Matsyendra's *siddha* / *yogini kaula* school. This was further sublimated by Kashmiri *shaivism* into a series of inner visualisations of the communion, stressing on the need to retain the seminal fluid. As David Gordon White explains[94]:

> In the ninth or tenth century a paradigm shift of sorts occurred, with a change in emphasis away from the feeding of these ravening deities and toward a type of erotico-mystical practice involving a female horde collectively known as the Yoginis…Once gratified by said oblations, the Yoginis would reveal themselves as ravishing young women and gratify their human devotees in return with spiritual powers, most particularly the power of flight.

This is helpful for understanding the subtle changes in the image of Mainamati in the various versions of the song. In the Rangpur songs, her power of flight is described; it is Mainamati who chases 'godā Yama' and flies over considerable distances in an instant (verse 90, Grierson 155; Bhattacharya 1.334-336). In other words, Mainamati is a mortal *dakini* in these texts – she gains physical powers of flight as a mortal *yogini* would, sharing the gnosis of the esoteric congregation. In both Sukur Mamud and Bhavani Das's poems, however, Mainamati's flight is not described. On the contrary, in *Gopichandrer Sanyas*, Sukur Mamud describes a pantheon of celestial *vidyadhari*-s who visit Hadipa and Gopichandra during the journey of renunciation as Hadipa chants the appropriate mystical words (Mamud 2270-2301). Both Bhavani Das and Mamud engage in elaborate descriptions of inner, mystic topography (Mamud 1471- 1472, 2790-2807, 2828-2851; Das 13-14, 866-67) — evidently, an internalisation of the journey to liberation.

Moreover, the *natha* tradition, especially the development of Gorakshanatha's influence in this particular tradition, complements the development of *trika shaivism* in Kashmir. Whereas Abhinavagupta aestheticises the antinomian practices, *natha* tradition apparently renounced them. The popular story of Matsyendranatha being entrapped by ravishing beauty of women in the land of Kadali and his eventual liberation from that state of hedonistic excess by his own disciple Gorakshanatha, is recounted in *Gorakṣavijaya* / *Mīnketan*– a narrative yarn which had been adopted by Vidyapati in a multilingual play in the late fourteenth - early fifteenth century and as a verse narrative by several Bengali poets including Bhimdas, Shyamdas Sen and Sheikh Faijullah (Shyamdas and Sheikh Faijullah might actually be the same person or the textual similarities of their compositions suggest one amongst them composed it while the other wrote it; Bhimdas and Shyamdas are also sometimes considered to be the same individual).[95] The extant manuscripts, some from North Bengal and others from Tripura-Chittagong region, are not older than late eighteenth century and were, quite expectedly, products of the same regions from which the songs about Gopichandra had been gathered.[96] The yarn describes Shiva imparting esoteric knowledge to Gauri at a secret arbor in the legendary Ocean of Milk ('kṣīradsāgar'). Gauri fell asleep (probably being bored while listening to profound philosophico-mystical knowledge imparted by Shiva) but Matsyendranatha, one of the four eternal *siddha*s and a disciple of Shiva, listened to the conversation secretly by adopting the form of a fish (from whence comes his name). When caught in the act of stealing esoteric knowledge, Matsyendranatha was cursed by Shiva that he would forget this gnosis when he would need it the most. Later, Gauri adopted the guise of a beautiful maiden and tempted the immortal *siddha*s. This was done to test their abstinence of sexual desire. Matsyendra fell short (only Gorakshanatha was successful) and he was cursed by Gauri to venture to the land of Kadali. He would live a hedonistic life there with sixteen hundred women and would forget Shiva's esoteric gnosis. Gorakshanatha would eventually venture to the land of Kadali and would remind Matsyendranatha about the ephemerality of the physical world and sensual desires, liberating him from his stiffling sexual obsession. This story has been incorporated in *Gopīcandrer sanyās* (Mamud 367-1260). As *siddha* / *natha* traditions developed in the post-Gorakshanatha era, the erstwhile Tantric tendencies were toned down and the *kanphata yogi*s were transformed into a renunciate order. The note of abstinence in *siddha* / *natha* tradition and the sublimation of Kashmiri Trika traditions developed as parallel paths of sublimation. Thus, the teasing vacillations of the received traditions – recorded and written – do not merely replicate dialectical tensions engendered by the colonial, *enlightened* gaze. The tension had already been a part of the nature of the esoteric text that Grierson had recorded.

Yet, there had been a significant change in the reception of Manikchandra's song to which Grierson had been a witness to. The vacillations that we have discussed are often variations in a culture which primarily followed the 'traditional' technologies of communication. The Rangpur songs were part of an oral tradition which was being reshaped in each performance till they had been recorded in print. The manuscripts of Bhavani Das and Sukur Mamud also show signs of permissible variation in a culture in which the songs were not expected to be read in private but performed in public. Eric Havelock has discussed about the semi-oral traditions of seventh century BCE Greece which had engendered the Homeric epics. He has also pointed how fifth century BCE Athenian culture, which was fast evolving its textual traditions, had received the 'poetic'/ 'Oral'/ 'Homeric' corpus. This is not merely the matter of having a system of writing (the Greeks had one even in the seventh century BCE) but the technology of communication which was effectively in use. Plato's criticism of the poets in *The Republic* has roots in this reception of oral traditions in an analytical culture of textuality.[97] Ludo Rocher discusses the remarkable interventions which textual criticism brought about to the oral and manuscript traditions of the *Purāṇas*, when texts which had lived vitally in the oral performance of the *paurāṇika* had been standardised by philologists by working out a *stemma codicum*. The bardic performance changes depending on various factors, including the direct intervention of the audience in the middle of the recital. Rocher sums up the situation[98]:

> As a result, there must have been numerous living and real versions of each story. The fact that someone, at a certain moment, decided to write one version of the story down and insert it in a Puran manuscript, hardly justifies the view that this is *the* text of the story. Yet, that is the impression created by most of modern scholarly publications on the Puranas.

In the 'epic song' of Grierson, traces of oral culture which is about to be ossified into a printed text jut out as rough, metamorphosed edges. The myriad layers of historical accretion remain in an oral song in synchronic homeostasis.[99] The reception in print brings this into the domains of an analytical medium, hence initiating a process of diachronic historicisation. This leads to archetypal formulations of identities of language, class, gender and ethnicity. The role of the Asiatic Society in initiating and fostering this process which eventually led to the formulation of fractured, South Asian identities cannot be overstated.

It is hence not so much a question of how Mainamati was transformed from a sovereign, overt practitioner of antinomian rites to a submissive, apologetic, covert preserver of sublimated gnosis. Rather, it is a question of how one of her various identities had been standardised and crystallised and the consequences of such ossification of identity. Similar processes of ossification are noticeable for other markers of identity – class, ethnicity and language.

Both Grierson’s and Bhattacharya’s versions of the ‘epic song’ start with an elaborate description of the prosperity of the subjects during Manikchandra’s rule. This description of utopaic abundance is not merely limited to a certain class or community but seems to be all-pervasive:

Mānikcandra rājā baṅge baḍa sati|
hāl khānāy māsḍā sādhe deḍ buḍi kaḍi||
deḍ buḍi kaḍi loke khājnā jogāy|
aṣtamī pujār dine pNāṭhā goṭhe lay|
khaḍibeca haiye je khaḍi bhār jogāy||
tār badli chay mās pāl khāy|
pātbecha haiye je pāt āti jogāy|
tār badli chay mās pāl khāy||
ena Mānikcandra rājā saruya nāler beḍā|
ekatan yekatan kaire ke khāiche tār duyārat ghoḍā|
ghine bāndi nāhi pinde pāter pāchdā||
kāro mādāl keha naa jāy|
kāro puṣkanīr jal keha nā khāy||

(verses 6-11)

6. Manik Chandra was a very pious king in Banga. Each month he used to collect a tax on each plough of seven and half gandas of kaoris.

> 7. The people paid a tax of seven and a hal gandas of kaoris, and on the day of the Ashtami puja used to bring him a herd of goats.
>
> 8. The fuel-seller, who supplied him with fuel, had six months' taxes remitted to him in consideration thereof.
>
> 9. The leaf-seller, who supplied him with bundles of leaves, had six months' taxes remitted to him in that consideration.
>
> 10. Such a king was Manik Chandra that his ra'iyats' fences were built simply of thin reeds; the man who lived at hap-hazard, even he had a horse at his door. So proud were they, that not even the maid-servants wore saris made of jute.
>
> 11. No one had need to use the foot-path of another, and no one had to drink the water of another's tank.
>
> (Grierson 201)

Bhattacharya's version also records such descriptions of plenty (Bhattacharya 1.9-23) with common people setting up palatial residences ('dālān'). We have already discussed that the *kaori*s mentioned in the texts had been used as a proof by Dineshchandra Sen to suggest that the compositions were pre-Islamic. The reference to *ashtami* puja is also remarkable, as it serves as a proof of Brahminical culture and the rites of Durgapuja. The earliest references to Durgapuja in Bengal date from early fifteenth century, many centuries after the Islamic advent in Bengal.[100] Moreover, this Arcadian prosperity was vitiated by a certain diwan who is described quite suggestively in the songs of Rangpur (verses 12-18, Grierson 150; Bhattacharya 1.25-41):

bhāti haite āilo bāṅgāl lambā lambā dāḍi|

> sei bāṅgāl āsiyā mulukat kailo kāḍi|| (verse 12; Bhattarcharya 1.26-27 replaces ‘bhāti’ with ‘dakṣin’)

> A *Bangal*, with long beard, came from the *bhaati* region,
> As he came, he looted the people of the entire country.

The word ‘bāṅgāl’ is used to denote people from the eastern and south-eastern parts of Bengal. The word ‘bhāti’ is used to denote the deltaic region of lower, southern Bengal. This region, which had earlier been a forested region, saw a gradual clearing of the forest cover during the Mughal rule and the reclaiming of land for agriculture. Thus the spread of Islamic culture in eastern and south-eastern Bengal is associated with the term. As Richard Eaton explains[101]:

> A distinguishing feature of East Bengal during the Mughal period — that is, in "Bhati" — was its far greater agricultural productivity and population growth relative to contemporary West Bengal. Ultimately, this arose from the long-term eastward movement of Bengal's major river systems, which deposited the rich silt that made the cultivation of wet rice possible.

The *diwan* with a ‘long beard’ evidently marks the advent of Islamic culture in north and north-eastern parts of Bengal during the Mughal rule. Earlier, we have witnessed how Grierson uses the typology of ‘bearded strangers’ to mark the spread of Islamic culture as a watershed mark in Rangpur’s history. This evidently problematises the dating of the text as myriad layers of references are coalesced in a homeostatic performance of the song. Interestingly, the bearded diwan vanishes once we shift to another version of the song, Bhavani Das’s *Gopīcandrer PNācālī*, which had origins in the *yogi* circles of Tippera and Comilla. In this text, Mainamati reminisces about the period of prosperity during Manikchandra’s rule and blames Gopichandra for increasing the tax and perpetrating a tyrannical rule (Das 136-173). This divergence might suggest the variant histories of these two regions – the divergent political systems and processes of the spread of Islamic culture. Grierson's translation and commentary, however, ossifies this typology of 'bearded strangers' in print – hence implementing the process which Rocher has dicussed.

One needs to realise that there might be another source for the descriptions of famine and tyrannical rule in the songs of Rangpur. It is the British who had been the tax collectors of Bengal during the famine of 1769-1770 and during the Sanyasi-Fakir rebellion in the subsequent decades. It is Naib Nazim of Bengal, Muhammad Reza Khan (working under the British), who had increased the taxes by ten percent. This had been one of the immediate causes of the famine.[102] It is Devi Singh, the Diwan of Dinajpur, whose tyrannical reign as the collector of revenue for the British, led to the uprisings of 1781-1783.[103] The 'set of lawless banditti'[104] which the Council describes in its report in 1773 and to which Willam Hunter alludes to in *The Annals of Rural Bengal* left traces of their disgruntlement in the songs of Rangpur:

sāudh sadāgar dyay khājnā nāo nauka beceyā||
fakir darbesh dyay khājnā jholā kethā beceyā||
lāṅgal becāy joyāl bechāy āro becāy phāl|
khājnā tāpat becāy dudher chāwāl||

(Bhattacharya 1.36-39)

The saints and the merchants paid taxes by selling their boats,
The Fakirs and Darvishes paid their taxes selling their bags and rags.
They sold off their plough, their yoke, their share,
Singed by the taxes, they even sold their own child.

In the Rangpur songs, the subjects rose against the ruler and eventually decided to end the reign of Manikchandra. It is Mahadeva/ Shiva who eventually instructs them about appropriate occult rites so that the ‘asati’ (‘immoral’) ruler might die. It is evident why Grierson was desperate to identify the ‘bearded strangers’ with the Islamic rulers of Bengal. Interestingly, this identification would leave an indelible impact on Bengali prose when the most prominent of Bengali novelists, Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, would appropriate this identification in his historical romance, *Ānandamaṭh* (1882) – which was set in the backdrop of the Sanyasi-Fakir rebellion. Bankimchandra’s novel, published only four years after Grierson’s translation, would influence the nationalist movement in India and the genesis of schismatic national identities.

Gautam Bhadra discusses about the complex dynamics of sovereignty and subordination, reflected in the long poem *Kāntanāmā*, written by Dewan Manulla Mandal, the song provides a historical narrative about the zamindars of Kantanagar in Rangpur. Manulla Mandal’s text had been discovered by Nalinikanta Bhattasali in Dinajpur, West Bengal. Significantly, Manulla had worked as a copyist of songs of Gopichandra.[105] He was also a Dewan – the category of prosperous peasants who served as semi-autonomous villageheads in North Bengal, collected taxes on behalf of the zamindar and would eventually evolve as the prosperous *jotedar*s (the reference to the dewan in the Rangpur songs also become significant in this context). Bhadra notes elaborately how Manulla’s text reflects an ambiguous distribution of power in the village communities of this region and how religion was evoked to reflect these ambiguities of *dharma*. Bhadra notes the cultural and religious syncretism of the region that could have produced a text like *Kāntanāmā*, a text replete with allusions of *mangalkavya* and *pauranic* high tradition, yet written by a muslim ryot. He notes how the *burhana* and *madaria pir*s and *natha yogi*s live in communities with blurred demarcations of identity – where Baikuntha and Behesht, Nirajan and Allah merge inextricably.[106] Bhadra also points how the ambiguous concept of 'rājdharma' (the moral code of a ruler) was used to justify rebellion. The subaltern consciousness did not challenge *rajdharma* but rebelled against individual rulers who transgressed it. Bhadra notes[107]:

> Manulla is not unique in pursuing this theme. It is also present in the ballads of Mainamati and Gopichandra, so popular with illiterate Muslim peasants, weavers, and the Yugis, agricultural labourers and lime-makers of north Bengal. Through the work of Sukur Muhammad(sic), Manulla was familiar with these stories. … On this point Manulla is close to Gopichandrer *git* rather than to any *sastric* literature.

Bhadra goes on to state[108]:

> There is yet another reason why Manulla's text may be thought to have a general significance. If we were to think of subordination not as a static and fixed property of particular classes but as a process and a relationship, which people could enter into to reproduce in different contexts of hierarchy, the relevance of Manulla's text becomes apparent. In his statement we begin to see the different elements in the cultural repertoire of rural Bengal that are marshalled and arranged in order to communicate to his masters his feelings of loyalty and submission. Hence, Manulla's text is of interest to us not simply because it allows us to see a particular form in which a peasant may try to present his view of rajdharma to his landlord in order to get material benefit as well as merit. What makes the text rich are its contradictions and ambiguities – the fact that a text ostensibly written to please the landlord should carry within it its own moments of irony, fear, resistance and resentment.

Bhadra's observations become important as it helps us to understand some of distinctive traits of songs of Gopichandra. The invocation of Rama in Grierson's version (verses 1-2); the presence of Narada who acts as a marriage broker (Bhattacharya 1.681-688); references to *vaishnava*s in Grierson (verse 431; Mamud 248-250), allusions to Krishna (Das 1144-1145), mention of *kirtaniya*s (Bhattacharya 1.565) and the sacred basil leaf ('tulsi patra' in Bhattacharya 2.1145); the prayer to Chandi-Kali (Bhattacharya 1.222) – make sense from the context of a dynamics of appropriation which Bhadra has charted out in his paper. The vestiges of the high tradition are especially conspicuous in Sukur Mamud's song in which we notice references to the epic tradition (Mamud 238-469, 2662-2663), to the *mangalkavya* (Mamud 1655-1721), to *pauranic* legends (Mamud 1861-1865) and to the *Bhagavata Purana* (Mamud 429-430). The description of Chaitanya casting a mysterious spell of devotion on wild animals in the forest (*Caitanya caritāmṛita*, Madhya līla 17) is transposed on the influence of Hadipa on animals (Mamud 2328-2345). The esoteric knowledge which Gopichandra sought for is craftily associated with the high tradition of Vedantic philosophy ('vedānta bhedānta kathā,' Mamud 306-307). Yet, in the Rangpur songs, Hadipa is definitely associated with antinomianism. When Mainamati solicited Gopichandra to be Hadipa's disciple, he retorted with disgust:

Hāḍi chād jāti khetkhānā nikāiyā nā kare snān|
Bāiś danda rājā haiyā karimu Hāḍik praṇām||

(verse 367, Grierson 175)

Hadi is of a vile caste. He does not bathe after cleansing the toilets. Shall I, a king of twenty-two *danda*s, make obeisance to a Hadi?

Hadipa hence becomes a generic representative of sweepers, deemed as untouchables in the traditional Brahminical society. His impurity makes him an antinomian character, especially for the king (Bhattacharya 2.50-59; Das 1081-1083). His subversion is further associated with deviant *vaishnava* orders like the *sahajiya*s (he is refered to as 'ṭhāgār boṣṭhom' in Bhattacharya 5.1267). In fact, ideas about corruption in the *yogi* order and associations with their secretive, adulterious relationships with women are hinted at. Gopichand questions her mother about the source of her hermetic gnosis (verse 363, Grierson 175; Bhattacharya 2.81-97; Das 626-629; Mamud 1416-1417). He suspects her mother's motives in not rescuing his father from Yama's clutches. He doubts her fidelity and hints at her adulterous association with Hadipa (Bhattacharya 2.460-463). He asks his mother about his own birth:

> putra haiyā akta kathā, mā, tomār āge kai|
> ehāte yadi gāli pāḍ pitār dohāi||
> cāri cākri pukurkhāni, mā, madhye jhalamal|
> kon birikher botā āmi, mā, kon birikher phal||
>
> (Bhattacharya 2.361-365)
>
> [Even as a son, o mother, let me ask you something,
> If you abuse me for this, I would swear by my father!
> The four-fold pool, mother, shines in the middle –
> I am the twig of which tree, o mother? Of which tree am I the fruit?]

