CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: ORIGIN, EVOLUTION AND HISTORY OF COMIC STRIP

The very nomenclature 'comic strip' is a combination of two words viz. 'comic' implying 'thematic content' and 'strip' implying 'form/structure'. Comic strip is a sequence of illustrations narrating (both pictorially and literally) a story or an event. Pictures have always been a means of better understanding than description. Combined with this aspect of understanding is the idea of communication—communication of thought and concepts from one who describes to the recipient. Comic strip is a visual medium of communication of ideas or the contents of a text. It is a form of visual art consisting of images which are commonly combined with the text, often in the form of speech balloons, speech bubbles or image captions. It may seem to be a very modern technique but connections can be made between this and the communication system of ancient civilisations. The Egyptians used combination of images and hieroglyphics. Narratives composed of sequence of pictures were common in other ancient cultures also. Relating to its medium and its communicative functions, most of the scholars have observed its precedence also in Japanese Emaki, European stained glass windows, pre-Colombian Central American manuscript, and the Bayeux Tapestry. Taking into account this aspect of image-idea relationship in comic strip/comics, the term 'sequential art' coined by cartoonist Will Eisner has also been used for comic strip.

The aim of this research undertaken, however, has not been to attempt a definition of comics/comic strips, but to examine it as a mode of cultural production and cultural dissemination. Attempts would also be made to see the effect of market forces on comic strips in general and vernacular comic strips in particular. A detailed study of the background and history of comic strips is important in order to show how political and market forces in consonance with dominant power structures are at play as shaping factors behind the emergence of comic strips/comics as cultural products at various levels. The methodology adapted in the thesis is based on content analysis, semiotic analysis, case study, visual interpretation of image-illustration as ‘text’ and the application of interview with the writer-illustrator of Nante Fante and Handa Bhonda comic strip, Sri Narayan Debnath for a first hand comprehension of the process of comic strip production and resultant dissemination.

In examining comic strips/comics as a 'product' and a 'producer' of intended implication (as the initiator of the process) one important thing to be noted is the place it enjoys in the established
literary canon. The categorisation of comic strip as low/pop/children's literature with an implied age group as well as its pictorial quality in mind presupposes the negation of its seriousness. This is a marginalisation in canonical terms. Nevertheless, what has been important in the present research is the way comic strips works through the sub-text. A detailed analysis of the medium (the image - text-display) of comic strips/comics in the subsequent chapters shall reveal that its apparent simple mode does not merely mean what it seems to say. The process of marginalisation of 'the other' in comic strips that works through the assignment of subordinate role or through marginalisation by tactical glamourisation (which is seen particularly in case of women characters), works through a sub-text. A sub-text is a mark, or a disguise of the real meaning of a comic strip text. The manifest meaning of such a text thus gets interpreted as a distortion, displacement or total occlusion of its real meaning.

The two vernacular comic strips *Nante Fante* and *Handa Bhonda* have been the praxis for case study though a few other comic strips such as *Senapati Ray Kachag* has also been analysed. Attempts have been made to show how these two strips work as a 'product' and 'producer' of culture and culture artifacts. Nicholas Granham in his "Concepts of Culture-Public Policy and the Cultural Industries" defines culture as "the production and circulation in symbolic meaning…a material process of production and exchange, part of, and in significant ways determined by, the wider economic processes of society with which it shares many common features" (55). The cultural processes, he further adds is "as much, if not more about creating audiences or publics as it is about producing cultural artefacts and performances" (ibid).

What is being marketed through image and text (two tools of comic strips) is the dominant majority culture through the lexical (Bengali language) and the visual (illustration of characters and events with the essence of Bengali culture). These comic strips are targeted to a Bengali readership covertly reinforcing Bengali cultural value on one hand, and to a non-Bengali yet Bengali reading audience who are unconsciously subjected to this cultural hegemonisation. This is only one dimension of the multidimensional hegemonisation process. Hegemony operates also as a tool of patriarchal ideology where women characters are silenced or stereotyped in comic strips.