The reference to the 'four-fold pool' makes sense when we realise that the image of a pond/pool is associated with the four *chakra*s/ *padma*s in Buddhist *tantra* – centres of consciousness through which the *kundalinī* flows upwards through the *susumna* in the journey towards supreme bliss (*mahāsukha*).[109] The luminous substance shining in the middle (the central channel of *suṣumnā*), metaphorically associated with the sun (*ravi*, *surya*) is in actuality the menstrual fluid (*rajas*).[110] The tree (birik, Sankrit. *vṛikṣa*) represents *bodhicitta* (the enlightened consciousness) which is associated in the Tantric code with the semen (*śukra*).[111] It is when *rajas* is imbibed through *coitus interruptus* (*samarasa*)in the body of the male adept and is united with the *śukra*, it travels up through the four-fold pools of consciousness, leading to ecastatic bliss (*mahāsukha*).[112] This reverses the actual process of conception in which the semen is ingested in the woman's body. Gopichandra's question is quite pointed – if Mainamati has been a practitioner of the *tantric* ritual, how did she give birth to a child? He hints that both Mainamati and Hadi were corrupt esoteric practitioners and they have indulged in sexual consummation, perhaps causing his birth.

The apprehensions about corrupt *yogi*s are mostly incipient and covert in Grierson's version of the 'epic song.' They become more overt in Bhattacharya's recording. The hedonistic *yogi*s are often identified as being indulgent in sensual pursuits, especially with women – they are referred as 'seducers'('nārīcorā,' Bhattacharya 5.238-244) and 'lechers' ('māguya yogī,' Mamud 1851-1852). This develops as a misogynistic note throughout the corpus, justifying the king's separation from his wives and the Hira's punishment of morphing into a bat (verse 649-659, Grierson 194-195; Bhattacharya 5.2031-2050; Das 1525-1534). Earlier, Hira's subversive status had been specifically aligned with notions of caste pollution:

tor natī rūp dekhi yena andha kūp|
hāḍi dom chuiyā bāwane pāḍe dub||

(verse 576; Grierson 190)

O courtesan, your beauty is like a dungeon –

The *brahmin*s touch the sweepers (‘hāḍi’) and undertakers (‘dom’) and yet jump in it.

Gopichandra’s wives lament as they want to be with their husbands; they goad their husband to enjoy his youth and spend it in sensual pursuit. They even want to join the king in his spiritual journey. In Mamud’s song, they request him to stay till childbirth and even try to poison Hadipa to stall their husband’s renunciation (verses 243-255, Grierson 166-167; Bhattacharya 5.216-234, 2.440-441; Das 364-372; Mamud 1320-1323, 1969-2103). Gopichandra refuses sexual contact with queens as well as the courtesan. Yet, this is also recognition of the female body as the geneatrix, the mother (verse 453, Grierson 181; Das 1218-1220; Mamud 2533-2534) – an association the queens (and Heera in *Gopichandrer sanyas*) vociferously deny.

However, these notions of corruption/ pollution are challenged by other depictions. Mainamati adopts a child called Khetua (verse 218, Grierson 165) after the death of Manikchandra who grows up as an attendant lord. Khetua’s origin is lowly, as is suggested by his status as an attendant of the king. The queens dismissively refer to him as a slave (Bhattacharya 5.370). Gopichandra however denies that the lowly status of Khetua:

āmi daṣ māse, rāni, Khetua, daś māse|
kāko āte kāko nā āte nachiber doṣe||
…
āmi hocchi rājār cheiḷa bhāi kene achut|
ek thober bNāś, rāni, nachibete lekhā|
keo hay phuler sāji keha hāḍir jhNātā||

(Bhattacharya 374-381)

[I was in the womb for ten months, o queen, so was Khetua,
It is fate which gives status to some while others don’t fit in.
…
If I am a prince, why would my brother be an untouchable?
O queen, (we) are the cane from the same bush, but its fate –
Some are used to weave flower basket, others become the sweeper’s broom.]

The flower baskets are sacral symbols, associated with divine worship and hence with the brahmins. The sweeper(‘hāḍi’) might refer to the so-called untouchable caste, but can also refer to Hadipa’s antinomian status as the preceptor of a heterodox gnosis.

Religious syncretism further challenge boundaries of caste prejudice. Grierson collected his song from a Muslim *yogi*, yet his song does not overtly refer to Islam and its percepts. Notes of syncretism are more prominent in Bhattacharya’s version:

uttar dike darbār baise rājā Jalpeśvar|
paścime basilo darbār pīr paigambar||

(Bhattacharya 2.16-17)

[In the north was the seat of the regal Jalpeshwar
In the west was the seat of the Saint and the Prophet.]

Jalpeshwar, the famous shrine of Mahadeva / Shiva in Koch Bihar, is described along with the shrines of the Islamic saint and the Prophet, most probably alluding to the direction of Mecca. While Mainamati reminds Gopichandra of the ephemerality of life by referring to the Hindu cremation and Islamic funeral (Das 309-310), Sukur Mamud declares his own identity:

sāyer Allah-r nām fakir gunamanta|
tāhār tanay pNuthi racila yogānta||

(Mamud 883-884)

[Fakir Gunamanta was the bard of Allah –
His son wrote (this) scripture of the essence of Yoga.]

Sukur leaves it ambiguous when he states that 'it is not for a Muslim (*yavana*) to practise the Hindu rites/ Yet, that there is some significance in their traditions is not untrue;/ It is like the Islamic Hadiths" (Mamud 1261-1264). The *yogi* traditions of Bengal thus exposed the ambiguities of ethnicity, gender, caste and religion through the propagation of its syncretic gnosis.[113]

Questions about the ethnic origins of the Bengalis and the search for their historical roots were also necessarily a search for their linguistic and cultural roots. The members of the Asiatic Society were probing into these issues, as is evident from Rajendralal Mitra's article on "The Pala and Sena Rajas of Bengal", in the same volume of the *Journal* in which Grierson had published his translation of the 'epic song'. Mitra summarised the epigraphic evidence available in order to reconstruct a credible chronology of the Pala rulers. He suggests that their sovereignty extended 'as far as the boundary of Behar and probably further, taking the whole of the ancient kingdom of Magadha.' It however, seems to be limited to the northern regions of Bengal, including 'Tirhut, Malda, Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Rangpur and Bagura, which constituted the ancient kingdom of Paundravardhana. The bulk of the delta seems… not to have belonged to them."[114] This association of the Palas with the northern regions also connected them with the Chandra rulers and established their contrast with the Senas who, apparently ruled over the delta region and the eastern reaches of what was curiously termed ‘Bengal proper’. Mitra also refers to a Bengali treatise called *Sambandha Nirṇaya*, published two years earlier by Lalmohan Vidyanidhi, which established associated Adisura, the legendary king who initiated the Brahminical culture of Bengal, with the Senas. Mitra does not give much credence to Vidyanidhi’s sources but he notes[115]:

> In no part of the world could two such near neighbours as the Palas and the Senas, professing such antagonistic faiths as Buddhism and Hinduism, co-exist without coming into hostile contact; and in Bengal there is no reason to suppose that the case was otherwise than what has been elsewhere invariably the result of such neighbourhood.

Thus an antagonism between the Hindus and the Buddhists – an antagonism quite hard to decipher from the *nathayogic* corpus of Bengal – was constructed. Mitra suggests that the Palas were driven out of Bengal by the Senas in the middle of the eleventh century. Bengali prose would soon appropriate these fractured identities – in Gopalchandra Mukhopadhyay’s *Vīrvaraṇ* (1883), we meet with Virasena (whom Mitra identities with Adisura in his article and places his rule in c.986-1006 CE) as a protagonist, cleansing Bengal of its defiled, corrupted Buddhist rulers. Although Mukhopadhyay’s chronology is not strictly historical (his narrative starts at 998 Samvat/ 921 CE), he portrays Virasena’s ascension as a popular rebellion against a tyrannical Buddhist dispensation. Virasena is presented as a feudal chief of Ramapala (whose historical dates should place him in the second part of the eleventh century, not the tenth). Mukhopadhyay portrays Madhuri, called ‘unmādinī’ by the residents of Gaur who revere her prophetic and occult powers, urging Virasena to stage a revolt against Ramapala. She is an embodiment of

Mother Bengal. Her songs are not devoid of nationalist suggestions, but were curiously directed against the indigenous Buddhist rule[116]:

vidharmī koreche deha adhikār!
hridpinda chNiḍe kare chār khār!—
katakāl ār,
jātanā apār
sabare nĪrabe?—jharibe nayān!
[The hererics have seized my body!
They tear apart my heart, desecrate it!—
O for how many more days
This infinite pain
Would I bear silently? – I have to cry!]

This silent cry of 'six crore children (santān)' is reminiscent of Bankimchandra's *Ānandamaṭh*, which had been published just a year earlier. Like Bankimchandra, Gopalchandra also depicts an Acharya called Dhurandhar, a religious man with occult powers who serves as Virasena's advisor. The *acharya*, Dhurandhar, is an important character – like Satyananda in Ānandamaṭh, he provides justification for the revolt by tapping into the libidinal, subversive resources of the *tantric shakta* iconography. Yet this assertion of nationalism is declared as a clarion call not against the British, but as a fight against the tyrannical Buddhists. At the heart of Gopalchandra's text is a romance between Virasena and Malaya, a sixteen year old *yogini* who had been forcefully carried away by Ramapala from Varanasi. Thus, Malaya's recovery also becomes a symbolic representation of the recovery of Bengal from the clutches of the Buddhist heretics.

Malaya's identity as a *yogini* engenders its own ambivalences, ambivalences which we have encountered in Grierson's 'epic song'. We meet Malaya imprisoned by Ramapala in a flowery arbor, much like Sita in Ashok-vatika. She looks at the flowers and listens to their conversation with the wind, birds and the bumblebee[117]:

> The bumblebee said with an excited heart, "Listen, listen, listen!" The wind, the master of the innumerable flowers, spied a crimson rose conversing with the bumblebee. How could a lone lover protect so many women? As the wind rushed to his beloved rose, the bumblebee occupied the heart of the tuberose. Immediately, a bird chastised the tuberose, "O Myna!"
>
> The word 'Myna' impressed the damsel. The moment she was about to turn her saddened face to look at Myna, a man -- all smiling -- came in with steady steps into the echites-grove.

The word 'Myna'is quite interesting. When Malaya would come out of her reverie, she would realise that it was she who was being called. The words 'Malaya' and 'Myna' have been confused – this bit of miscomprehension might be significant. The word might have refered to the Common Myna (*Acridotheres tristis*), a member of family Sturnidae, native to South Asia. The word is used to suggest licentious women, even courtesans or prostitutes, which might explain why the bird rebukes the adulterous tuberose as 'Myna.' However, we cannot discount Malaya's identity as a *yogini* which would immediately associate her with Mainamati. Thus, Malaya's erasure of Myna/Maina(mati) is also a recognition of the subversive trace decipherable in the embodiment of the Nation as Mother. The seminal texts of nationalism endeavoured to domesticate, reform and disassociate this subversive womanhood from its ambivalent/ syncretic roots.

These divergent notions of ethnicity were not merely Orientalists constructions – the colonised also imagined, categorised and stereotyped the coloniser. Frederic Salmon

Growse (1836-1893) had noted the beliefs of Prananathis, a syncretic sect of North India about whom Wilson had earlier discussed. Growse came across Prananatha's treatises in Mathura. The owner of one of the manuscripts, Karak Das, could not be convinced by Growse that the Isa of the *Koran* (repreated alluded to by Prananatha in his treatise) was actually the incarnate God, worshipped by the English. An exasperated Growse remarks[118]:

> Like most of the Bairagis and Gosains with whom I have talked, his idea was that the fiery and impetuous foreign rulers of the country were Suraj-banshis, or Descendants of the Sun, and that the sun was the only God they recognized, as was evidenced by their keeping the Sunday holy in his honour.

In November 1881, a report about the dissenting sect of *kumbhapatia* (sent by the Under Secretary to the Government of Bengal, Judicial Department) was read at the meeting of the Society. They denounced idol worship and revered Alekh, the Supreme Being, as their only deity. Alekh became incarnate as Alekh-swami, who descended from the Himalayas to Orissa and spread his faith amongst the masses. The clashes with the followers of Jagannath in Odisha drew the attention of the British civil servants, who were fascinated by the monotheistic cult that was being proclaimed. Another report on the same sect ('Followers of Alekh') was read in January 1882.

Like Grierson, Richard Carnac Temple (1850-1931) was also drawn to the local bardic traditions. A young Lieutenant in the Bengal Staff Corps and sent to Punjab in 1879, Temple was soon promoted as the Captain in 1881. In his early study of folksongs of Punjab, Temple reflects those traits which would eventually confirm his stature as one of the preeminent ethnographers/ folklorists of Punjab. Temple prefaces his translations of the folksongs with a discussion on Punjabi grammar and a vocabulary. One of the songs he quotes and translates represents a conversation between a flirtatious woman and an otherworldly *yogi*[119]:

Stri. Andar bahar ek'hi rit,
Kya jane duje ki prit?
Jogi. Tu hai sundar banki nar,
Kyon kar'ti jogi ko khwar?
[Woman. His mind and body are the same:
What does he know of other's love?
Jogi. You are a skittish beauty:
Why do you disgrace the Jogi?]

This replicates many of the themes reflected in the conversation between Gopichandra and his wives. It is to be noted that Punjab has a considerable population of *natha yogi*s and Tilla Jogian, a peak in the Eastern Salt Range (presently in the province of Punjab in Pakistan), has one of the prominent monasteries of Gorakshanatha's order. The site is described in several folk songs of Punjab as Ranjha, the star-struck lover of Heer, becomes a *yogi* and lands up at Tilla Jogian as a renunciant.

Grierson had been transferred to Bhagalpur at the end of 1877 and then to Darbhanga. He became interested in the literature of Bihar which remained his lifelong passion. He edited Manbodh's *Haribans*, a *vaishnavite* text of the eighteenth century. It was a Maithili adaptation of the narrative of *Harivaṃśa*, the story of Krishna. The Maithili text was published in the *JASB* 51 in 1882 and Grierson's English translation was published as a special number in 1884. In the forthcoming years, Grierson would publish several collections of folksongs from Bihar – “The Song of Bijai Mal” (also included in the special number of 1884, in Bhojpuri), “Some Bihari Folk-songs”(1884, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 16:196-246), “Some Bhojpuri Songs” (1886, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 18:207-267) and “The Song of Alha’s Marriage: A Bhojpuri Epic” (1885, Indian Antiquary 14:209-227). These resources would enable him to write *Bihar Peasant Life* (1885), a fascinating socio-anthropological survey of rural life in Bihar. He published *An Introduction to the Maithili Grammar of North Bihar* (printed as an Extra Number to the *Journal* in 1881). From 1883 to 1887, he went on to publish grammars on seven lects of Bihar (*Seven Grammars of the Dialects and Subdialects of the Bihari Language*). Moreover, Grierson collected two more narratives of the *natha*s from itinerant singers; he published them in the *Journal* in 1885. Predictably, these two are in local Bihari lects – the Bhojpuri version was recorded in Shahabad while the Magahi version was recorded in Gaya. What is distinctive in Grierson’s introduction is his assertion that the song had originated in central India and had later ‘penetrated as far east as even Rangpur.’[120] In the Bihari versions of the legend, Gopichandra/Gopichand is the king of Dhar (located in the Malwa region, presently in Madhya Pradesh). Mainamati convinces Gopichand to become an ascetic. He eventually accepts Gorakshanatha as his guru, through the mediation of his maternal uncle Bhartrhari (the legendary ruler of Ujjain). Mainamati dissuades Gopichandra from visiting Bengal[121]:

> [She] warned him in his journeys never to go to Bangal. The king says he has never been there, and asks what sort of country it is. He has been all over India, Balkh and Bukhara, but has never been there. The mother insists on the necessity of his avoiding Bangal, for his sister Champa(or Birna as she is called in the Bihari versions) lives there, and if she chance to see him wandering as a beggar,

> she will die of grief. To which he replies, ‘When I went first to be an ascetic, I left sixteen hundred wives behind me, and not one of them died. Why then should my sister die?’

Gopichandra does visit his sister in Bengal and she does die, as had been predicted by her mother. Gorakshanatha comes to her rescue and revives her. The differences of this narrative – popular in the Hindi heartland of India from Bihar to Maharasthra – from the narrative encountered by Grierson in Bengal are quite telling. Bhartrhari becomes an important character while Hadipa is conspicuously absent. Mainamati loses much of her sovereignty as a proficient occult adept. Moreover, Bengal is no longer Gopichand’s domain – he travels there to meet his sister (in spite of being asked not to do so). The fact that Grierson accepts this narrative as the older version of the legend reflects his ideas about linguistic and cultural exchanges in India. Bengal has lost its centrality not only in the narrative but also in Grierson’s conception of diffusion of Indo-Aryan languages and culture.

The ambivalence about the linguistic register, especially the inability to comprehend the esoteric contents of the literature collected, recorded and translated continued with the efforts of the ethnographers in Northern India. Hugh Fraser published a collection of songs from Eastern Gorakhpur, with additional notes from Grierson and F.H. Fisher. Although grouped together as folklore, these songs of myriad forms – *kajri* (songs expressing longing for the beloved during the rains), ‘ṭhumri,’ ‘jatsarī’ (grinders’ song), ‘virhā’(songs of separation) and some of irregular metre. It is interesting to analyse one of the songs which had been translated. The text and the translation are quoted, along with the translator’s note that follow them:

hamra pichhuarwaa mitwaa sonar|
guji ghar hain dui sei chaar||
piaraa sarson ghan mangaawe|
haath ke beree haath bethhawe||
chhat maah|
chat dhartee laage||
harin laage khaae|
jaag jaag jogini maae||
sat guru ke bandon paar||
chaar chaukoree pokhraa|
rote banaawal ghaat||
te bait ke devee nihailee|
harule paral hnaak||
nikrat devee pahiraa saaree|
sab dnaag par haath pasaaree||
aalam se chalal pukaaraa|
se bikh nijiwe khoda||
sat guru ke bandon paar||

Behind my house is a goldsmith, my friend.
There are two hundred and four beetles in my house.
Kindly fetch yellow mustard seed.
Put the bracelet on the arm.
Six months six earths there are.
The deer began to eat.
Wake, wake, Jogin mother.
(Mantra) Sat guru ke bando par.
A four cornered tank.

> At the landing place Debi made bread.
> There sitting she bathed.
> The Garur gave a cry.
> Debi came out and put on her sari (veil).
> And stretched forth her hand on every string,
> Then cried aloud to all the world,
> Thus may God deaden poison.
>
> (Mantra) Sat guru ke bando par.
>
> [Note: Being an incantation the lines are nonsense. The “Sat guru &c,” is effective mantra. The above is the nearest meaning I can arrive at.]

The fact that Fraser thinks that the lines are nonsensical shows us the occlusion of the ethnographers to the mystical traditions which engendered these songs. The ‘guji’ (beetle/ worm) that the text talks about symbolises sexual desire that wastefully consumes the *rasa*/ *bija*/ *bindu* (the essence, here ‘semen’). Mustard seed, associated with *vajra* [123](‘the thunderbolt’ but also ‘the phallus’)[124] is a potent symbol of semen. This results in worldly bondage(‘beree’) and misery. Even our ephemeral lifespan(‘six months’) seem to be like six worlds (the supreme bliss is ‘six worlds’ away from our basal state, the ‘six worlds’ being the six *chakra*s of *shakta tantra*). The deer eating the grass is the involvement of the self in the mortal cycle of consumption (this reminds of the comparison of the *citta* with the deer in sixth cārya of the *Caryāpāda*, composed by Bhusukapada, ‘apaṇā māṃsNe hariṇā vairī,’ ‘the deer’s own flesh is its foe’). The poet desperately urges the kundalinī to wake up, to rise along the *susumna* to higher levels of consciousness. Kundalinī is identified with Shakti, the Divine Mother, in s*hakta* / s*haiva tantric* symbolism[125]; this is the significance of referring to it as ‘Yogi mother.’ The four-fold pool has already been encountered. It is from here that *roti*(bread) is created, signifying the consciousness centres as the source of the corporeal cosmos. The Mother, once awakened, washes herself at the 'ghāt,' purifying the consciousness of its licentious attachments. She moves through the worlds of consciousness like a beautiful saree-draped woman. The strings are pulled (the *tantric* image of the body as a loom seems to be alluded to) as she swirls upwards, freeing the self from the poison of attachments. It is for guidance to bring about this journey that the 'sat guru', the Enlightened Master, is paid obeisance to. The erotic, adulterous hints in many of the other songs Fraser quotes might also be similarly associated with a subversive gnosis. Though Hugh Fraser and Grierson considered these songs nonsensical, there were other members of the Asiatic Society who were listening to this other harmony. The foremost amongst them, one who would leave indelible mark in the evolution of Bengali language and prose, was Haraprasad Shastri.

Haraprasad Shastri (1853-1931) was born in a family of Sanskrit scholars. His grandfather, Manikya Vidyabhushan, had assisted Jones in the interpretation of Hindu Law. Manikya Vidyabhushan settled in Naihati, in the 24 Parganas after the Battle of Plassey (1757). Haraprasad's elder brother, Nandakumar Nyayachanchu (1835-1862), was a profound scholar and was a friend of Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar.[126] After graduating from Sanskrit College, Haraprasad came under the direct influence of two of his illustrious neighbours in Naihati – Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay and his brother Sanjivchandra Chattopadhyay (1838-1894). Bankimchandra identified his talent and urged him to write for his periodical, *Baṅgadarśan*.[127] From 1876 to 1883, Haraprasad not only wrote essays but also penned a novel for the periodical. In 1878, Rajendralal

Mitra, the Philological Secretary of the Asiatic Society, asked him to translate *Gopāltāpani upaniṣad*. Eventually, after a brief stint as the Professor of Sanskrit in Lucknow, Haraprasad started helping Rajendralal in publishing descriptive catalogue, *Nepalese Buddhist Literature* (published 1882). He helped Rajendralal with the cataloguing during his illness.[128] In February 1885, Rajendralal Mitra was elected as the President of the Society, the first Indian to be bestowed the honour. In the same meeting, Haraprasad was inducted as a member of the Asiatic Society.[129] Rajendralal's Presidential Address in February 1886 suggested a generational shift. He confessed that changes have occurred in the functioning of the Society, but it had begun 'its second century of its career with far greater vitality, energy, and capacity for useful work than what it possessed at the time of its birth.'[130] His note of regret is, however, quite significant – especially for the first native President of the Society[131]:

> To an Indian like me, the brief survey I have above sketched, affords, in one respect, a matter of painful reflection. I cannot but mourn that, amidst steady and arduous work, amidst hard struggle for progress, advancement, and knowledge, -- for greater and greater light and mastery over the mysteries of physical phenomena, for throwing open the arcana of nature – the pioneers among my countrymen should be so few. They should be much more and far more enterprising in the service of knowledge in their country that what they are.

It is the likes of Haraprasad Shastri who would be one of the prominent pioneers.

The increased involvement of Indians in the affairs of the Society contributed to an increased study of regional languages, especially dialects and those beyond the domain of the normative Indo-Aryan languages. In December 1885, F.E. Pargiter presented a paper entitled “Notes on the Chittagong Dialect”. This was eventually published in 1887. Pargiter notes that the language spoken in Chittagong is a ‘dialect of Bengali, but greatly corrupted, owing to the remote position of the dialect, the strong Muhammadan element in the population, and the tendency in East Bengal to speak quickly and clip the words.’[132] What is noticable in Pargiter’s statement is both a desire to appropriate Chittagong lect as a regional variation of Bengali as well as to stress its marginal status due its locality as well as its religious demography. These constructions of alterity would lay down the narrow boundaries of identity which are questioned and destabilised by a text like Grierson’s ‘epic song.’ Pargiter’s paper was responded to by Augustus Frederic Rudolf Hoernle (1841-1918), a German-British Orientalist and philologist, who had been working on Indo-Aryan languages and was the present Secretary of the Society. His *Comparative Grammar of the Gaudian Languages* (1880) had carried on the work of Beames and influenced Grierson’s philological and linguistic enquiries. More significantly, he would propose the two-wave theory which would considerably influence the evolution of Indo-Aryan comparative linguistics in the coming decades. According to Hoernle, the first Aryan invasion took place in Punjab through the valley of Kabul. In contrast, the second wave of invasion occurred in a later period and proceeded with greater speed as the new group drove into the heart of the Ganga-Yamuna river basins and settled in the central regions of India. Brahmanical culture developed with the inter-marriage of the Aryans and the non-Aryans. Hymns of *Rgveda* were written and eventually classical Sanskrit evolved. Hoernle identified two early Aryan language groups with the two waves of invaders: Magadhi, the tongue of the first group, and Sauraseni, of the second. The Magadhi varieties, according to Hoernle, were displaced to the east and south by Sauraseni, and it was from this second linguistic wave that Rgvedic culture evolved. Grierson accepted this theory, which perhaps explains why he hinted at the eastward direction of spread of his ‘epic song’.

Hoernle welcomed Pargiter’s paper and stated that though it was known that ‘Bangali possessed equally distinct and instructive dialects’ as Hindi and Bihari, very little work has been done on them. He noted that ‘phonetic detrition’ in the case of the Chittagong dialect has been carried a step beyond what is generally found in the Gaudian lects. He also noted that change of an intial sibilant or of a ‘ch’ to ‘h’, quite common in the Chittagong lect, was also noted in other languages like Sindhi and Punjabi. Curiously these belonged to the extreme west.[133] Thus, Hoernle seems to have associated Sindhi and Punjabi with the language of Chittagong as first-wave lects. Nawab Abdul Latif Khan also responded to Pargiter’s paper. He noticed how Bengali became corrupt the further one moves ‘in all directions from the district of Nuddea, the seat of pure Bengali’[134]. Interestingly, Abdul Latif suggests a similar model of corruption for Urdu (which Hoernle’s scheme would have placed as a second-wave lect) but wondered why the idiomatic expressions of chaste Urdu ‘have been carefully preserved in Murshidabad and Dacca’ while ‘they have been quite corrupted in the chief towns of the Province of Behar, through which the Urdu language has travelled to Bengal.’ Evidently, this destabilised Hoernle and Grierson’s ideas about the epicentre and margin of linguistic propagation.

In August1886, an abstract of papers regarding enquiries into the ethnology of Bengal was forwarded by the Government of Bengal to the Asiatic Society for criticism and suggestions. In September 1882, the Government of India issued to all Local

Governments and Administrations, at the behest of the Census Committee, an instruction to collect more precise information regarding caste and occupation of various groups in India on the basis of the statistics of the 1881 Census. Risley was entrusted to conduct the Ethnographic Survey of Bengal. He commenced his work in February 1885 and met D.C.I. Ibbetson and J.C. Nesfield to chart a future course of action. The official communication to the Society urged the members to collect ethnographic data 'on the same general lines in order that their results might be of some service to students of comparative ethnology in Europe.' Two sets of questions were prepared. The first set was 'designed to bring out by as few and simple questions as possible the leading characteristics of any particular caste.' The second set was more detailed; it was divided under the categories of 'Constitution – Domestic ceremonies – Religion – Superstitions – Social Customs – Occupations – Relations to Land'[135]. Risley wanted to enquire 'physical characteristics of certain selected castes and tribes of Bengal' and endeavoured to establish a correlation between physical features and position in the caste hierarchy. Needless to say, this signalled the intrusion of racial typology which further reaffirmed the schismatic linguistic, ethnic and religious boundaries in Bengal.

The significance of these schismatic categories in analysing a text like Grierson's 'epic song' must be sufficiently comprehended. The religious identity of the *yogi*s were in question – were they Hindus, Buddhists or Muslims? Further, the nature of the lect used in the composition of the songs was also in question. Was it a dialect of Bengali or could it be categorised a separate lect? How should one name it? Moreover, what was the ethnicity of the population who had produced and listened to these texts for centuries? What was the ethnicity of the Koch/ Rajbanshis? Were they Hindus / Aryans / Bengalis?

These questions had not hindered the creativity of a Durlav Mallick or a Sukur Mamud – but they became pertinent during the phase of nationalist reformation of Bengali literary aesthetics.

On 2nd January, 1889, the monthly meeting of the Society was attended by an unusual visitor – Omrao Gin Gosain, the Mohant of the Bhotbagan Math situated at Ghusuri, Howrah. The Math had been set up in 1775, after the Anglo-Bhutanese War which had been initiated when Bhutan suddenly invaded Koch Bihar in 1772. Lobsang Palden Yeshe (1738-1780), the sixth Panchen Lama and the head of the Tashilhunpo monastery, had been involved in the peace negotiations between the English and the ruler of Bhutan. He had befriended George Bogle, the Scottish adventurer and diplomat, and had requested Warren Hastings for a place on the banks of Ganga. Interestingly, the monastery was set under a *shaivite sanyasi*, Puran Gir Gosain whom Lobsang Yeshe granted the use of the land in 1785.[136] Omrao Gir Gosain happened to be one of his successors. The monastery acted as a conduit for the Tibetan manuscripts which proved to be important in the Orientalist understanding of Vajrayana Buddhism. Gaurdas Bysack was presented two important manuscripts by Omrao Gin Gosain, which he handed over to Sarat Chandra Das for inspection. Both the manuscripts were associated with the Gelugpa Order of Tsongkhapa. They had been presented to Lobsang Yeshe to Puran Gir Gosain.[137] Puran Gosain had indeed been a remarkable man – he had not only facilitated the Anglo-Tibetan negotiations at the court of the Panchen Lama but also joined the Lama in his diplomatic mission to the Court of the Chinese Emperor. As Bysack described him[138]:

> He was a *Brahmana* and a *dandi*, and a follower of Sankaracharta's teachings, he was a young man when he went to Tibet, had fair features, was tall, strong and sinewy, and was a good rider… He possessed remarkable intelligence and wisdom and was a master of many languages, including Tibetan and Mongolian, a wide range of experience acquired by travel in and out of India, a practical insight into all the commercial relations of Asia… and enjoyed and deserved a reputation for piety and integrity which made him the trusted Agent of the Lama and the British Government.

What is remarkable about this vivid pen-sketch is the ambivalent status of the monastery. Although Bysack categorises the monastery as a 'Buddhistic' one, he also asks a pertinent question, 'How Hindu Gods and Goddesses with those of Tibet receive joint worship?'[139] For eighteenth century figures like Puran Gosain, Warren Hastings and Lobsang Yeshe – the boundaries between the myriad religious and political identities were fluid. By the last decades of the nineteenth century, a systematic effort was made to unequivocally demarcate these categories.

Rajendralal's illness made it unable for him to continue as the President of the Society. The Presidential Address of 1889 was delivered Lieutenant Colonel James Waterhouse (1842-1922), a pioneering photographer who headed the Photographic Department of the Survey of India. Waterhouse declared that the Ethnographic Survey of Bengal, which had been initiated in 1885, had been completed and the 'extensive materials collected [were] being prepared for publication.' The first two volumes would contain the measurements of nearly six hundred people, 'representing about eighty castes and tribes of Bengal and Northern India'. Risley had been invited for the Paris Exhibition of 1889 (Exposition Universelle) and 'a series of life-size models [were]…being prepared at the School of Art for the exhibition in Paris'[140] A man like Puran Gosain (not to talk of the bards of Rangpur whom Grierson had interacted with) would have felt increasingly marginalised in a world which started to attach monolithic identities to photographic frames and anthropometric dimensions.

In the Annual Meeting of February 1890, financial problems became one of the major topics of discussion. There had been considerable expenditure in repairing the premises. The invoices of Trubner and Co., the distributor of Society's publications in London, had not been paid yet. The Annual Report states[141]:

> The fact is therefore evident that the ordinary income of the Society is not sufficient to meet present expenditure, and that measures must be taken to reduce the expenditure within the limits of income. To be constantly meeting expenditure from capital must seriously cripple the permanent income of the Society before long.

One of the measures taken to tackle the financial crisis was to stall the publication of books which were thought to be of little practical interest. We have earlier noted how Grierson's decision to publish an edition of the *Yoginī tantra* had been stalled by 1893 due to 'lack of funds.' An effort was also undertaken to increase the subscription fees. In January 1891, the alteration of the rules, as proposed by the Council, was brought up for discussion. There seemed to be considerable adverse reaction, especially from the Indian members[142]:

> A letter from Raja Rajendralala Mitra strongly objecting to the alterations was read, and then remarks were made by several members. Dr.W.King supported Raja Rajendralal Mitra's objections and Messrs. Mehta and Donaldson and Babus Asutosh Mukherjia, Gaurdas Bysack, Jogendrachunder Ghose, Rajnikanta Gupta and Nobil Chundra Bural spoke against the proposals to

> increase the subscriptions and to substitute annual for quarterly payments. Messrs. Munro, Sclater and Pedler approved of the proposal to increase the subscriptions.

The proposed alterations were then put to vote and the proposals asking for changes in subscription were rejected. Although this was a major victory of members associated with Rajendralal, the Council found other ways to introduce changes. For example, in the May 1891 meeting, 'The recommendation of the Finance Committee that future edition of the works published through the Oriental Publication Fund should be reduced from 500 to 300 copies was confirmed.'[143] Just a month earlier, the Secretary wrote a letter to the editors of the Oriental Publications informing them 'that the funds in hand were insufficient to carry on publications at the present rate and requesting them to send no more manuscripts to the press'during the year.[144] This might have been a temporary shortage of funds but the aim was not merely to stop publications, rather change the nature of the publications themselves. In June 1892, discussions were being held in the Council of India, London in order to abolish the India Office Library. Grierson was allowed to attend the meeting in person and the members of the Asiatic Society decided to draw up a representation to the Government of India against the proposal to 'abolish and disperse' the collection.[145] In August 1892, a resolution was passed in the monthly meeting to enter into a negotiation with the Government for granting funds to publish a third section of the *Journal*, dealing with Anthropology, Ethnography and Folklore.[146] In the same meeting, the entry of Risley in the Council of the Society was declared. In other words, there was a decided ethnographic turn in the policies of the government which endeavoured to limit the literary explorations into the Oriental terrain and supplement it with so-called scientific data regarding their customs and identity which might be deemed as *useful*. When Rajendralal Mitra died in July 1891, Haraprasad Shastri was ‘invited to carry on the duties of Sanskrit Ms Fund.’[147] Haraprasad received an advance of a thousand rupees to purchase manuscripts from Varanasi in September 1891. In November 1891, he was offered a year’s gratuity and was assured the help of two pundits.[148] Haraprasad was one of the last practitioners of a method of literary sociolinguistic exploration which was fast giving way to ethnographic studies and racial typologies.