The subtext operates in comic medium more emphatically through its action-oriented progression of plots. Comic medium is more akin to film medium than it is to the photographic image. Using Barthes' analogies in "The Rhetoric of Image", one can see that while photographic reality involves an awareness of having been there, or "the stupefying evidence of this is how it was, giving us, by a precious miracle of reality from which we are sheltered" (23), the dramatic element or the progress in action is constituted by the 'de-stilling' of the images through the continuity of images in the comic medium. Just as the photographic image is related to a pure spectatorial consciousness, the film medium depends on "a more projective, more "magical" fictional consciousness (ibid). The film medium consequently involves an awareness of 'being there' rather than 'having been there'. The photograph
can at best represent a flat anthropological fact. The film on the other hand, with its present continuous narratives can establish links and therefore construct a story.

Considering the authority that is invested in the written word and the privilege it commands in communication, it is very difficult to find a text that is exclusively made of images. There is at least a minimal written caption. Barthes delineates two functions from the linguistic message that accompanies any image, namely, anchorage and relay. While the anchorage text is meant to "direct the reader through the signified of the image causing him to avoid some and receive others, by means of an often subtle dispatching, it remote controls him towards a meaning chosen in advance" (20). The anchorage text in other words becomes an occasion to display its overt ideology, in consonance with dominant social structure. The relay text is found in cartoon and comic strips. The text is not more than 'a scratch of dialogue', and it is complimentary to the image,"the words in the same way as the images are fragments of a more general syntagm and the unity of the message is realised at a higher level than that of the story, the anecdote, the diegesis"(21).

The idea is to use dialogues for advancing the action and to add only those meanings that are not to be found in the image itself. Interrogating the very notion of the anchorage text according to Barthes this research proposes that in order to ground the semiotic coding/decoding process of the writer/illustrator and the readers of the comic strips as well as to communicate intended culture specific stances through comic strip as a cultural product and its illustration Barthes's definition can be broadened, enlarged and modified to include the image and illustration of the comic strips within the category of the anchorage text. This is substantiated by the fact that in the case of comic strip as a genre the illustration performs the same function of 'anchoring' i.e. directing the reader towards a meaning chosen in advance as does the caption in the photograph anchors the meaning of the image, reinforcing the addresser's intended meaning. Hence all further analysis of comic strips included in the research entails consideration of the illustration in the comic strip panels as 'anchorage text'. The image with its definitive shapes, sizes and colours and its representation of culture specific details leave almost no scope for the reader/viewer to move away from the intended meaning/s.

A discourse on comic strip and the related theory automatically leads to a discussion on two theoretical postulations viz. 'anchorage' and 'relay' text. Anchorage text is meant to 'direct the reader through the signifieds of the image causing him to avoid some and receive others. By means of an often subtle dispatching it remote controls him towards a meaning chosen in advance' Anchorage text does not offer variation of interpretation. It has a fixity of meaning. The illustration works as a pictorial code. This provides an impetus to direct the reader to a single intended meaning. This pictorial code is deciphered/decoded by the reader often in a predetermined/definitive manner. The anchorage text (illustration) restricts/resists the connotative function and denotes only a single meaning. It anchors towards a meaning 'chosen in advance'. This is a strong tool to disseminate a particular ideology through
the image. Interpretation and internalisation becomes convenient in anchorage text as it denotes/directs only one meaning through cultural codes inherent in the pictorial image. The anchorage text in other words becomes an occasion to display its 'overt ideology' in consonance with dominant social power structure-the established hegemonic construct. On the other hand, relay text is found in cartoon and comic strips. Relay text is no more than a scratch of dialogue, and it is complementary to the image, "the words in the same way as the images are fragments of a more general syntagm and the unity of the message is realised at a higher level than that of the story, the anecdote, the diegesis. In contrast to anchorage text (devoid of language) relay text generates multidimensional connotations. Interpretation varies as it provides scope for imagination to fill in the gaps or indeterminate elements. Wolfgang Iser sums up his theory of textual determinacy and indeterminacy with an analogy to stars and constellations-" two people gazing at the night sky may both be looking at the same collection of stars, but one will see the image of a plough, and the other will make out a dipper. The 'stars' in a literary text are fixed; the lines that join them are variable"(282).

Iser does not analyse actual readings of texts, but proceeds from an ideal "implied reader." For Iser, the reader does not mine out an objective meaning hidden within the text. Rather, literature generates effects of meaning for the reader in a virtual space created between reader and text. Although reader and text assume similar conventions from reality, texts leave great portions unexplained to the reader, whether as gaps in the narrative or as structural limits of the text's representation of the world. This basic indeterminacy "implies" the reader and begs her participation in synthesising, and indeed living, events of meaning throughout the process of reading. In case of comic strips, the gaps are filled by images generated through visualisation by the reader/audience. The process of decoding in case of comic strips has been analysed in detail in the second chapter of this thesis. These images vary with respect to age, circumstances and experiences. Signifieds remain beneath the signifiers (lexical) providing scope for multilayered connotations. Illustrations provide scope for a strong decodification process than the relay text through which a fixed predetermined meaning is constructed. Relay text implies the use of dialogues for advancing the action. It tends to add only those meanings that are not found in the image itself. Thus in the lexical-visual interdependency of anchorage and relay, the pictorial-visual code is able to enforce a meaning (or an ideology) more forcibly and effectively. The sign system here operates through cultural codification where representation through lexical-visual combine (relay and anchorage text) leads to 'recognition' or 'identification'. Comic strip/comics is a combination of these two types of texts. It has the advantage of both verbal and pictorial code. The oscillation of relay is strengthened by the illustration of anchorage. What relay text fails to convey anchorage text enforces it through illustration.

A panel from *Nante Fanter Nanan Kirti* Vol. 7,8,9 (page 10 of 7) can be analysed so as to show the function of relay and anchorage and depict how this combined code type of text generates
meaning. The panel shows the Oriya cook telling Nante, Fante and Keltu that superintendent is calling them (Figure 1.1). The anchorage provides scope to decipher the text through the illustration where he is shown to be informing them (the body language and expression). Even if the relay text is omitted we can still decode his subordinate position through his role as a cook and as someone who functions as a bearer of order. His illustration with a “tiki” and “gamcha” directs the reader/viewer to his identity that is generally referred to as 'Ure Bamun' in Bengali meaning a low category Brahmin (not the pujari or priest category of Bengali Brahmins) engaged for cooking only. The anchorage text here constructs a fixed meaning that operates in consonance with dominant power structure/hegemony where his subordinate role is emphasised in contrast to the mainstream Bengali-Hindu culture. Kolkata has a history of enjoying socio-cultural, literary and economic privilege due to politico-geographical reasons. People from Orissa, Bihar and other comparatively underdeveloped regions came to Kolkata primarily in search of employment. A Brahmin from Orissa would have to work as a cook in a house which might be of a lower rank in racial hierarchy. The social hierarchy of his society and culture of origin viz. Orissa society where he enjoyed dominating position was reversed due to economic reason, dislocation and displacement as well as change in society and culture. A 'central' thus became 'marginal'. Relay text that is complementary to the image is the language spoken by the cook ("Thakur"). He is trying to speak Bengali language with his own mother tongue accent and intonation. Language is a means of communication and he is bound to communicate his ideas into the language of the 'other' culture as he occupies a peripheral/marginal space in that culture and society (here Bengali). His role is strengthened through relay and anchorage which implies that ideology operates in comic strips/comics or visual media more forcefully through these combined type of text. The unity of the message is understood at a higher level as a result.