In the meantime, Haraprasad’s relationship with Bankimchandra had been complicated by their ideological differences. Haraprasad’s *Kañcanmālā*, a historical novel, was serialised in the *Baṅgadarśan* in 1882-1883 (Asadh-Magha, 1289 Bangabda). Curiously, in the Preface to the novel published in the book form in 1915, Haraprasad laconically comments, ‘In 1290 [sic], when Sanjivchandra Chattopadhyay was the editor of *Baṅgadarśan*, *Kañcanmālā* had been published. After that, due to various reasons, I had not written in Bengali for a long period of time; thus, I did not try to publish *Kañcanmālā* [in book form].’[149] In a memoir about Bankimchandra, Haraprasad has commented, “We had a few intense quarrels, for that I had to stop writing in Bengali for a while.’[150] While Gopinath Kaviraj and Ganapati Sarkar have hinted that Bankimchandra became alarmed by the presence of a potential competitor, Nikhileshwar Sengupta suggests a more probable explanation. Haraprasad’s novel was set in the reign of Ashoka in third century BCE Pataliputra. It narrated a tale of courtly conspiracy in which Ashoka’s youngest wife, Tisyaraksha (Tissarakka) conspired with the Brahmin minister Radhgupta to disinherit Kunala, Ashoka’s son and heir apparent. Shastri etches out a story of lust in which Tissarakka lusts for Kunala and when refused by the virtuous prince, conspires to blind him. Tissarakka’s success of denying Kunala was brought about by the evident support of the brahminical bureaucracy which was dissatisfied at the ascendancy of Buddhism as state religion under Ashoka. Sengupta hints that it was Haraprasad's portrayal of the Hindus as conspirators, who had brought down the legitimate rule of the Buddhists which might have perturbed Bankimchandra.[151] Bankimchandra's ideological differences with his own brother, Sanjivchandra (who had published Haraprasad's novel in *Baṅgadarśan*) also comes to the fore. In his memoir, Haraprasad writes about Bankimchandra's 'dualist' phase from 1882-1884 during which he tempered his erstwhile unalloyed aesthetic sensibilities with spiritual, didactic and nationalist symbolism. He describes how "Vande Mataram", in spite of being criticised for its errant euphonic constructions, became the clarion call of a nation. As much as he admired Bankimchandra, Haraprasad never failed to outline this 'profound differences' in their ideology.[152] It is significant that Bankimchandra's *Ānandamaṭh* was published in the same year as Haraprasad's *Kanhanṃalā*. The ideological rift between the mentor and his disciple, the nationalist and the Orientalist – was split wide open. Thus when Shastri joined as the Joint Philological Secretary, in charge of the publications of the *Bibliotheca Indica*, he was at loggerheads with two contentious tendencies of his time – Hindu nationalism and ethnographic determinism. In his studies, he would discover the subversive possibilities of Tantric gnosis and its influence in shaping the ambivalent, syncretic contours of Bengali literature.

In August 1890, in the same meeting in which Waterhouse presented his paper on "Reversal of Image on Photographic Plate", Haraprasad presented before the members the map of 'ancient Aryavarta,' prepared by Nagendranath Basu. This was Haraprasad's first presentation in a meeting of the Society; he was evidently hesitant[153]:

> I will not take up much of your time by going into the details of the map, but will content myself by pointing out the route taken by the Cloud Messenger of Kalidasa's well-known work the Megha Duta.

Haraprasad's considerable contributions to the Society would serve as a similar counterpoint to the limitations of the photographic plate; it would also present an image of South Asia which aimed at subverting the gaze of the coloniser and the evasions of the nationalist.

Haraprasad was not alone in this quest of the syncretic roots of India. Gerindranath Dutt communicated an article titled "The Antiquities of Belwa Sirsea" in December 1891. He discusses about an obscure village called Belwa Bhaya, in the Saran district of Bihar (near the two of Gopalganj, presently in the newly formed Gopalganj district). He described a spot in the village[154]:

> There under a Pipal tree… stands a big image of Buddha Gautama, which was formerly buried under a mound of earth and is not yet wholly dug out. Although the Putwary in his report had stated this to be Bhairoji's Murti, as called by the ignorant villagers, from the description given in it I was at once convinced, even before seeing the spot, that the antiquities must be of a Buddhistic and not Brahmanical period… It is in a standing posture, having its head cut off down to the chin and both hands mutilated, showing the vandalism of fanatics on the revival of Brahmanism.

L.A. Waddell presented a sixteenth century account of the Indian Buddhist shrines, recovered from Tibetan sources, written by an Indian Buddhist *yogi* named Buddhaguptanatha in February 1893. As the name of the *yogi* suggests, he had affiliations with the order of the *natha siddha*s. Waddell confesses that there is much ambivalence[155]:

> [W]hile Tirthi Natha and Buddhagupta Natha are held by the Lamas to have been truly Indian Buddhists – and they certainly were born in India, and made their pilgrimages chiefly to Buddhist shrines – their form of religion was of the most highly Tantrik and Saiva type and scarcely recognizable as Buddhism, although it is practically, if not wholly, identical with the Buddhist Yoga in its latest development amongst the Northern Buddhists of Kashmir, Nepal and Tibet. These two Yogis indeed seem to belong to the same school as Gorakhnath or Gorakshanatha, noted leader of the Kanphata or ear-slit Yogis… and usually considered a Buddhist Yogi.

Haraprasad's "Reminiscences of Sea-voyage in Ancient Bengali Literature" (January 1893) was an exercise in decentring an important aspect of colonial rule. Colonial rulers prided themselves of their naval explorations – Haraprasad discussed five manuscripts of the *Manasāmangal* narrative (composed between 1495 and 1595 CE), all of which described Chand Sadagar's sea voyage. Haraprasad's point was critical if we realise that Vasco da gama landed up in Calicut in 1494. Haraprasad conceded that much of these are perhaps fictive but stressed that they contained a core of real-life naval history[156]:

> There is much that is fabulous in this, but in later works, the fabulous element appears in greater abundance. The fleet seems to have passed by the Aracan Coast describing the country of cannibals, who were to be found till very recent times in the Andaman and other islands in the Bay of Bengal. Anupam Patam seems to have been a city in Ceylon.

Grierson's 1893 publication of a specimen of Malik Muhammad Jaisi's *Padumawati* (composed in early 16th century CE) in 1893 was important in the linguistic and literary history of Hindi literature. As the antiquity of Chand Bardai's *Prithiviraj Raso* was seriously questioned and the poems of Vidyapati had changed considerably, *Padumawati*'s archaic language was attractive for a philologist. He also did away with most of the 'favourite devices' of the Pandits and spelt the words as they pronounced (unlike the brahmins, who generally had the habit of hypercorrection). Grierson notes that the narrative has attracted many Islamic poets and the tradition was essentially syncretic.[157] Grierson notes the difficulties of transliterating a Hindi poem written in Persian character. He concedes, like he did for his 'epic song', that there are passages which he did not 'yet understand' and which 'awaited further examination.' Grierson eventually published the text and translation of *Padumavati* in the *Bibliotheca Indica* series (New Series No.877) in 1896. Jaisi's poem reflects a symbolic Sufi story of love and separation between the Creator and the Soul. It is ironic to note that the same narative would engender a series of nationalist texts with a decidedly anti-Islamic bias. It is interesting to note that Ratan Singh disguises himself as a *yogi* to win Padmavati's hand. Thus, the quest of Ratan Singh was inherently a *yogic* quest – a quest akin to what Grierson had already encountered in his 'epic song.'

E.A. Gait's paper on the Koch kings was a significant text as it marks the intrusion of the schismatic categories of systematic historical study in the domain of the *natha*s of Rangpur, Dinajpur and Koch Bihar. We have already discussed about the obscure roots of the Koch / Rajbanshi kings. Gait corroborates the accounts of earlier historians like Hunter, Buchanan-Hamilton, Robinson and Glazier with indigenous genealogical sources like the *Vaṃśāvalī* or *Puruṣanāṃa* of the Koch Bihar family, written by Surya Hari Ganaka in 1806 CE, and *Asamburunji* by Vishveshwar and Rai Guniabhiram Barua. He makes a significant reference to Hiuen Tsang's travel account which reveals ambivalences about caste and religious identities[158]:

> [Hiuen Tsang] visited Kamarupa about 640 A.D., at which a Hindu prince named Kumara Bhaskara Varman was on the throne. He describes this ruler as a Brahman, but by this it seems doubtful whether he meant anything more than that he was a Hindu and not a Buddhist. Barman is a well known Kshattriya title, and is one which is commonly adopted today by Kacharis, when they accept Hinduism and assume the sacred thread, on the fiction that they are concealed Kshattriyas. The method of conversion by fictions such as this is, doubtless, of very ancient date, and from the fact that this prince described himself as "Barman," it seems not unreasonable to presume that he was a Hindu convert from some aboriginal tribe. The presumption is strengthened by the fact that his subjects are described as being of small stature with dark yellow complexions, and by our knowledge that subsequent rulers, e.g., the Khven and Koch kings, were nothing more than Hinduised aborigines.

Haraprasad was not deterred by these ambivalences; he revelled in elaborating upon the syncretic roots of Bengali culture and ethos. In November 1894, he presented a paper titled "Ancient Bengali Literature under Muhammadan Patronage". He emphasised that it was Ala-uddin Hussain Shah's (reg.1494-1519) tolerant attitude towards Hindus which had enabled him to extend the boundaries of his kingdom. Rather than presenting the image of Muslims as desecrators (as had become increasingly popular in nationalist literature), Haraprasad stressed on the note of harmony[159]:

> Following the example of their Noble Master, the Provincial Governors and Generals also assumed a conciliatory policy towards their Hindu subjects. This enabled Husain to make extensive conquests in every direction. He conquered a portion of Tripura, and the greater part of Chattagram. He destroyed the powerful dynasty of Kamtapur, in the north, and led several expeditions against the King of Orissa. He afforded an asylum to the last fugitive King of Jaunpur, and thereby risked the displeasure of the powerful Lodi King of Delhi. All this he was enabled to do because the Hindus were friendly towards him, and he had nothing to fear at home.

Rather than interpreting the conquests of Hussain Shah as imperialist exercises against the Hindus, Haraprasad interpreted them as the successful products of Hindu-Muslim solidarity. This also led to the production of literature – translation of *Rāmāyaṇa* by Krittivasa, of *Śrīmad bhāgavatam* by Gunaraj Khan and of *Mahābhārata* by Kavindra Parameshvar (who received patronage from Paragal Khan, a Governor of Hussain Shah). The *mangalkavya*s were composed. Chuti Khan, Paragal's son, had ordered an elaborate poem on the *Asvamedha Parva* of the *Mahābhārata*. This was composed by Srikar Nandi and was recently discovered by Pandit Binod vihari Kavyatirtha[160]:

> He found in the collection of Babu Anukul Chandra Ray, a landholder in the vicinity of Komilla, a copy of Chuti Khan's work, complete in 87 leaves.

The reason why Haraprasad considers Chuti Khan's poetry to be a specimen of 'very good Bengali' is significant[161]:

> There is no pedantic use of Sanskrit words, and is completely free from Persian influence. There are indeed… the old Pali and Prakrit forms which have not yet been eliminated from the language. A

> study of these works is likely to remove that misapprehension about the poverty of the Bengali language which has induced some Bengali writers to coin new words, and to make the modern Bengali style jar in the ears of the Bengali public.

Thus, Haraprasad criticises the sanskritised pedantic style, the overtly Persianate style as well as the ‘modern Bengali style’ which unnecessarily coined words. He focused on Pali and Prakrit as the basic source of Bengali vocabulary. This fitted in well with his stress on Buddhist culture as the substrate of Bengali language and culture which had eventually assumed a syncretic form under the influence of later appropriations.

It was Haraprasad’s ‘discovery’ of Buddism in Bengal which runs as a persistent undertone of his papers presented in the Society during these years. In December 1894, he presented a paper which would sum up the innovative hypothesis that Dharma worship in Bengal is the remnant of once flourishing Buddhist culture in the region. He starts his paper by pointing out some salient facts which distinguish the worship of Dharma-raja/ Dhamma from the Hindu Brahminical rituals. His shrine is often under a tree or in the open. The deity is worshipped as a round stone with one or two nails driven through it; though sometimes a *ghata* (an earthen jar, full of water), generally used in Brahminical rituals, is also used. Daily worship is not insisted upon. More significantly, the priests are Doms, Pods, Bagdis and other groups belonging to the lower echelons of the caste hierarchy. The annual festival is one ‘from which the higher classes generally hold aloof.’ One of the conscpicuous features of the annual festival, ‘the atheletic feat of swinging on a lofty pole… was put a stop to in 1868 under the orders of Government.” At the annual festival, a long poem called the *Dharmmaṅgala* or *Dharma ṭhākurer gān* is recited. The mantras used for the worship of Dharma also appeared to be quite curious to Haraprasad. Haraprasad emphasised that the name Dharma-raja is mentioned in the *Amarakosha* as one of the names of Buddha. Dharma is also the first of the Buddhist triad. Moreover, he reminds us that Saratchandra Das had earlier quoted from Taranath, the eminent Tibetan historian's work, which reaffirmed that 'after the destruction of Higher Buddhism by the Muhammadans, the popular and *tantrik* Buddism remained in Bengal and was known under the name of Dhamma'[162]. Shastri establishes the differences between the cult of Dharma-raja and that of Shiva in Bengal, in spite of both being associated with trees. Shiva's temples face the western direction while Dharma's shrines generally face the East. He also notes the gradual but persistent brahminical incursions which were still transforming these Buddhist shrines into Shaivite ones[163]:

> The offerings are made over to the priest of the temple, a *Dom* or *Mayara* or *Teli*, and he presents it to the deity. But proud brahmanas when they offer any votive offering disdain to have it presented by a low fellow and so they bring their own priests. In some temples in the vicinity of large brahmana population, there are two priests, one low born, and the other brahmana for presenting votive offerings. In one cae the brahmana has completely supplanted his low born rival, and he now worships the deity with Saiva mantras and looks upon him as Siva. But in the daily worship he divides the naivedya, or rice offering, placed on a brass plate in the shape of a cone, into two semi-cones making a trench with his finger, and offers the joint *naivedya* to the joint deity saying *shivaya dharmarajaya namah*.

Haraprasad also discusses about the *Dharmamaṅgala* narrative and how it endeavours to establish the superiority of Dharma over the Hindu trinity. He stresses that Doms figure prominently in the work and he was searching for earlier recensions of the poem. The only version of *Dharmamaṅgala* printed till then was Ghanamram Chakraborty's *Dharmamaṅgala*, composed c.1710 CE, which Haraprasad found to be filled with later accretions. Shastri discusses the mantra by which Dharma was worshipped and stresses on one of his epithets, *sunyamurti*, which he associates with Madhyamaka *sunyavada*. It is important to realise that Grierson's 'epic song' also refers to Dharma as the supreme arbiter who was placated by the subjects of Manikchandra to bring about an end to his tyrannical reign. Moreover, an older narrative in the entire *Dharmamaṅgala*/ *Dharmapurāṇ* corpus is associated with a certain king called Harischandra.[164] Nalinikanta Bhattasali has associated him with Harischandra, the ruler of Savar, the father of Aduna-Paduna in the Gopichandra cycle. Though this theory has been discredited and Harischandra has been associated with a kingdom in Bardhaman district[165], the similarities between the general religio-social world presented in these narratives cannot be denied. The predominance of Sunya as a deity who creates the Hindu Trinity, as described in Ramai Pandit's *Anilpurāṇ* / *Sunyapurāṇ*, finds resonance in the references to *sunya* in Grierson's 'epic song'(for example, verse 467, Grierson 182). Ramai Pandit's narrative about how Dharma tested Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva by morphing a putrefying corpse is preserved in Rajvanshi folklore.[166] The story of Harischandra, contained in Ramai Pandit's narrative was later contained as an episode in the later *Dharmamaṅgala* narrative. Both Sahadev Chakraborty as well as Ramai Pandit, the composers of the two extant *Dharmapurāṇ*-s describe the birth of the *natha siddha*s, Matsyendranath's listening to the esoteric discourse of Shiva-Parvati as well as the Gorakshanatha's heroic rescue of his master from the land of Kadali (we encountered these in the *Gorakṣavijaya* narratives).[167] Sukumar Sen also notices the *yogic* resonances in both these traditions. The main *Dharmamaṅgala* narrative also situates itself during the rule of a certain Dharmapala's son, mysteriously named Gaudesvar (the lord of Gaud). Not only is the poem placed in the identical *w*eltanschauung, Nagendranath Basu notes similarities and parallels in the narratives and the characters.[168]

Years later, Haraprasad recollected how he suddenly came across this idea about an ancient Buddhist substrate of Bengali culture after reading the new edition of Ghanaram Chakraborty's *Dharmamaṅgala*, published from the Bangavashi press. He described his coming across Dharma shrines in Suyaganchi and Jamalpur villages (Kalna subdivision, Bardhaman district). The remarkable incursion of Brahminical tradition was witnessed in Jamalpur while the mantra of Dharma was collected from Suyaganchi. Later he came across similar shrines of Dharma in Kolkata.[169] It is interesting to note that his field studies were yielding remarkable results – syncretic, filled with carnivalesque excess (in the essay just mentioned he describes Panchanan, one of Dharma's associates, who had to be satiated daily with a bottle of liquor) and essentially subversive.

Grierson's position was more ambivalent. An imperialist administrator, a contributor to census and ethnographic studies – he was also a self-critical researcher, as is evident from his repeated confessions about miscomprehension. The ethnographic interest in the North-East manifested itself not through studies of literary texts but through compilation of vocabularies. S.E. Peal's table of comparison of words spoken in the various North-Eastern languages were signs of things to come.[170] Grierson and Hoernle, along with C.Little, represented the Society at the Tenth International Congress of Orentialistis at Geneva in 1894. Noted linguists like Saussure and Buhler attended the meeting.The common convention for transliterating Sanskrit and Pali was adopted.[171] Grierson's ambivalences became evident in the disagreements the linguists had in standardising the transliteration rules and phonetic symbols, especially for the liquids, sibilants and the aṅunāsikā. Disregarding a quest for purely literary sources (like *Yoginī tantra*), Grierson suggested that Gait's note of the subject of Historical research in Assam should be published in the Proceedings of the Society on April 25, 1896.[172] When Hoernle became President in February 1897, he stressed on the critical disjunction with the past[173]:

> A very happy distinguished member of the Society, Horace Hayman Wilson, once said with regard to his own labours for the Society that they had made many hours of leisure in this country slip happily away. To have many hours of leisure for scientific work is an experience which I fear is not given to any of us in these days of professional work under high pressure. To me that will always be one of the sad reminiscences of this "land of regrets."

Hoernle's statement was clear enough – the Oriental pursuit was no longer about an erudite, leisurely indulgence; it was about scientific investigation geared as a supplement for 'professional work.' In the Annual Address of February 1898, as the President of the Society, Hoernle discussed about the achievements of the Ethnographic survey of Risley. He also discussed about the survey in the North-Western provinces (completed in 1896) and the ongoing survey in Punjab, under the supervision of William Crooke and Longworth Dames respectively.While the first two volumes of the Bengal Survey focus on enumeration and description of tribes, castes, sects and occupations –two other volumes focus on the 'scientific part of the enquiry'. They provide the data on which Risley's 'ethnographic generalisations' are based. Hoernle emphasises[174]:

> Special interest attaches to these tables; for they are the first attempt on a large scale to apply the anthropometric system, elaborated by the French school of anthropologists, to eludication of the problem of caste which is so prominent in India.