The anchorage and relay functions of the text are seen to be analogous to the still photograph and moving picture frame of the image text. In comic strips, the relay function of linguistic text operates along with its action-oriented medium. The awareness of 'being there' involves the reader at once. As an example one could cite three pages from *Nante Fante Collection* Vol. 7,8,9. An image of the same woman figure is drawn in five panels as per the continuity of images in the story. In *Nante Fante* written and illustrated by Narayan Debnath women characters are almost entirely excluded. Taking into consideration the time frame which this comic strip depicts (which is probably 70s and 80s of the 20th Century), women in Bengali literature/society were gradually emerging from the sentimental trap of Saratchandra Chatterjee, passing through a phase of self awareness in Ashapurna Devi, but were yet to step into the more liberated mould of Buddhadeb Guha. The story of this comic sequence is centered around life in a boy's hostel, which as a space automatically excludes female presence. It is only when these two characters (whose names are being used in the title) move out of the physical space that is the boys hostel, do they come across a women who is herself playing the role of a heroine in a film shooting.
As Nante and Fante move out of the spatial confinement of the boy's hostel, they enter into the alien space of a village where they are misled by the cry of a female voice desperately seeking assistance. Here linguistic text (relay text) is used without image. The text as seen through the sign used in the panel evokes the 'male' in Nante and Fante at the same time to show case their gallantry. The binary of powerful male and tender female works here only through the relay text, which is a cry for assistance: "Help! Help! Is there somebody to help me? I have fallen in the hands of thugs". (Debnath 16; trans. mine.) The unwritten lines automatically imply some sort of threat to her womanhood. The subsequent panel, through image and text, fits into the usual paradigm of women in distress apparently. (Figure 1.2). The linguistic text is here complimentary to the image. The illustration clearly projects her fear and her lack of intelligence as she misinterprets her 'rescuers' to be thugs. The relay text functions in correspondence with the cinematic/ film medium. The continuity of images 'de-stills' the anchorage text/image and restricts these to the monolithic and one dimensional connotation. However, the combined text foregrounds the concept of 'feminity' as specific to women such as 'save me, protect me', as expression specific to women, when threatened. When the woman here misinterprets Nante and Fante as thugs, she calls some Nepababu and Tepababu (probably the director producer duo of the film) and exaggerates the whole scene as an attempt to kill her. This text also reinforces the tendency of exaggeration and melodramaticity generally attributed to women. In comic strips ideology functions more forcefully through the verbal and pictorial code, but at the same time conceals/ covers the sexist connotation that works as a part of patriarchal ideological bias. Her femininity is established at the outset. This is also a sort of discrimination based on gender, since to portray women otherwise would automatically lead to a role reversal. However, this is only one side of the story. It is strange that the entire episode gets a different perspectival connotation altogether when it is known that all these, right from the shouting to the entrance of the villagers, are all parts of the movie script which was being filmed there. But owing to her gender specificity she becomes a victim - when both Nante and Fante mistake her to be in trouble and she herself thinks that she is really in trouble. Surprisingly, her role in spite of all play acting and misunderstanding remains the same. She never moves beyond her subordinate nature, her delicacy, her tenderness and her resultant insecurity as a woman.

Although considerable data about the origin of comic strip are available and they give us some of the traces of its evolutionary pattern, yet the logic for the nomenclature of this literary genre could not be ascertained. The paucity of material has automatically given rise to some approximations in tracing the nature of comic strip and its evolution. This research also attempted to vindicate its claim to serious study. It has been said that 'cartoon' and 'caricature' are the forms from which the idea of comic strip originated. The term/adjective 'comic' associated with this genre is appropriate since cartoon and caricature are generally 'comic' in nature and content although they are also sometimes used for the purpose of satirising a serious issue.
Brian Walker in his book *The comic before 1945* says that the definition of comic strips is hard to pin down because comic strip creators are constantly innovating and changing the scope of definition ("Comics"). Will Eisner discussed the technique and structure of comic use, which he named "sequential art", defining it as the arrangement of pictures or images and words to narrate a story or dramatise an idea ("Comics and Sequential Art"). All these definitions focus on the technical part of the comic strip and give no hint to the evolution of the content in them. Eddie Campbell's statement is important in this connection. He offered the term 'graphic storytelling' defining comic as the art of the using pictures in sequence and its attendant language of forms and techniques, refined over many centuries. But what counts most in his view is the contrast that he finds between comics and graphic storytelling. He defines the former as 'humorous art'. ("Eddie Campbell"). He also adds that they are not necessarily humorous due to their own evolutionary patterns, but are still to be considered under this rubric as they evolved from it.

The 'evolutionary pattern' which he observed may be located but cannot be ascertained or affirmed. Every 'text' or 'product' reflects the context in which it is produced. The context affects the society and individual alike, perhaps because human need is curved out by the changed situation and circumstances. All the strips of early period were humorous—*Max and Matritz* (1865) which is thought to be a significant forerunner of the comic strip, the *Ally Slooper's Half Holiday* (1885), *The Katzenjammer Kids* (1897). But as in the course of time, society became complicated, the subject matter of comic strips also underwent some changes. The action genres, mythological stories and strips with serious story lines replaced the humorous tone of the 'comic' strips and this replacement was bound to happen. The context and technique of various genres of literature have undergone many changes during the course of their evolution. A modern or postmodern text avoids providing a solution or a happy ending in most of the cases. This is perhaps because solution is not possible in a confused and complicated world affecting human lives. The same thing happened in the case of comic strip genre. A conflict-ridden world or rather a conflict ridden creative mind cannot produce a simple straightforward text in a humorous vein. The change that has occurred in case of comic strips is the necessity and consequence of a complex society. The manifestation of the conflict between good and evil is very popular with action comic strip writers. This evil force is perhaps in conflict within and without men against which he fights relentlessly but rarely becomes victorious. This leads to a difference between concept of reality and comic strip simulated reality. In social reality or the context on which comic strip is generated man is seen fighting against evil, culminating in his/ her defeat. But in comic strip the man/superman/hero is not defeated. This aspect of comic strips reflects its market concern. A tragic comic will suffer in the market and therefore, somewhere down the line, the happy ending and optimism is retained and is accepted.
However, the evolutionary pattern of comic strip was so swift and unobserved that need was not felt to replace the term. In 20th century U.S.A. comic strips started to broaden their content. This was first seen in *Buck Rogers* and *Tarzan* that launched the action genre. Following publications adopted the popular usages 'comic' keeping in mind the form rather than content. Endeavour has been made to replace the term because it is criticised as both confusing and misleading. In the 1960s and 1970s 'underground' (a politically loaded term with anti establishmentarian implication) cartoonists used the spelling 'comix' to distinguish their work from mainstream newspaper strips and juvenile (immature age factor/ non serious implication) comic books. Ironically, although their work was written for an adult audience it was comic in nature, as well. So, the 'comic' label was still considered appropriate. The term 'graphic novel' was popularised in the late 1970s, having been coined two decades previously to distance the material in question from this confusion.

This research is based on the hypothesis that comic strip is a cultural product. So, along with the discussion on the history of its evolution pattern, the research undertaken would also tend to substantiate the view that apart from being a material only for children, comic strip is a potent tool for disseminating culture. The discussion on the nomenclature of comic strip so far was an attempt to show how the technique, form and style work as a mask to conceal serious implications under a carefully planned naiveté. The process of stereotyping gets simplified by the use of this term. Whereas the adjective 'comic' gives the genre an apparently simplistic mould, its content implies multilayered constructions and multilayered connotations.

Throughout its history, comic strips have reflected the sociopolitical attitude of their writers and readers. In America, early comics consisted of short, humorous newspaper comic strips. In 1930 the action-oriented storylines were represented in the comic format. There was a shift in content, not in form. It has been argued that these comics primarily addressed contemporary political issues. Some have suggested that the 'wonder-women' character and its title evolved as a vehicle to communicate pro-American attitude during World War-II. 'X-men' creator Stan Lee has frequently cited the African- American Civil Rights Movement as the inspiration for his team of superheroes and has translated many of the tensions of majority-minority race politics into the 'X-men' title. These were only a few of many such instances. Many examples of stereotyping Asian, Black American and women characters as tools for imparting dominant ideological indoctrination would be discussed in the subsequent segments of this chapter.