It is based on these studies that it was decisively concluded that 'the brachycephalic or broad-headed race occurs only along the northern and eastern borders of Bengal, and can hardly be deemed Indian at all.'[175] Risley's theories about the racial origin of caste was opposed by Ibbetson and Nesfield who 'hold that caste originated from differences in the occupations of the people.' Hoernle, following Emile Senart, concludes the discussion by considering the problem of caste from a more universal perspective; he considered it to be embedded in the exogamic codes of the Aryan tribes. The gradual erosion of these codes has taken place 'among the Aryan nations of the West…due…to the growth of strong political and national feelings; and it is the absence of such feelings in India which probably accounts not only for the continued existence, but occasional new creations of caste in this country.'[176]

Hoernle continues the discussion with an account on the comparative philology of Indian languages and the contributions of Grierson. He hopes that the North-Indian vernaculars would be studied in great detail due to the Linguistic Survey of India which was since 1895 progressing under the supervision of Grierson. The idea was first suggested in the International Congress of Orientalists at Vienna in 1886. The Congress requested the Government of India to carry out the detailed survey of the languages and dialects spoken in India. First, a rough 'unscientific catalogue' was being made of the languages spoken in India, excluding 'Burmah and Madras Presidency'. The initial list was prepared in the following manner[177]:

> Each District Official and, in the case of Independent States, each Political Officer was given a printed form which he was requested to fill up, naming every dialect and form of language, under the appellation by which it is locally known, spoken in the tract under his change.

Hoernle informs us that the lists for Bengal Proper, Bihar, Orissa, Central and North-West Provinces, Oudh and Punjab were complete and in the Press while those for Assam and Rajputana were ready but had not been yet sent to the Press. There were two parts in the Rough List. In the first, languages are arranged according to local areas while in the second languages are arranged according to families and groups. Hoernle now reveals a critical aspect of the survey[178]:

> The original returns have been prepared by persons with local knowledge, but who do not pretend to be philologists. They may be taken as representing what intelligent local people consider to be the languages of their own neighbourhood. They give names, but they are names only. We are told, for example, that Bangali is spoken in such and such a place, but we are not told what is meant by the word "Bangali." It is probably the language which Europeans call Bengali, but it may be something else. .. The decision of these and similar questions is one for linguistic experts, and it is to provide experts with materials for coming to a decision, and thus to render the survey complete and of scientific valur, that the second portion of the scheme has been devised, and, it is hoped, will be approved of by the Government of India. As soon as the rough list of a Province is complete, translations into every language, indigenous to each district, will be called for from each local officer. One standard passage has been selected for these translations, namely the Parable of the Prodigal Son… But as every translation will probably be more or less stiff, efforts will be made to procure at the same time an original folktale, song, or other naturally spoken sample of the language. When all these translations have been collected, they will have to be examined, and with their aid each language mentioned in the rough lists will have to be classified under its proper name and family.

Hoernle's suggestion was quite clear – it is the linguistic experts who would decide the linguistic identity of an Indian. One may claim to speak in Bengali but unless that was validated by the expert, conclusions should not be arrived at. Hoernle assured us that such a survey would, along with its 'proper purpose', also through fresh light 'on unsettled points of history and ethnography.'

Hoernle saw Grierson's initial conclusions as a validation of his 'two wave theory'. He placed Bengali among the so-called Non-central languages of the First Wave. These languages have evolved from an originally synthetic Sanskrit to an analytical language and again back to being a synthetic one, by the incorporation of the auxillary words, used in the analytic stage, with the main words to which they were originally attached. Examples are genitive terminations like the Bangali 'er', or verbal terminations like the Banglai 'ām'. In the Annual Report, presented in February 1898, the publication of the Part III of the *Journal* was announced, which was to contain Reverend R.A. Sherring's 'Index of the Hindu Tribes and Castes as represented in Benares'. This part of the *Journal* would be eventually published in 1903 but the ethnographic conventions were already given a preeminent position in the Society.

The product of theories about the overlapping of caste and ethnicity was to imagine a construction of archetypal sociolects, often stereotyping particular professions as hereditary domain of particular linguistic groups, who shared their own unique linguistic code. Saratchandra Mitra had read a paper in July 1894 entitled "North-Indian Folklore about Thieves and Robbers", which was eventually published in the *Journal* in 1896. The initial lines of his article reveal how language, culture and religion came to be increasingly associated with profession[179]:

> Every profession, not excepting even that of the light-fingered gentry, has its gods and goddesses… The vegetable-sellers of Bihar have their gods. The Kahars…or palankeen-bearers, and the Mallahs, or boatmen of Bihar, also worship particular deities who, they believe, watch over their welfare and safety. Indian thieves and robbers, and thr rest of the marauding fraternity, have also particular goddesses whom they worship in the belief that success or otherwise in their pilfering expeditions depends on the favors or frowns of these female deities.

Not surprisingly, the female deity is revealed to Kali. What is surprising though is the manner in which Saratchandra associates particular communities with theft and banditry. He evidently follows Colonel Sleeman's identification of Thugs as a community sharing not only religious but also linguistic codes. Saratchandra quotes a series of Bengali idioms relating thieves in order to prove that 'theives play an important part in the proverbial philosophy of the Bengali people.' These idiomatic references also develop as a persistent code which helps in the delineation of stereotypes. In his next article, titled "Buddhism in Bengal since the Muhammadan Conquest", Haraprasad problematised some of these stereotypes. He asked, "All these facts plainly shew that fire and sword were employed in the destruction of Buddhism in Eastern India. But who employed them?"[180] The question is poignant, especially if we keep in mind tensions between Bankimchandra and Haraprasad about *Kañcanmālā*. Haraprasad conceded that Muslims used physical force, but Hindus also persecuted the Buddhists. Sasanka cut down the Bodhi tree, Sena rulers granted 'lands to Brahmans bordering on Buddhist Viharas, thus setting up a perpetual source of annoyance to the inmates of the monastery.' To prove the persistence of Buddhism after the Muhammadan conquest, Haraprasad resorts to the *Dharmamaṅgala* narrative, and briefly elaborates the story as it is depicted in

Ghanaram's text. Haraprasad describes again his interactions with the *mayara* priest at the village in Suangachi. He described that *dom*s participated in the worship. Haraprasad quotes from Taranath's *Bkah babs bdun* which had been translated by Saratchandra Das. The specific passage he quotes is interesting[181]:

> He (the Domacarya) preached the Tantrik doctrine of Buddhism, called Dharma, to the people of Tippera, and obtained numerous followers. Many among them became Siddhas too. He was then invited to the country of Radha, and Rara in the common language of the people. The Raja of that country was a bigoted follower of Brahmans, but seeing the supernatural powers of Domacarya, and his goodness and learning, he became changed in his views, and henceforth the "Dharma" Buddhism, in its Tantrik phase became greatly honoured and followed by the people of Bengal, Raḍha, and Tippera. By the worship of Dharma, is meant, that of the Buddhist deities such as Vajra-yogini; Vajra-varahi; Vajra-bhairava(Ksetra-pala); Vajra-dakini; the Natha, and so on.

The passage from Taranath validated Haraprasad's efforts to connect two disjunct regions of Bengal and prove their Buddhist predelictions. Moreover, by the reference to the *natha*s and *siddha*s, the passage also points at a particular phase in the history of Tantra in which the Buddhist and Hindu *tantric* practices overlapped with each other. The story of the Domacarya refered to in the extract is remarkable. He was Virupa's disciple (his name was Dom Heruka Virupa) and had been a king of Tippera. Having married a *dombi*, he was declared an outcast by his subjects. Renouncing his kingdom, he went to the forest and achieved *yogic siddhi*. He returned to his kingdom, which had been troubled in the meantime by maladministration, and converted the inhabitants. The minglance of religious heterodoxy, ethnic antinominianism and sexual subversion, aspects we have clearly deciphered in Grierson's 'epic song', is discernable in Taranath's narrative.

In another paper, Haraprasad compared Lausen's story described in *Dharmamangala* with Buddha's life depicted in *Lalitavistāra*.[182] In 1897, Haraprasad published a crisp summary of the facts and views propagated in his series of articles on Buddhism. His remark about Nathas in this book is worth mentioning, in order to outline the evident link between his investigations and Grierson's interactions with the *natha yogis*[183]:

> Many sects arose in the bosom of Bauddhadom itself which openly sympathised with the Saivayits and others. The Nathas or saints arose in India and Nepal about the 14th century, who were reverenced both by Hindus and Buddhists. …Brian Hodgson says that Nathism or saintism was the bridge uniting the orthodox and the heterodox, the Brahminical and the Saugata sects. The Nathas were said to have been possessed of supernatural powers. They were not much attached to any creed… The Brahmanas shunned them as much as they shunned any man belonging to any heretical sect. But they had immense influence among the other the other castes, specially those outside the pale of Orthodox Society i.e., those people whose water the Brahmanas did not accept. .. In Bengal an entire section of the *yogi* caste call themselves Nathas, and those were anxious some years ago to assume the sacred thread and become Brahmanas i.e., made an unconscious effort to regain their religious supremacy. An investigation as regards the position of these Nathas in India would be of invaluable use to the student who interests himself in the history of the chages which brought about the present state of religious, social, and moral life of India.

Haraprasad's reposte was pointed; the forms of Grierson and other ethnographers cannot be filled accurately because religious, ethnic and linguistic identities in the sub-continent are always in a state of flux. The *natha*s stand as a test-case; the subversion embedded in Grierson's epic song destabilises his grand ethnographic quest to categorise Indian lects.

The ethnographic studies, however, continued to pour in. Reverend P.O. Bodding's "On the Taboo and Customs Connected therewith about Santals" [Proceedings of the Asiatic

Society(1898):5-6] and “On the Different Kinds of Salutation used by the Santals” [Proceedings of the Asiatic Society(1898)]; L.A. Waddell’s “The Physical Types and Affinities of the Wild tribes in the Brahmaputra Valley [published in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society* 69, no.3(1903):1-127]; J.E. Friend-Pereira’s “Some Khond Songs[published in *JASB* 68, no.3(1903): 1-13] and “Marriage Customs of the Khonds”[published in the *JASB* 71, no.3(1903): 18-28], T.H. Holland’s “The Coorgs and Yeruvas: An Ethnological Contrast”[*JASB* 70, no.3(1903): 59-98]. Waddell’s article was accompanied by seventeen photographic plates while Friend-Pereira’s article on the marriage songs of Khonds is had two photographs. There was focused interested in folklore, with Saratchandra Mitra presenting several papers such as “Bengali and Bihari Folklore about Birds” [*JASB* 68, no.1(1903):14-29], “North Indian Folk-tales of the ‘Rhea sylvia’ and ‘Juniper tree’ types”[*JASB* 71, no.3(1903): 4-17], “Riddles current in Bihar”[*JASB* 70, no.3(1903):33-49], “Folklore from Pargana Sipah in the District of Saran”[*Proceedings of the Asiatic Society* (1901):4].

Waddell’s article on the tribes in the Brahmaputra valley conceded that, ‘[m]any of them are of that extremely barbarous type which is popularly associated with savage South Africa.’ He also noticed that of the tribes are fast adopting Hindu customs, hence if anyone did not record their cultural traits, soon there ‘will be nothing left to record.’[184] He believes it is a ‘duty which Government owes to science and to posterity’ to record the fast vanishing ‘prehistoric customs’. As Risley’s study did not include Assam, he feels it his duty to supplement it. Waddell’s entry on the Koch (Kos /Cooch / Rajbanshi) reveals many interesting facts. He states that these ‘semi-Hinduised’ people are not dark Dravidian aborigines, as surmised by Colonel Dalton or Risley(in the Ethnographic

Survey of Bengal, in which Risley studied the Koch population in North Bengal); rather they are ‘distinctly Mongoloid, though somewhat heterogenous.’[185] He states that the term seems to be a ‘caste title’ rather than a ‘tribal appellation’; thus individuals of the Kachari, Garo, Rabha, Lalung tribes and even Chandals (i.e. the lower castes of the so-called Indo Aryans) are also allowed in it. Anyone of these tribes can become a Koch ‘by establishing a Brahminical priest and giving up eating beef.’ He first becomes a Saraniya, a refugee, acknowledging his temporary incorporation in the Hindu fold. If they give up beef, swine and liquor altogether – they gain a permanent position in the Hindu fold. The orthodox Hindus assign them one of the lowest castes. As the term Koch is discriminated against, they adopt the title of ‘Rajbanshi’wherever they have a king from their tribe, as in Koch Bihar, Darang, Bijni, Mechpara, Sidli, Beltola, Jaipaiguri and Lakhi. The men dress like ‘Bengali peasantry’ while the women go about ‘without restraint, with their heads uncovered. Their dress like that of Kachari women is merely a narrow striped cloth wrapped round the body.’ The various groups into which Waddell divides the Koch are as follows[186]:

Koch, proper, iuoluding Modai and ' Pani Koch ' of Garo Hills.
Horoniya or ‘Saraniya,' semi-Hinduised.
Kam-tali, most Hinduised.
Koch
Kantai-Koch.
Rajbansi.
Deshi.
Poli (8adhu and Babu).

Interestingly, Waddell states that the anthropometric data on the Koch have been published in Risley's survey. He however thinks that the data (recorded by a Hospotal assistant) do not reflect data on 'typical Koch' population. Yet, Waddell's own study has pointed out that there is nothing like a 'typical Koch' population. The identity of the Koch is not only a linguistic continuum (Bengali/ Assamese/Kamtapuri/ Rajbanshi), it is also an ethnic continuum. Grierson's 'epic song' was a product of this continuum, containing the subversive resonances of this ambivalent ethnolinguistic situation.

Not everyone whole-heatedly embraced the 'ethnographic turn'. There were people like Maulvi Abdul Wali (1856-1926) who emphasised the syncretic roots as much as Haraprasad did. Born in a Mughal aristocratic family and raised in Satkhira, Wali received an Islamic training in Arabic and Persian before joining the Calcutta Madrasa. He studied in St. Xavier's College, Kolkata for his graduation but could not complete it due to financial difficulties. Wali's work in the Department of Land Registration made him work in various rural localities where he got an opportunity to study the rural society. Wali's "Ethnographic Notes on the Muhammadan Castes in Bengal", published in the *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay* 7, no.2 (1904), explained how caste system had been incorporated in Bengali Muslim society. Gait asked for Wali's cooperation while preparing the Census Report of 1901. In his early articles in the Journal of the Society, however, Wali challenged some of the ethnographic observations of Risley and other ethnographers.[187] In "On the Origin of the Chaklai Musalmans", published in *JASB* 68, no.3 (1903), he focuses on a a class of Muslims in a remote village in the district of Jessore, trying to elaborate upon why they were alienated from their ‘fellow-Muslims’. They were blamed to have sold fish from their own village channel in the bazar and hence were exocommunicated by other Muslims. Wali does not use the anthropometric method; he rather focuses on a story told to him while he was ‘waiting at the Trimohini ghat for the steamer that plies between Jhingargacha and Kapilamuni.’[188] Similarly, in “On the legendary Origin of the River Kumrul and Bil Kakuli in the District of Jessore”, published in the same issue of the *Journal,* he focuses on a legend about the origin of a magical origin of a river focusing on the magical deeds of a *sanyasi*. Although he offers rational explanations, he leaves the narrative open-ended. In his “Note on the Faqirs of Baliya-dighi in Dinajpur”, published in *JASB* 72, no.3 (1904), he notes the syncretic practices of the *fakirs*[189]:

> The beliefs and practices of these faqirs are in many mays anti-Islamic. They grow long hair on their head, which they call *bhik* or *jata* ; put on coloured cloths, wear a small piece of cloth instead of breeches called *kofni*, and use shackles of iron and long iron tongs**.** They sit with thick sticks placed as a support under their **arms.** They never take food touched by other persons, and subsist mainly on unboiled rice, clarified butter and salt. They do not eat fish or meat…The faqirs are the members of the Basria groh, Taifuria Khanwada and Tabaqati ghar. In other words – as I understand from this – the Taifuria Khanwada is a branch of Basria groh and Tabaqatia ghar is again a branch of the Taifuria Khanwada an order introduced by Shah Madar.

Wali would be unhesitant in revealing that ‘these faqirs are a survival of a corrupt form of ancient *sufism* mixed with Hindu Jogi ideas.’

Haraprasad became a Professor of Sanskrit of the Presidency College in 1895. In 1900, he would become the Principal of the Sanskrit College in 1900.[190] He went to Nepal several times – in 1897, 1898, 1907 and 1922 in search of valuable manuscripts from the

Darbar library of Nepal. His 1898 visit was with Cecil Bendall, Professor of Sanskrit at University College London, who had visited India in search of manuscripts. Binod Bihari Kavyatirtha, Haraprasad's assistant at the Society, also went with them. Bendall's association with the collection of Oriental Manuscripts at the British Museum was well known. In February 1899, at the Annual Meeting of the Society, Bendall discusses the importance of finding Pali manuscripts and editions of *Purāṇas* in the library. He also found two old copies of Vidyapati's poems. Bendall recounts his attending the *Jana baha dyah yatra*, an annual procession in Kathmandu, in which the idol of Matsyendranath (identified in Nepal with Lokeswara /Avolokiteswara / Loknatha, a major Buddhist Bodhisatva) is taken through the streets of the city in a portable shrine. Bendall recounts how both Hindus and Buddhists participate in the festival. Bendall emphasises that this 'juxtaposition of Buddhism and Hinduism in Nepal' should suggest the probability of 'a good many traces of Buddhistic survivals still [to] be found among the popular forms of worship in India, as has been shown of late in once instance with regard to Dharma worship in Bengal…'[191] In the very meeting in which Bendall and Shastri presented their findings before the Society, the new Viceroy of India – Baron Curzon of Kedleston(1859-1925)—was welcomed as a guest for the first time.