The experimentation with comic strips/ comics and its metamorphosis both in form and content started right from its emergence. It has been said that the Francies Barlow's *A True Narrative of the Horrid Hellish Popish Plot* (c.1682) is an early surviving work, which is recognisable as being in the form of printed comics. *The Punishment of Lemual Gulliver* by William Hoggarth (1726) is another early work that bears similarities of form. But in recent times Eddie Campbell has argued that
these may be more a collection of cartoons rather than actual comics. The eras 15th to 18th centuries are credited with having codified the speech balloon in its present form, from the previous convention of having speech represented by banners. Thomas Rowlandson and James Gillary are its proponents. Rowlandson's works also popularised the strip form as pictorial narrative. A surviving work of Rowlandson from 1782; satirising the politics of the day, shows it to be an early variation of the strip cartoon. Rodolphe Topffer, a Francophone Swiss artist is the key figure in this regard belonging to the early part of the 19th century. The emphasis on cinematic quality of comic strips and the arrangements of parts is seen in his thoughts revealed in 'Picture Story' in his "Essay on Physiognomics" in 1845. He wrote:

To construct a picture story does not mean you must set yourself up as a master craftsman, to draw out every potential from your material often down to the dregs. It does not mean you just devise caricatures with a pencil naturally frivolous. Nor is it simply to dramatise a proverb or illustrate a pun. You must actually invent some kind of play where the parts are arranged by plan and form a satisfactory whole. You do not merely pen a joke or put a refrain in couplets. You make a book: good or bad, sober or silly, crazy or sound in sense. ("Defining Comics")

The concept of verbal codification and pictorial codification associated with comic strip/comics was comprehended by Sir Ernst Gombrich in the works of Topffer who had been successful in evolving a new pictorial language- that of an abbreviated art style, which worked by allowing the audience to fill in gaps with their own imagination (Gombrich 21). Satirical drawings in newspaper were popular through much of the 19th century. In Britain, Punch magazine launched such drawing in 1841 and referred to such 'humorous pencilings' as cartoons in satirical reference to the parliament, who were organising an exhibition of cartoons at the time. This usage becomes common parlance and has lasted till the present day. Fliegende Blatter and Charivari magazine in continental Europe and Judge and Puck in the U.S. contained cartoons.

In America, the great popularity of comics sprang from the newspaper war between Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst. The Little Bears was the first American comic with recurring characters. The Yellow Kid, which is the source of the term 'Yellow Journalism' is the first colour comic. It was a part of the first Sunday comic section in 1897. Mutt and Jeff was the first daily strip that appeared in 1907. The comic strip in Germany began in 1865 with Max and Mortiz by Wilhelm Busch, a strip about two trouble-making boys in a series of severely moralistic tales in the vain of
German's Children's stories like 'Struwwelpeter' (Shock Headed Peter). This strip provided an inspiration for German immigrant Rudolph Dirks to launch *katzenjammer kids* in 1897, probably the first comic strip in the modern sense of the term. Familiar comic strip iconography such as stars for pain, speech in thought balloons, and sawing logs for snoring.

It is around the time that Manhua, the Chinese form of comics started to formalise and the process lasted till 1927. In 1884, *Ally Sloper's Half Holiday* featured a recurring character. However, the first successful comic series featuring regular character was either R.F. Outcault's single panel cartoon series *Hogan's Alley* (1895) or Rudolph Dirk's multipanel strip *The Katzenjammer kids* (1897). The 20th Century, along with the emergence of action genre (*Buck Rogers* and *Tarzan*) saw the first appearance of the very popular *The Adventure of Tintin* in 1929. It was published as a black-and-white strip in *le Petit Vingtieme*, a supplement to *Le Vingtieme Siecle*, a Belgian newspaper. The strip was published as *Tintin in the land of the Soviets* in 1930. The abbot Norbert Wallez, an avid supporter of social Catholism, a right wing movement, ran this children section. Influenced by his mentors especially the abbot Norbert Wallez, the creator Hergé (real name Georges Remi) used Tintin as a tool for catholic propaganda.

In 1929, a reprint collection of newspaper strips *The Funnies* was published. It is reported to be the first four-colour comic news-stand publication in the United States. But its publication ceased after 36 issues. The year 1933 saw the emergence of a format recognisable today as comic book *Funnies on Parade* published by two workers Hally Walden and Max Gaines.

The 'action genre', which started with *Tarzan* and *Buck Rogers*, gave way to the 'superhero genre'. In 1936, *Phantom* was published. Phantom is a protector who reincarnates in order to save his men. According to its creator Le Falk's confession, the concept of a superhero- a protector was engraved in his mind since childhood when he saw an old man tortured by the more powerful others. In 1938, *action comics* # 1 was published featuring the first appearance of *Superman*. It ushered the Golden Age of comics. Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster created *Superman*. The emergence of superman in U.S.A. is said to have a definitive cultural connotation. USA is a relatively new country compared to the old worlds of Europe, Asia, Africa), and as a young nation formed demographically by a group of people from diverse racial backgrounds, there's not really as much shared history and deeply seated cultural myths to present. So the American conception of heroism includes 'superpowers'. However according to Peter Coogan, author of *Superhero :the Secret Origin of a Genre* Superman's emergence and popularity was just the contemporary expression of a timeless need. ("Peter Coogan on Superman and Superhero")

In 1938, *Spiroon* first appeared in Belgium, starting the typical custom of weekly magazines featuring mostly Franco-Belgian comics. Post World War II period brought many changes in the
The concept of comic strip in India is almost fifty years old. But it is quite recent compared to the European, American and Japanese comic strip tradition. Indian market was dominated by foreign comics primarily. When Indian publications began a tendency to present a mixed action and comic (humorous) genre was apparent. Action genre was attempted following the popularity of foreign superheroes. Abid Surti created the saffron kurta-clad crime fighter Bahadur to Indianise/localise the action hero construct. Another such hero was Inspector Azad created by Surti along with illustrator Ram Mohan and Pratap Mallick. Abid Surti also published a three panel strip Dhabbuji, a comic in humorous vein in the magazine Dharmayog. Dhabbuji is based on the protagonist who is a lawyer by profession and is witty.

Action heroes had a huge fan base but comics featuring everyday characters had their own attraction. One of the fore-runners in this genre was Pran Kumar Sharma, creator of famous Chacha Chowdhury, Billo Pinky, Srimatiji and an assortment of characters drawn from daily life. In 1967, UNESCO endorsed the use of comics as a vehicle for communicating cultural values. Prior to that the comics market in India was completely dominated by foreign titles- Phantom, Mandrake and Superman being the more popular ones. For instance, Phantom was not only serialised by the Illustrated Weekly of India, it was also brought out in comic magazine form by the Times of India Group under the guardianship of Anant Pai who devised the tactics of devoting half the comic 16 pages, to indigenous material scripted by him with titles like Around the World with Kunju Pillai. By 1967, however, Pai was disillusioned with the exclusive profusion of western children literature and concomitant colonisation of the young minds educated in English medium school. So he hit upon the proposal of 'acquainting' Indian children with their cultural heritage in consonance with the UNESCO dictum and the result was the Indian Classic Illustrated or Amar Chitra Khata. The Indian comic strip scenario underwent a sea change with the launching of this most popular as an endeavor to familiarise Indian children with Indian mythology, legends, history and culture. This was a change both in theme, technique and style. By competing and challenging the domination of non-Indian publications, Amar Chitra Khata initiated a cultural revolution confronting/resisting the western mode.