Lord Curzon's imperialistic designs were offset by his genuine love of antiquity and his extensive knowledge of the various regions of Asia. His travels across Asia enabled him to gain a firsthand knowledge of the various regions and comprehend their mutual socio-political dynamics. Being a Conservative politician, Curzon's focus was in preserving the imperialistic control in India and he saw Russia as a major threat to this plan.[192] The

British invasion of Tibet in 1903 under Francis Younghusband was prompted by the aim of forestalling a Russian threat through Tibet. In February 1899, however, Curzon's presence helped Risley, the elected President, in reaffirming the new plans for an ethnographic mapping of the subcontinent. The Annual Report declared that the Council has decided that 'no paper shall be printed without an order in Council and without an estimate of cost being prepared beforehand by the Secretary responsible. By these means the Council will be kept constantly informed of the financial position of the current journal.'[193] The Council has also had a meeting with the Baptist Mission Press in which they have obtained considerable reduction in printing costs. The Report concedes that 'increased supervision of the Council and Secretaries' had not yet shown obvious result (there had been an increase in expenditure), but it assures that the changes would be observable from the next year. It bluntly points out that the members should 'make good the deficiencies of previous years.' The actual implications of this changed attitude are not hard to decipher. The Society had focused on linguistic, historical, literary and scientific studies since its inception. It was however, emphasised by Risley that the Society now has to deliver results in accordance to the new, ethnographic methods or perish altogether. The report threateningly states that if reforms were not instituted the 'only alternative was to put a complete stop to all [their] publications except Journal Part III…" It was amply conveyed that it was the third part of the Journal which has now become its only indispensable part.

A couple of months earlier, in September 1898, a sub-committee had decided for condensing the accession list of the Library. Risley was quite frank about the need for pragmatism in his Annual Address of February 1898[194]:

> The discussion that took place on our financial position at the last Annual Meeting has… served one most useful purpose. It has drawn attention to the necessity which a scientific ideality is perhaps at times apt to overlook. The Council have stopped that leak at any rate… I hope matters are now on such a footing that this will not occur… A scientific society which does not publish a respectable number of papers has, as Matthew Arnold said of somebody's translation of Homer, no proper reason for existing.

In his own address to the members in that Annual Meeting, Curzon presented himself as a 'student of Orientalist research'. He regarded the work of the Society as a 'duty which we owed to India.'[195] The critical use of the 'we' is quite remarkable, a studied reflection of the 'white man's burden'.

Haraprasad would continue with his series of papers on Buddhist religion and its importance in sculpting the syncretic Bengali identity. His 'discovery' of Dhoyi's *Pavanaduta* and 'a work by Aryadeva's is reported in February 1899. In May, he presented a paper on Dhelai Candi – a cult focusing on tree worship in Bengal. In his characteristic conversational tone, he discusses his stroll in the fields east of Naihati twelve years ago, which led to his encounter of a cult in which a tree deity – apparently Chandi—was propitiated by offering lums of clay at the base of a date tree. Haraprasad's prose reveals his distinctive humour and his emic attitude towards the subject studied[196]:

> Unlike the propitiation of other deities who grant boons enjoyable only in the world to come, the propitiation of this deity is followed immediately by a great relief, and the relief is that children crying at home are at once pacified. I had then a child about a year old whose cries often vexed the whole family, so I took a clod and threw it at the tree.

In 1900, Shastri exhibited a turquoise Ganesha sculpture and a *tantric* text of seventh century CE, *Kulalikāmṇaya*. In March 1900, he discussed about the manuscript of *Rāmacarita*, composed by the twelfth century Sanskrit poet, Sandhyakar Nandi. He had discovered the manuscript in Nepal. The text details the historical events in Bengal during the Pala era. It discusses a chain of events from the assassination of the Pala emperor Mahipala II(c.1070-1075 CE) by Divyok, a rebel Kaivarta officer, up to the reign of the last ruler of the Pala dynasty, Madanapala (c.1144-1162 CE). The poem consists of two hundred and fifteen verses and narrates a double-narrative by using 'śleṣa' (double-entendre) to describe both the historical events of the reign of Ramapala (who quashed the Kaivarta rebellion by defeating Bhima, Divyok's successor) as well as that of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The Kaivarta rebellion is an important event in the history of the Pala Empire. The lower classes, especially the Kaivartas, challenged the might of the regal authority in Bengal. Marxist philosophers and historians like Deviprasad Chattopadhyay associate this uprising with the *siddha* movement.[197] Shastri, however, read Ramapala's rule as a period of Mahayana revival – which thwarted the subversive excesses of *sahajayana*, the school of the *siddha*s. Haraprasad's troubled reception of the *sahajayana* was not associated with the possibilities of social revolution that it suggested; it arose from his critical understanding the transgressive sexual rites introduced by the Siddhas. In another paper, entitled "Antiquities of the Tantras and the

Introduction of Tantric Rites to Buddhism", Shastri discusses about encountering an illustration of the Kalachakra sect in the Darbar Library of Nepal in which 'Buddha and Prajna [were] in the unspeakable situation begetting Boddhisathvas.'[198] In an article written in 1915, Shastri blames the libidinous excesses of the *siddha*s for the degeneration of Buddhism in India[199]:

> I don't need to convince anyone about the fact that the conseuquences of *sahajayāna* were poisonous. Buddha had tried earnestly to renounce the sensual enjoyment (*pañcakāmopabhoga*)… [yet] *sahajayāna* abandoned that process of purifying one's inner being. To make Buddism easy, to make *nirvaṇa* easily approchable, to make monism accessible, the *sahajayānists* propagated a philosophy which led to an alarming increase in profligacy.

In another article published in 1915, Haraprasad however recognised a valuable contribution of the *siddha*s. While he considered their antinomian sexual rites to be immoral and degenerate, he recognised their contribution in the field of language[200]:

> This sermon was blissful, as a result of which the masses were enamoured. That the result of this has not been favourable is quite evident to us. Yet, these people who enamoured [the masses], were powerful personalities; they knew how to influence the minds of the populace. They acquired great prosperity as gurus, but did not think about the fate of their disciples. Yet, they also did them a great service – they vitalised, envigored, simplified and sweetened the Bengali language and gave it a high pedestal in the Buddhist world. For this, all Bengalis should be grateful to them.

It was Haraprasad's third trip to Nepal in 1907 which yielded the collection of the songs of Buddhist *siddha*s, the *Caryācaryaviniścayaḥ* or the *Caryāpada*s, which he eventually published in 1916.[201]

In the Society, however, the ‘ethnographic turn’ was all too evident in the spurt of anthropological essays which one encounters in the *Journal* at the turn of the century. The Census of 1901, under Risley’s supervision, became a vortex of the new tide of anthropological enquiry. In 1900 Annual Meeting, as an outgoing President of the Society, Risley celebrated the considerable ethnological achievements of the Census and offered demands for more precise ethnographic data on behalf of the Society’s Council.[202] In the extensive research done on myriad tribes and linguistic/ethnic groups in the next few years, papers were also presented on the Rajvanshis. In November 1902, Monmohan Roy presented a paper titled “Some Notes on the Rajvamshi Caste” while Harimohan Sinha (in 1903) read “Notes on the Koch, Poliya and Rajvamshi in Dinajpur”. Roy endeavoured to disprove the suggestion that Koch and Rajvanshis are the same ethnic group. He expressed[203]:

> …[I]t is a patent fact that so far at least as the Rangpur district is concerned, Koch and Rajvamshi form distinct castes. I have enquired from a large number of competent persons – the District Engineer, Sub-Divisional Officers, Police Sub-Inspectors, School Sub-Inspectors, educated natives of the district, inhabitants of villages whre both Koches and Rajvamshis reside – and I have found a consensus of opinion on the point that, as a matter of fact… the Rajvamshis and Koches form entirely distinct castes.

According to Roy, Koches are placed lower than the Rajvanshis in social stature. They form different endogamous groups and do not dine together. The Rajvanshis have Brahmin priests while only a few Koches care for brahminical rituals. The Rajbanshis are *vaisnava*s, while Koches are identified as *shaivite*s. The ritual worship of Sanyasi

Thakur, practised by the Koches, shows their association with *siddha yogic*/*tantric* groups[204]:

> The image is stuffed with straw and resembles a male person, with a beard and big belly, constantly occupied with smoking *ganja*. The principle article of offering is *ganja*. … It is a curious relic of some old tribal faith superseded by, and metamorphosed into, Shaivism.

The rites of 'Burhir puja' described by Monmohan remind one of the rites of worshipping a deified representation of Mainamati, which Vishveshwar Bhattacharya describes in his preface to his edition of *Gopīcandrer gān*. Vishveshwar, like Monmohan, stresses that the goddess is identified with Kali/Chandi and is worshipped by Rajbanshi priests called 'deodNā'-s.[205] Monmohan states that the physiognomy of the Rajbanshis in Rangpur, except those who live in the region bordering Koch-bihar, is distinctly Dravidian while that of the Koches is distinctly Mongoloid. Monmohan reaffirms his schismatic categories[206]:

> I am inclined to think that the distinction between the Rajvamshis and Koches in the Rangpur District is not of recent growth, but points to a real ethnological difference. The theory that the term Rajvamshi is merely a recent title of the Koch who assumed it on the establishment of the kingdom of Koch Bihar does not on a close examination of the existing facts, appear to be a tenable one. It is important to observe that the Rajvamshis of Rangpur look down upon the Koch Bihar Raj family and the connected Raj families of Panga and Jalpaiguri from a social point of view. They consider them to be Koches.

Monmohan hints that the members of the royal family of Koch Bihar were ethnically Koches, who assumed the title of Rajbanshi as a mark of respect. This, according to him, is the reason why the terms overlap in Jalpaiguri and Koch Bihar but remain distinct in Rangpur. He feels that the distinction between Koches and Rajbanshis has been obliterated to a great extent due their intermarriages, though regions in the North have distinctly Koch population while those in the South have distinctly Rajbanshi population. There is a middle zone of overlapping identities mostly of 'degraded' Rajbanshis who have married Koches. It is remarkable how Roy introduces both caste as well as ethnological metaphors to distinguish the two groups.

Harimohan Sinha studied the Koch / Rajbanshi phenomena in Dinajpur and came to dissonant conclusions. He concedes that the Rajbanshis in Koch Bihar and Jaipaiguri are actually Koches who assumed the title of Rajbanshi. He feels that Dinajpur and Rangpur, being parts of the erstwhile Koch Bihar kingdom, must have witnessed a similar social appropriation. The Rajbanshis of Dinajpur are, according to Sinha, Koches who assumed a royal appellation, largely because they were associated with the royal family.[207] Thus, in spite of the Risleyean imposition of caste/racial theory, the subversive notions of castes as merely 'social constructs' still remained.

It is important to realise that the notions of ethnic, religious and caste subversions that are associated with the people who had engendered Grierson's 'epic song' (be it the community of the Yogis or the more extensive population of Rajbanshis) – are intricately intertwined with notions of sexuality and gender. As Davidson states about the ritual *siddha* congregations ('gaṇacakra')[208]:

> One problem in understanding *ganacakra* is that there seems to be little precedent for this gathering in the normative rituals of either Mahayana Buddhism or Hindu Varnasramadharma. Its emphasis on sexuality, on eating foods forbidden to caste Hindus, on the use of a circle as a ritual enclosure, and no relative egalitarianism under the leadership of a teacher and his agents all make the *ganacakra* stand apart from mainstream practices.

Haraprasad's upholding of the ethnic syncretism of Bengalis was quite remarkable, especially judged in the context of the rise of neo-Hinduism and nationalism. Yet, Haraprasad's critique of sexual transgressions of Sahajayana appears to contradict and problematize his liberal stance. Although this self-contradiction is inherent in his ideological inclinations, there are also hints that his position on eroticism was itself riddled with tensions. In June 1902, Haraprasad published *Meghdut vakhya,* a rambling, reflective commentary on Kalidasa's *Meghadūtaṃ.* In the essay, Haraprasad stresses the importance of "Purvamegh" and just as he had done when in the meeting of the Society in August 1890, he had shown the route of the Cloud-messenger in the map of Aryavarta. For Haraprasad, it is not merely an index of places in India, it is a revelation of the symbolic cosmography in which the 'inert physical nature becomes imbued with consciousness.' Haraprasad presents Kalidasa's radical departure in *Meghadūtaṃ* in the very celebration of the physical world, in his acceptance and empathetic treatment of physical nature[209]:

> In *Raghuvamsa*, Rama and Sita travel in person as the incarnations of Narayana and Lakshmi; the physical world is too base for them… And in *Meghadutam*, our poor Yaksha has unleashed his sad, forlorn soul. His physical body lies abandoned. The one that moves [i.e. his soul] cannot rise much, but it descends to the depths. It falls across the river basins, the precipice, mingles with the physical world,

> becomes one with it. In spite of being burdened with sadness – in spite of his soul’s grief – he enjoys the physical world. And does he merely enjoy? He begs an empathetic response from the physical world. And that poet’s poet, the master wordsmith – he inundates him with empathy; he has unfurled his spring of empathy all about the world.

It is while commenting on passages like the seventh verse of “Uttar Megh” that Haraprasad displays this uninhibited recognition of physicality. Kalidasa’s text runs as follows[210]:

> nīvībandhocchvāsitaśithilaṃ yatra bimbādharānāṃ
> kṣaumaṃ rāgādanibhṛitakareśva ākṣipatsu priyeśu
> arcistuṅgān abhimukham api prāpya ratnapradīpān
> hrīmūḍhanam bhavati viphalapreraṇā curṇamuṣti||
> [Where lovers undoing the knot at the waist
> hands trembling with passion,
> toss aside silken garments loosening,
> yaksha women with lips like Bimba fruit,
> overcome with shy confusion
> aim handfuls of aromatic powder
> at the glittering gems serving as lamps.
> Ah! What fruitless throws even though they hit their mark.]

Haraprasad’s commentary shines brilliantly with his characteristic wit:

> yakṣa ramaṇīder thNot duti thhik duti telākucār mato|baḍo manolobhā| se adhare driṣti paḍilei, yakṣa bāburā āste āste āsiyā ādar kariyā uhāder garader śāḍir gnāit dhariyā upare tāniyā tulen, ār sāḍi ālgā haiyā jāy; amni tNāhāder sei garader kāpaḍ tānite thāken| takhan man preme gargar – hāter ār viśrām

> thāke nā| ramaṇī svataḥ-i lajjāśīlā; bhaye – lajjāy—pradīp nibhāibār ceṣtā karen| sammukhe je-kono guḍā-jinis pān pradīper dike pheliyā den; kintu se pradīp nibhibe kena? se ye ratner pradīp, tel-bātir pradīp to nay| tNāhāder sab ceṣtā viphalā hay, tNāhārā śarame mariyā yān; aar – tNāhāder kartāder jay-jayakār!
>
> [The lips of Yaksha women resemble the Bimba fruit. They are intensely charming. The moment they glance at it, the Yaksha lords come stealthily and endearingly pull upwards the knot of their silk sarees, the sarees loosen; immediately, they pull at the silk raiment. Their mind raging with love, their hands do not rest. Women are always diffident; apprehensive—shy—[they] try to extinguish the lamps. Whatever powdery stuff they find at hand, they throw at the lamp; but why would that lamp be extinguished? It was a lamp of gems, it was not an oil-lamp. They fail in their endeavour, and crumple in shame; and – their lords win the day!]

It is interesting to note how Haraprasad creatively bring out the latent, layered significances of Kalidasa's images and does so without any puritanical assertion of moral propriety. Many amongst his readers were shocked; one must be reminded that he was then the Principal of the Sanskrit College. The critics complained to the British authorities and charged Haraprasad of 'unpardonable obscenity'. Hurt by the turn of events, Haraprasad resigned from the Executive Committee of the Bangiya Sahitya Parishat.[211] Haraprasad's views about Sahajayana (expressed much later in 1915) are thus riddled by evident tensions.

The ambivalences unleashed in this discussion of Grierson's 'epic song' and Haraprasad's researches had repurcussions in the evolution of Bengali prose. The genre of the historical novel or historical romance was often an arena in which these forces could be seen at play. Sudipta Kaviraj discusses how Bankimchandra's obsession with liminality led his literary imagination into a world of 'endlessly indecisive conflict between the turbulence of desire and the stability of social norms'[212]. Kaviraj also notes how Bankimchandra noted the domain of the woman as that of liminality, separated from the normative world by the 'obliqueness of the feminine vision.' Bankimchandra does not negate these transgressive possibilities of the female in his nationalist historical romances – in both *Ānandamaṭh* (1882) and *Devī caudhurāṇī* (1884) he uses the mystic possibilities of woman's body in crafting out his powerful myth of resurgent nationhood. The mythic image of both the Mother and her *santān* hoards in *Ānandamaṭh* as well as Prafulla and her metamorphoses in the tutelage of Bhavani Pathak in *Devī caudhurāṇī* use, in this sense, the limits of *tantric* liminality. He associates this subversion with class /ethnic / religious transgressions as well, but he sublimates them into a metamorphosed vision of an 'imagined history'(to use Kaviraj's phrase) which is *now discovered* as a part of a normative, Hindu vision of nationhood. Chittaranjan Bandyopadhyay introspectively analyses the tensions in Bankimchandra's delineation of nationalist vision, prompted by his own position as a functionary of the British Government— a Deputy Collector whose fortunes fluctuate with the infamy of his rebellious novel.[213] His repeated revisions of the text, his initial shift of locale from North Bengal to South Bengal and his reenscribing the specificity of the locale, his gradual erasure of unflattering references to the British and substituting them with derogatory references about the Islamic rulers, his vacillations about writing a realist account about the Sanyasi rebellion – are all inextricably associated with his construction of nationhood in *Ānandamaṭh*.[214]

What is clearly significant is Bankimchandra's need to tell the story of Sanyasi rebellion – a historical event which had evidently taken place in Rangpur. It is true that Bankimchandra rewrites this with his imaginative projection of brahminical priesthood –

his Satyananda and Bhavani Pathak, in spite of being outlaws, are also brahmins. Yet, in the labyrinthine cavern in which Mahendra discovers his nationalist fervour, it is the subversive image of Kali that he meets as the present, fallen state of his nation. It is this liminal, *tantric* portal that Bankimchandra uses as a source of his reformed, normative utterance of nationalism. *Ānandamaṭh* is not merely about the rebellious adventures of Sanyasi rebels – it is also about the illicit lust of Bhavananda for Kalyani, the inevitable crumbling of the vows of celibacy, the verses of *Gitagovinda* used by rebels to signal their transgression. Like Prafulla in *Devī caudhurāṇī*, Shanti in *Ānandamaṭh* serves as a subversive symbol of feminity – their androgynous subversions need to be read through Bankimchandra's gaze in order to be tamed as submissive portrayals of marital fidelity.

Bankimchandra was not trudging a lonely path – in fact, the genre of the novel in Bengali was brimming with liminal possibilities in the turn of the century. Bijitkumar Dutta associates such representation of the female with both the European romantic as well as the Sanskritic traditions.[215] Haranchandra Raha's *Raṇacandī* (1876), Gopalchandra Mukhopadhyay's *Mayabinī* (1877), Harimohan Mukhopadhyay's *Yoginī* (1879), Damodar Mukhopadhyay's *Yogesvarī* (1902), Surendramohan Bhattacharya's *Bhavanīr Maṭh* (1907) are novels which delineate the potent mixture of subversive feminity and mysticism which had left an indelible impression in Bankimchandra's nationalist novels. A passage from *Yogesvarī* (1902) would serve as an apt example. Ghanananda, the mystic, grants Umashankar, his disciple, the mystic vision of Yogesvari[216]:

> krame andhakārācchanna nabhomandal ālokita haila ebaṃ bimal jyotsnāy caturddik samudbhāsita haiya uṭhhila| Ghanānanda swāmī o Umāśankar dhīre dhīre āraṇya-pathe agrasar haiya dekhite pāilen, dūre ek bisrasta-vasanā, ālu-thāluveśā, malinā sundarī dNāḍāiyā urdhamukhe ākāśer prati

> cāhiyā rahiyāchen| sundarī malinā o vasan-bhuṣan-vihīnā haileo, tNāhār aloukik ṣrīte sannihita pradesh jena pradīpta haiya uṭhiyāche|
>
> [Gradually the dark sky was lit up and everything became radiant in immaculate moonlight. Ghanananda Swami and Umashankar steadily trudged the forest-path and eventually discovered at a distance – a dishevelled, unkempt, soiled beauty standing, looking up at the sky. Though she was soiled and without any apparel or adornment, her supernatural lustre lit up the adjacent realms.]

It is only later revealed that the woman, Yogesvari, is also Ghanananda's wife. She had visited him in a vision when she was only sixteen years old. When she addressed him as her husband, he took her for a licantuous woman ('kulatā kaminī') and a lunatic ('unmādinī). Yet, even now, he meets her only in visions. If we remind ourselves of the connection of yoginis / yakṣīs with succubus in *tantric* literature, we would immediately realise the extent of subversion contained in the image of Yogesvari. Yet, she is also a woman with vermillion on her forehead; like Bankimchandra's women, she morphs into an ambivalent image of submissive womanhood which is discovered as Nation itself. Similarly, in Rakhaldas Bandyopadhyay's *Dharmapāla* (1915), Visvananda and Amritananda (like Bankimchandra's Satyananda and Bhavani Pathak, and Damodar's Ghanananda) help Dharmapala in jousting with the forces of transgression and chaos in order to inscribe a domain of radical nationhood. In Rakhaldas's novel, this domain is discovered to be the reign of the Pala kings, an enlightened era of prosperity after the chaos of the post-Sasanka years.

In contrast, Haraprasad Shastri's *Bener meye* (1919) presents problematic questions about the eventual fall of the Pala Empire and the collapse of Buddhism in Bengal. Haraprasad framed this story during the reign of Mahipala II (1070-1075 CE). He depicts a clash between the Buddhist *bagdis* (marginalised untouchables of Brahminical society who were shown in the novel as prosperous), backed by Mahipala II, and Hindu *bene*-s(merchants), backed by Harivarmadeva of the Varman Dynasty of South-East Bengal. The events of the novel unfurl when Luisiddha (a Buddhist *siddhaguru*) visit Tarapukur to attend the coronation festivities of Rupa *bagdi*, the indigenous leader of the *bagdi*s who rose to be a king. Rupa is a patron of Buddhism and the *siddha*s. Maya, the daughter of a local *bene* called Vihari, visited Luisiddha to pay obesience. Maya was married to Jivan Dhani. Luisiddha's disciple, the prince of Vikramanipur, felt an illicit desire for Maya but restrained his desire on his master's advice. When Jivan died, the Buddhists endeavoured to persuade Maya join their monastery in order to get hold of her considerable property. Rupa wanted Maya to be the participant ('sādhan-saṇginī') of the *sahaja* rites. Vihari appealed to the Hindus to protect Maya. This resulted in a feud between the Buddhists and Hindus in which the Buddhists were defeated. Rupa was ousted and Vihari became the new king. Bijitkumar Dutta argues that Sandhyakar Nandi's *Rāmacarita* as well as the description of battles in *Dharmamaṅgala* narratives had influenced Haraprasad's novel. He further argues that the Bagdi unrest was modelled on the Kaivarta rebellion in Sadhyakar Nandi's Sanskrit epic.[217] There are obvious discripencies. Mahipala II fought against the Kaivartas; in Haraprasad's novel, he supports the *bagdi*s. However, the novel seems to uphold Haraprasad's central thesis that Buddhist degeneration was brought about by the antinomian excesses of the *sahajayana*. Yet, Haraprasad has obvious sympathy for the *bagdi*-s, the esoteric practitioners and especially, Luisiddha. As has been already pointed out, Luisiddha or Luipada is a *siddha* whom Buddhists identify with Matsyendranatha. The transgressive world of the rebels of

Rangpur is connected with drastically different ideations of nationhood in the novels of Bankimchandra and Haraprasad.

The transgressive liminality of Grierson's 'epic song' had its reverberations in the subsequent evolution of the history of the Rangpur, the *yogi*s and the Rajbanshis. Rangpur has witnessed subsequent peasant uprisings like the Ryot rebellion (1917-18), the Adhiyar Revolt (1936-37) which eventually catapulted the Tebhaga Movement (1946-47).[218] All these follow the generalised paradigm of a subaltern rebellion which Ranajit Guha discusses in his study on peasant rebellions. Guha's work studies the Rangpur rebellion of 1783 in some detail but he concludes his book focusing on the broader contributions to this spirit of rebellion which has been negated from the normative discourses of nationalism[219]:

> …Indian nationalism of the colonial period was not what elite historiography had made it out to be. As a praxis involving the masses it did not always conform to the rule book of the Congress Party or the tenets of Gandhism. On the contrary, it derived much of its striking power from a subaltern tradition going a long way back before the Mahatma's intervention in Indian politics towards the end of the First World War …

What Guha emphasised was the use of same formal devices – mobilisation, signalling, means of solidarity – which were used not only peasant's rebellion but also in sectarian violence. Since early 1990s, the Rajbanshis in various districts of West Bengal (Koch Bihar, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Malda, North and South Dinajpur) and Assam (Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon, Dhubri and Goalpara) have participated in a separatist movement, claiming the delineation of a sovereign state and language. Solidarity with the Kamtapuri cause has led to contention among linguists about the status of the Rajbanshi /Kamtapuri /Rangpuri language – whether it is just another dialect of Bengali or whether it has a sovereign status as an independent language.[220] Quite predictably, in the *Linguistic Survey of India*, Grierson names the language as Rajbangsi and denotes it as a dialect of Bengali.[221] This demarcation is further reffirmed by prominent Bengali linguists like Sunitikumar Chattopadhyay and Sukumar Sen ; both refer to it as the Kamarupi dialect.[222] The discussions naturally span various texts, including *Gopīcandrer gān*. While those who uphold the scarcity of any salient tradition of Kamta literature as a proof of its status as dialect (see for example, Nirmal Das's article). On the other hand, Vishveswar Bhattacharya notes the challenge of recording an oral tradition, whose forms continually change and are often inconsistent. In the narratives of Gopichandra, the archaic and new forms are preserved side by side – often displaying varying degrees of similarity to Standard Bengali. [223] Toulmein notes how proto-Kamta tendencies had developed in the lect/s from 1250 to 1550 CE (ending with the formation of the Kamta kingdom under Naranarayan), which paralleled the development of proto-Bengali and proto-Assamese. After 1550, the the proto lects were affected by similar changes and further influenced each other. The sub-lects of Kamta developed their own characteristics, hence developing considerable differences (much to the confusion of the ethnographers). [224]Yet, the reason why Grierson did not list 'Rajbangsi' as a separate lect is revealed through Toulmein's personal reflections[225]:

> As I have undertaken this reconstruction of linguistic history it has struck me that patronisation of Bangla and Asamiya written varities by the Koch kings – rather than the mother tongue of their subects – during the middle and modern KRNB periods is a major reason why these lects have been

> subsequently accorded the status of ‘dialect’ of either Bangla and Asamiya. When Grierson categorised ‘Rajbanshi’ as a ‘dialect of Bangla,’ I am quite sure that this was based on (a) the Indo-Aryan character of the lect; coupled with (b) the absence of a large written literature in the lect; and (c) the patronisation of written Bangla and Asamiya varieties by the Koch Kings.

Toulmein recounts another startling experience. While he went to Rangpur (now a part of Bangladesh) for his field-studies, the local officials continuously told him that the people are ‘simply making up the language’ that he was recording.[226] The Bangladeshi government is indifferent towards another language which might challenge the hegemony of Bengali in the socio-cultural discourse (they are already dealing with Chakma seperatists, demanding an independent homeland). We can immediately realise that more than stages of linguistic change, it is people’s interpretation of ambivalent linguistic codes which engender meaning and identity. Tantra had created its own codes of subversion and transgression; codes which were read differently to engender other ways of meaning. The colonial administration, however, tried to standardise a particular reading of the situation and endeavoured to ossify it as ethnographic truth. The nationalists engendered their own versions of the truth – Bankimchandra’s *Ānandamaṭh* drew inspirations from the same melieu which had sustained religio-ethnic subversion for ages (and would continue doing so even after Independence).

Yet, Grierson’s ‘epic song’ embodies the crux of this ambivalence and locates it in the human body. The way bodies have been gendered to produce specific narratives of control (brahminical/ Buddhist/ colonial/ nationalist/ Kamtapuri/ Bangladeshi) tells us that there is an inextricable link between the performance of the bodily and linguistic identities. This is because Tantras are, above all, linguistic codes and like all linguistic codes, preconceive a collectively *imagined* code of signification. Though their comprehensibility derives from the mutual comprehension of the code, their power derives from being aware of an essential nature of non-signification, the serpent's gift (to use a term conceived by Richard M.Bucke, R.C, Zaehner and Jeffrey Kripal)[227] of a 'double vision', an awareness of vacuity of language itself. Grierson's 'epic song' upholds this as the crux of the *siddha* gnosis. Hadipa transforms Gopichandra into an essentially hermaphroditic being:

> kām krodh mani bhidiyā bāndhilā|
> nā rāndī nā puruṣ rājāk karilā|

(verse 547, Grierson 178)

> He bound the jewels of lust and anger,
> And transformed the king into neither a woman nor a man.

It is this radical ambivalence about our gendered identities that lies at the heart of Grierson's 'epic song' – an ambivalence that has sustained the dialectical embodiments of contending narratives of religious, ethnic, linguistic and nationalist identities. Grierson and Haraprasad, as members of the Society, were partakers of this gnosis – a gnosis which would mould the contours of Bengali prose in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

Notes

1. George Abraham Grierson, "Notes on the Rangpur Dialect," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 46, no.1 (1877): 186-226.

2. David Greene, "Robert Atkinson and Irish studies," *Hermathena* 102 (1966): 8.

3. F.W. Thomas and R.L. Turner, "George Abraham Grierson, 1851-1941," *Proceedings of the British Academy* (1942): 284.

4. Ibid.

5. *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal,* January to December 1876 (Kolkata: Baptist Mission Press, 1876), 202.

6. Grierson, "Notes on the Rangpur Dialect," 186.

7. Ibid.

8. Gaborn Henry Damant, "Notes on Shah Ismail Ghazi, with a sketch of the contents of a Persian MS., entitled Risalat ush-Shuhada, found at Kanta Duar, Rangpur," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 43, no.1(1874): 215.

9. Shah Ismail Ghazi, Banglapedia, accessed October 7 2014, http://www.banglapedia.org/HT/S_0274.htm.

10. Damant, “Notes on Shah Ismail Ghazi,” 215.

11. Grierson, “Notes on the Rangpur Dialect,” 187.

12. Ibid., 188.

13. Ibid., 196.

14. Dineshchandra Sircar, “Pragjyotisha-Kamarupa,” in *The Comprehensive History of Assam*, vol.1, ed. by H.K. Barpujari (Guwahati: Publication Board, 1990), 59-78.

15. See Nagendranath Acharyya, *The History of Medieval Assam* (Guwahati: Omsons Publications, 1966), 189-190.

16. Ibid., 194 ff.

17. Richard M. Eaton, *The Rise of Islam in the Bengal Frontier, 1204-1760* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 148.

18. Bhagavaticharan Bandyopadhyay, *Koc vihārer itihās*, rev. ed. (Kolkata: Dey's, 2011), 122.

19. D. Nath, *History of the Koch Kingdom:1515-1615* (Delhi: Mittal Publications, 1989), 100.

20. Arthur Coulton Hartley, *Final Report of the Rangpur Survey and Settlement Operations: 1931-1938* (Kolkata: Bengal Government Press, 1940), 43.

21. William Wilson Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Bengal*, vol.7 (London: Trubner and Co., 1876), 317.

22. Ibid., 322-323.

23. A.N. Chandra, *The Sannyasi Rebellion* (Kolkata: Ratna Prakashan, 1977), iii.

24. E.G. Glazier, *A Report on the District of Rungpore* (Kolkata: Calcutta Central Press Company, 1873), 36.

25. Grierson, "Notes on the Rangpur Dialect.," 190.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid., 192.

28. Ibid., 193.

29. Ibid., 196.

30. Matthew Toulmin, *Reconstructing Linguistic History in a Dialect Continuum: The Kamta, Rajbanshi and the Northern Deshi Bangla Subgroup of the Indo-Aryan* (PhD diss., Australian National University, 2006), 26.

31. Grierson, “Notes on the Rangpur Dialect,” 195.

32. For a discussion about the historical dates of Gorakshanatha and his guru Matsyendranatha, see Kalyani Mallick, *Nāthasampradāyer itihās, darśan o sādhanpraṇālī* (Kolkata: University of Calcutta, 1946), 40-59.

33. George Weston Briggs, *Gorakhnath and the Kanphata Yogis* (Kolkata: Y.M.C.A. Publishing House, 1938), 2.

34. For a discussion about the various meanings of the polyvalent word, *siddhi*, especially in the context of the *natha sampradaya*, see David Gordon White, *The Alchemical Body: Siddha Traditions in Medieval India* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 2-4.

35. For Matsendranath's role in transforming the *siddha* and *tantric* traditions and his formulation of Yogini Kaula, see David Gordon White, *Kiss of the Yogini* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 163-167.

36. For a discussion about the overlapping traditions of Hindu and Buddhist siddhas, see Ronald M. Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History of the Tantric Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 177-186.

37. Briggs, *Gorakhnath and the Kanphata Yogis*, 150-151; Mallick, *Nathsampradayer itihas,* 40-59.

38. Grierson, "Notes on the Rangpur Dialect," 198.

Narendranath Bhattacharyya, *History of the Tantric Religion*, 2nd ed. (New Delhi: Manohar, 2005), 429.

39. C.U. Aitchison, ed., *A Collection of Treaties, engagements and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries*, vol. 12 (Kolkata: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, 1931), 230-233.

40. Thomas R.Trautmann, *Aryans and British India* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1997), 131.

41. *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, January to December 1893(Kolkata: Baptist Mission Press, 1894), 49-50.

42. *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, January to December 1877(Kolkata: Baptist Mission Press, 1877), 12.

43. Rameshchandra Majumdar, *History of Ancient Bengal* (Kolkata: G.Bharadwaj & Co., 1971), 161.

44. Francis Buchanan-Hamilton, *The History, Antiquities, Topography and Statistics of Eastern India*, ed. Montogomery Martin, vol.v (1838; Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1976), 407.

45. Vishveshwar Bhattacharya, "Maynamatir Gaan," *Sāhitya Pariṣat patrikā* 15, no.2 (1908): 91-92.

46. Ibid., 89-90.

47. George Abraham Grierson, "The Song of Manik Chandra," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 47, no.1(1878): 136.

48. Buchanan-Hamilton, *History, Antiquities, Topography and Statistics of Eastern India*, 451.

49. Ibid., 535.

50. Ibid., 536.

51. Ibid., 559.

52. Ibid., 563.

53. Glazier, *Report on Rungpore*, 9-10.

54. Grierson, “The Song of Manik Chandra,”136.

55. *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, January to December 1885 (Kolkata: Baptist Mission Press, 1885), 34.

56. *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, January to December 1893 (Kolkata: Baptist Mission Press, 1894), 129.

57. Grierson, “The Song of Manik Chandra,” 137.

58. Ibid.

59. Vishveshwar Bhattacharya, "Pratham saṃskaraṇer bhūmikā," in *Gopīcandrer gān*, ed. Ashutosh Bhattacharya (1924; Kolkata: University of Calcutta Press, 2009), 466. A certain ruler of Bengal, Govindachandra, is mentioned in the Tirumalai inscription. He had been defeated by Rajendra Chola I in between 1021-1024 CE. Vishveshwar Bhattacharya identifies this ruler with the Gopichandra of the song.

60. Dineshchandra Sen, *Baṅgabhāṣā o sāhitya*, 3rd ed. (Kolkata: Indian Publishing House, 1908), 69.

61. Nalinikanta Bhattasali, ed. *GopīcNāder sanyās*, by Abdul Sukur Muhammad (Dhaka: University of Dhaka, 1925), 75.

62. Grierson, "The Song of Manik Chandra," 147.

63. Dineshchandra Sen, *Glimpses of Bengal Life* (Kolkata: University of Calcutta, 1925), 61.

64. Dineshchandra Sen, "Pratham saṃskaraṇer mukhabandha," in *Gopīcandrer gān*, edited by Ashutosh Bhattacharya (1924; Kolkata: University of Calcutta Press, 2009), 429.

65. Sen, *Glimpses of Bengal Life*, 62.

66. Bhattacharya, “Pratham saṃskaraṇer bhūmikā,” 447.

67. Sen, *Glimpses of Bengal Life*, 61-62.

68. Bhattacharya, “Pratham saṃskaraṇer bhūmikā,” 447.

69. Susan L.Huntington, *The “Pala-Sena” School of Sculpture* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984), 164.

70. Bhattacharya, “Pratham saṃskaraṇer bhūmikā,” 471.

71. Muhammad Mosharraf Hossain, *Mahasthan: Anecdote to History* (Dhaka: Dibyaprakash, 2006), 19.

72. Henry Beveridge, “The Antiquities of Bagura,” *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 47, no.1(1878): 94-95.

73. E.V. Westmacott, “On the Traces of Buddhism in Dinajpur,” *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 44, no.1(1875): 189.

74. Grierson, “The Song of Manik Chandra,” 147-148.

75. The name of the kingdom of Manikchandra (and subsequently that of his son, Gopichandra) has not been mentioned in the oral songs collected in Rangpur. However, Sukur Mamud's *Gopīcandrer sanyās* and Bhavani Das's *Gopīcandrer pNācālī* designate him as the ruler of Meherkula/ Mrikula, a region which overlaps with the Mainamati-Lalmai ranges of Comilla district. Durlav Mallick refers to Gopichandra's capital as Patikanagar, which seems to refer to Patkapara of Rangpur or alternatively, Patikara of Comilla.

76. See Abdul M. Chowdhury, *Dynastic History of Bengal* (Dhaka: The Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1967), 155-160; 187-188.

77. In some versions of the song, Mainamati lives in Pherushanagar. Vishveshwar Bhattacharya identifies Pherushanagar with Mainamotir Kot in Rangpur. See Bhattacharya, "Pratham saṃskaraṇer bhūmikā," 469.

78. Some versions of the song identify Gorakshanatha as Mainamati's teacher; others state that she adopted Hadipa as her guru.

79. Ralph W. Nicholas, *Fruits of Worship: Practical Religion in Bengal* (New Delhi: Chronicle Books, 2003), 110.

80. Savar is presently an Upazila in the Dhaka district of Bangladesh. It is located about twenty four kilometres north-west of the Dhaka city. The seventh-eighth century

CE township of Sarveshwar or Sambhar is described in local legends to have been ruled by the king Harischandra.

81. Grierson, “The Song of Manik Chandra,” 145.

82. According to the local traditions, Hira’s residence was at Khola Kota. Both Vishveshwar and Grierson identify this place with Kholahati, in the present Parbatipur sub-district of the Dinajpur district in Bangladesh. The place is located near Karatoya which perhaps explains the daily labour that Gopichandra was subjected to.

83. The references are to the page numbers of the text and translation published in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society* in 1878. If not specified, the translations are my own.

84. Kisari Mohan Ganguli, trans., *The Mahabharata* (Kolkata, 1883-1896), 577.

85. I have referred to the text (edited by Vishveshwar Bhattacharya) as ‘Bhattacharya,’ followed by the chapter and verse numbers. As far as the written versions of the song are concerned, I have referred to the surname of the poet, followed by the line/ verse number. For the poems of Bhavani Das and Sukur Mamud, I refer to *Gopīcandrer gān*, edited by Ashutosh Bhattacharya (1924; Kolkata: University of Calcutta Press, 2009). For Durlav Mallick’s composition, I refer to the extract published in *Baṅgabhāṣā paricay*, ed. Dineshchandra Sen, part 1 (Kolkata: University of Calcutta

Press, 1914).As the verse numbers are not present in Dineshchandra Sen's edition of Durlav Mallick's text, I have mentioned the relevant page numbers.

86. Alexis Sanderson, "Purity and Power among the Brahmins of Kashmir," in *The Category of the Person*, edited by Michael Carrithers, Steven Collins and Steven Lukes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 214.

87. Alexis Sanderson, "Śaivism and the Tantric Traditions," in *The World's Religions*, edited by S.Sutherland, L. Houlden, P. Clarke and F.Hardy (London: Routledge, 1988), 671.

88. See David L. Lorenzen, *The Kapālikas and the Kālāmukhas* (1972; Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1991), 88-92.

89. Sanderson, "Śaivism and the Tantric Traditions," 671.

90. Ibid., 678.

91. Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, 203.

92. Miranda Shaw, *Passionate Enlightenment: Women in Tantric Buddhism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 36.

93. White, *Kiss of the Yogini*, 8.

94. See detailed discussion about authorship in Munshi Abdul Karim, ed., *Gorakṣavijay* by Sheikh Faijullah (Kolkata: Bangiya Sahitya Parishat, 1917), 6-19.

95. Sukumar Sen, *Bāṅgālā sāhityer itihās*, vol.3, rev. ed. (Kolkata: Ananda, 2012), 192.

96. Eric Havelock, *Preface to Plato* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: The Belknap Press, 1963), 36-48.

97. Ludo Rocher, "Orality and Textuality in the Indian Context," *Sino-Platonic Papers* 49(1994):21.

98. I use the term 'homeostasis' as used in Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (1982; London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 47.

99. Hilary Peter Rodrigues, *Ritual Worship of the Great Goddess* (State University of New York Press: New York, 2003), 18.

100. Eaton, *The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier*, 196.

101. Chandra, *The Sannyasi Rebellion*, 31.

102. Glazier, *A Report on the District of Rungpore*, 21.

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223. Toulmein, *Reconstructing Linguistic History in a Dialect Continuum*, 340-342.

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Conclusion

The study has traced the discussions, notions and configurations in and of Bengali prose in the writings of the members of the Asiatic Society of Bengal and the interactions of these with the developing genres of Bengali prose and its aesthetic formulations in the nineteenth century. It is undeniable that such processes of interaction in a colonial world are bound to be marked by traces of imperialist ideology, justifying narratives of control and subjugation. Yet, such a seamless narrative often undermines the diversity of engagements which has been charted out in the study. William Jones's motives for unfurling the Orientalist project were not the same as Grierson's intentions for studying Indic languages. Moreover, their methodologies of enquiry were drastically different. Thus, to imagine a simplistic, unproblematic colonial ideology which eventually engendered the discursive aesthetics of Bengali prose would be restrictive and myopic.

Having said this, the considerable contribution of early Orientalists in imagining a salient genre of Indic prose should not be underestimated. This, as we have witnessed, had evolved out of two dialectical tendencies – (a) shaping a structured understanding of the domain of language, through reading Sanskrit and Prakrit grammarians and rhetoricians; (b) collecting vocabularies, word-lists and recording conversation, often through 'native informants'. Both these processes evidently involved considerable foreclosure and pre-conceptions. Colebrooke's descriptions of the domain of the Sanskrit and Prakrit languages and poetic forms often involve imagining the syntactic basis of modern Indian vernaculars, including Bengali, to have been derived from Sanskrit. Jones's descriptions of orthography reveal this tendency at a phonemic level. This was also reflected in various degrees in the semantic domain of juridical compositions and translations –

especially in the scripting of *Vivādārṇavasetu*, *Vivādabhangārṇava* and the various translations of legal codes by Halhed, Jones, Colebrooke, Duncan, Forster and Edmonstone. On the other hand, the collection of vocabularies often involved contemporary native informants and was a multi-layered process involving greater inconsistencies and syncretic revelations. Forster's *Vocabulary*, for example, had words which were evidently non-Sanskritic (both by etymological and aesthetic standards) while Carey's *Kathopakathan* described an evidently polyglossic linguistic domain. The prose texts of the Fort William educators (some of them were also members of the Asiatic Society) were buffeted by the contrapuntal layering of these two tendencies. Both processes were mediated by a melange of native informants – *pandit*s and *munshi*s acting as interpreter, teachers and copyists – which led to a selective diffusion of their cultural preconceptions. It is true that the figure of the 'native informant' is, as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak rightly points out, ever elusive and always foreclosed by hegemony of colonialism.[1] It is also important to realise that the selfhood and agency of the coloniser, the administrator-scholar, is also an illusion. These spectres continually shape and reshape the Other, especially in a region like South Asia, with its myriad, multi-layered, mutually inconsistent ideations of culture. The present study agrees with Spivak's nuanced analysis[2]:

> If the student of culture wishes to pursue this further, the scrupulous difference between the figuration of the native informant in the text of Kant and Hegel should lead her to investigating the differences in the oppression of the Australian Aborigine and groups like the Fuegans and the production of the dominant Hindu colonial subject, rather than positing a unified "third world", lost, or, more dubiously, found lodged *exclusively* in the ethnic minorities in the First.

The study further reveals a decided shift in the methodology and objectives of the Asiatic Society, observable in the last three decades of the nineteenth century. There was an increased focus on collection of empirical data and 'scientific' evidence and a developing critique of subjective, literary studies of late eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century. This had implications in the imagining of the Indian vernaculars. From Jones's initial explorations in the last decade of the nineteenth century to Wilson's return to England in 1833, we observe the predominance of descriptive studies of linguistic and literary traditions, often emphasising subjective preferences and preserving ambivalence figurations. The financial crisis of the Society in 1820s and 1830s, the Orientalist-Anglicist controversy and the vindication of Bentinck's reformist paradigm led to a gradual transformation in the nature of Orientalist explorations. From mid-1830s to mid-1870s a period of transition sets in— moulded by considerable changes in the technologies of imperialist control, the introduction of the British Raj, the proliferation of the print culture and the incipient discourses of nationalism. John Beames's linguistic studies mark the ambivalences of this period – revealing the complexities of polyglossic identities, of contending nationalistic ideations and divergent literary aesthetics. This would eventually usher in an 'ethnographic turn' in the 1870s, with increased focus on taxonomic categorisation of ethnic identities and a systematic process of data collection about linguistic affiliations and diversities (often complementing the Census data which began to be published, every ten years, since 1871). Grierson's early linguistic studies, especially his translation of the 'Song of Manik Chand' and other variants of the *yogi* songs, typify the introduction of this trend. The gradual change of tenor in Grierson's explorations – from his initial speculative, literary essays to his multivolume *Linguistic*

Survey of India – effectively describes the dominant arc of Orientalist figuration of South Asian languages in the last decades of nineteenth century. Yet dissonant voices such as those of Haraprasad Shastri or Abdul Wali were also present; voices that problematised the ethnographic stereotyping of languages through a self-consciously, syncretic understanding of cultural, linguistic and historical roots of the subcontinent.

The flourishing of the normative traditions of Bengali prose after mid-nineteenth century has been studied not only through discussions about the literary works of iconic figures like Pyarichand Mitra, Ishwarchndra Vidyasagar, Akshaykumar Dutta, Ramnarayan Tarkaratna, Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay and Haraprasad Shastri but also through analyses of the various translations of *Gītagovinda* including the books published by Shyamlal Basak, Sharatchandra Bandyopadhyay and Nagendranath Ghosh; the translations of *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* by Nandakumar Roy, Jaganmohan Tarkaratna and Harishchandra Kaviratna; its adaptation as a *yatra* by Annadaprasad Bandyopadhyay and prose adaptation by Ramlal Mitra. *Gītagovinda* and *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* were selected not only because these were translated into English by Jones; they represent divergent Sanskrit genres of *kavya* – the lyrical and the dramatic –which were eventually rediscovered in the mundane world of Bengali prose. Akshaykumar Dutta's *Bhāratvarśīya upāsak sampradāy* represents the genre of non-fictional prose and serves as an important testament of interactions with Orientalist explorations. His adaptation of Wilson's 'A Sketch of the Religious Sects of the Hindus' is not a derivative text marked by slavish imitation; it is pervaded with dissonances, deviations, evasions, additions and changes. It is important that while Wilson's text is about 'Hindus', Dutta's is about Indians ('*bhāratvarśīya*'). Thus Dutta's reception of Wilson's categories also epitomise the complexities involved in the framing of South Asian nationalisms and how these, in spite of evident influences, were not merely derivative discourses of imperialist ideologies. The divergent print histories of Dutta and Wilson's texts also bring out different trajectories in which these discourses developed and framed linguistic identities.

Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar's lifelong engagement with *Abhijñānaśakuntalam* reveals an increasing preference for the Devanagari recension and a suppression of the so-called indecencies of the *sringaric* elaboration in Act 3. If this is read as a narrative of nationalist puritanism prompted by Orientalist interpretations (especially the translations of William Jones and Monier Monier-Williams) then it is not as straightforward and simplistic as it might look. Vidyasagar's reservations about the *sringaric* elaboration seem to be prefigured in his involvement in the debates about Sanskrit aesthetics. This is not exclusively a colonial phenomenon as it can be traced back to pre-colonial rhetorical traditions and several of Vidyasagar's contemporaries – including his teacher Premchand Tarkavagish, his friend Madanmohan Tarkalankar and his student Ramnarayan Tarkaratna – developed divergent views on the issue. These shaped the literary histories of Kalidasa's play as Premchand would publish the first Indian edition of the text (in 1839), Tarkaratna would publish a Bengali dramatic adaptation of the play (in 1860) while Vidyasagar would shape a prose adaptation (in 1854) and would eventually edit a Sanskrit edition of the play (in 1871). Moreover, the performative aspects of the play comes to the fore in the various stage adaptations in Bengali – especially in the two divergent editions of Nandakumar Roy's play (1855 and 1882). These bring out an increasing preference for prose (Roy appended alternative prose lines even for the verses used in the play in his second edition), a complex equivalence of Bengali polyglossia with the Prakrit/ Sanskrit sociolects used in the play and an increasing awareness of the libidinal excesses of the amorous encounters. Vidyasagar's ambivalences about social reform and nationalism are intricately linked to his complicated ideations of literary, linguistic and aesthetic norms. Thus, the translations of Jones and Williams did not usher an unequivocal puritanical understanding of nationalistic and gendered identities. The study explores the dialectical tension between text and its performance which evidently created ruptures in the reception of *Abhijñānaśakuntalam*. The erotic suggestions survived in the popular adaptations of the play and yet, quite ironically, reflected a continuation of certain pre-colonial Sanskrit aesthetic conceptions. These not only reflect a preference for more colloquial, syncretic speech registers but validate the play as a performative (and not merely a textual) genre. It is important, as Bakhtin had commented, to take into account the changes in speech genres in delineating changes in literary and linguistic aesthetics.[3] The survival of the carnivalesque in performance immediately makes us aware of the inconsistencies in national and gendered identities in South Asia.

The study has focused on the presence of eroticism and non-normative gendered ideations in some of the literary and cultural traditions studied by the members of the Asiatic Society. The notions of *rati viparite* in *Gītagovinda*, the assertions of female desire in *Abhijñānaśakuntalam*, the descriptions of heterodox antinomian sects in Wilson's typology of Indic sects and the Grierson's study of *yogi* songs reveal myriad ambivalent figurations of identity. The study has endeavoured to emphasise on the association between linguistic and gendered identities. While we must not think of the body to be 'only a linguistic effect which is reducible to a set of signifiers,'[4] its identity is delimited as being already signified (as Judith Butler asserts) before the process of signification which apparently identifies and labels it. Thus bodies are haunted with spectres of presence as languages are; they are always pervaded with the possibilities of 'becoming-sign of the symbol'.[5]The present explorations of the Orientalist encounters with South Asian literary traditions revealed how the contending ideologies and identities of nationhood presupposed mythic[6] (mis-)readings of the linguistic / gendered codes. Even in this the explorers participate in the already existent hermeneutics of the *tantra*s, its myriads codes of subversion and transgression; codes which had been read variously, for at least a millennia, to engender *other* ways of meaning. The study associates Grierson's interpretations and translations of the oral traditions of Rangpur with Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay's novels – *Ānandamaṭh* (1882) and *Devī caudhurāṇī* (1884) – and their uses of the mystical possibilities of woman's body in crafting powerful myths of nationhood. Bankimchandra's novels were evidently parts of a wider trend in historical romances, including Gopalchandra Mukhopadhyay's *Vīrvaraṇ* (1883), Rakhaldas Bandyopadhyay's *Dharmapāla* (1915) and Damodar Mukhopadhyay's *Yogesvarī* (1902). These novels reveal visions of the antinomian and the heterodox, prefigured through the *tantric* / *siddha* nexus in the woman's body, only to be later subsumed in the discourse of emergent nationhood. Yet other members of the Asiatic Society problematised a simplistic reading of this code, engendering disruptive narratives from the same source. Haraprasad Shastri's *Bener Meye* (1919) is an important example of such subversive (mis)reading. Thus the shaping of novel as a distinct genre was buffeted by the interplay of these dialectical *imagination*s of linguistic, gendered and nationalist identities.

In his presidential address at the Bangiya Sahitya Parishat in 1914, Haraprasad Shastri emphasises on the syncretic roots of Bengali. He states that ‘some writers’ might have considered Bengali to have originated from Sanskrit and thus use an exclusively *sanskritised* register. They have not been successful, however, in banishing *persianate* words from Bengali vocabulary. Shastri wants to make the members of the Parishat, which had been constituted for the study and improvement of Bengali literature, to be aware of the fact that the syncretic history of the language would not be revealed till one has deciphered the complex, intertwined histories of the *siddha* and *tantric* sects.[7] Shastri’s exhortation to the nationalists reveals his salient stand not to accept a restrictive, schismatic construction of the histories and aesthetics of Bengali.

The present study attempts a critique of a monolithic, seamless narrative of imperialist control in the shaping of the various genres of Bengali prose. Rather, it emphasises the discontinuities and ambivalences, the inconsistencies and (mis)readings which have shaped not only the registers of Bengali prose but have engendered diverse narratives of religious, ethnic, linguistic and nationalist identities in South Asia.

Notes

1. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Towards a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1999), 6-8.

2. Ibid., 49.

3. Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 65.

4. Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (1993; London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 6.

5. Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, rev. ed. (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1997), 47.

6. I use the word in the sense Barthes had used it, to suggest a second-order semiological system. See Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: The Noonday Press, 1991), 110-114.

7. Haraprasad Shastri, "Vangiya-sāhitya-pariṣader sabhāpatir abhibhaṣaṇ: 1321," in *Nirvācita Haraprasād Śastrī: sāhitya o saṃskṛiti cintā*, ed. Satyajit Chaudhuri and Bijali Sarkar (Kolkata: Pashchimbanga Bangla Academy, 2002), 191.

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