To begin with it did not have any takers lest of all the Times of India management who had by then converted the comic magazine into a full-fledged Phantom edition. India Book House Pvt. Ltd. Under H.G. Mirchandani was the only publishing concern willing to take on the experiment. Warming up with the publication of ten classics illustrated titles like Cindrella, Jack and the Beanstalk, for which it had rights in eight Indian languages, the eleventh title Krishna published in February 1970 became the first title of the Amar Chitra Khata corpus. Thus, in order to counter western cultural...
imperialism, foreign comics translated in Indian language (translation of comic strips and the resultant theorisation are dealt with in chapter III of this thesis), gave way to *Amar Chitra Katha*, the first native Indian comic in English. Indeed it was translated in 38 different languages as the sales gradually picked up, but the master copy was always in English.

The rise of *Amar Chitra Katha* in Indian market assured its place as a native Indian comic. But countering western cultural imperialism in itself created another marginalisation within its own ambit. *Amar Chitra Katha* series was a tool for imaging a 'Hindu - India' and this analysis of *Amar Chitra Katha* conforms to the proposed Ph.D thesis on the ground of constructing a homogenous space of Hindu cultural consciousness. While confronting western mode it resisted a centre (the Eurocentric one), but created a Hindu centre another by marginalising the other religious communities. It created a Hindu-India where non Hindu communities are silenced or given a secondary status in construction of the nation. Frances W. Pritchett in the essay "The World of Amar Chitra Katha" identifies Amar Chitra Katha's Hindu bias in the absence of any Muslim in the 'Makers of Modern India' Series' by saying that "readers who happen to be of the wrong gender, the wrong politics, or the wrong religion will find themselves only scantily represented"(105).

The vernacular comic strips such as *Handa Bhonda* and *Nante Fante* (vernacular implies Bengali for this research) similarly being vernacular and hence already marginal with respect to English and other prominent Indian Languages such as Hindi, facilitated within themselves the process of hegemonisation through which non-Bengali communities such as residents of Orissa and Bihar are marginalised through text-image relation in comics thus creating a centre. The functioning of this hegemonisation process in comic strips medium has been discussed in the subsequent section.

The more recent strips in India can be called a deviation from the general mode of comics as was propounded by *Amar Chitra Khata*. The dissemination of cultural value through mythic stories/legends through the introduction to Indian mythology is now done in a different mould. There is a persistent attempt to assimilate western culture and Indian mythology. Moreover the strips are dominated by more advanced western stylisation of illustration having an almost cinematic quality. The western mode has gradually come into being with another kind of hegemonisation - hegemonisation as a part of globalisation. In this case it is predominantly the rise of ‘super heroines' instead of superheroes that has hit the market. Interestingly these superheroines appeal not so much through their 'heroism' but through their 'glamour'.(Figures 1.3;and 1.4) Women characters are introduced, but being inspite of being in the apparent centre they do not dominate, they are infact being dominated by the idea of women as commodity. This pertains to commodification of femininity and helps in comprehending and theorising the position of rare women characters in *Handa Bhonda* and *Nante Fante*.

In the year 2002, Slave Labour Graphics of San Jose California published *Bombaby the Screen Goddess*. The comic introduced a character by the name of Sangeeta. The plot revolves around
this young girl who is about to get married when she discovers that she is the reincarnation of goddess Mombadevi. The artist Antony Mazzota was inspired by Bollywood and modelled Bombaby (Figure 1.5) on the Hindi Film, heroines of the 1960's. She was depicted as voluptuous, kitschy kind of figure, with a Sadhana8- style haircut. The emergence of super heroine cult in Indian comics was because of the Indian mythical heritage of the Mother Goddess embodying the feminine principle or Shakti. According to Sarnath Banerjee, a writer of comic books and graphic novels and artist: "there is a lot of complexity which comes with a strong super heroine character. And, India with its rich heritage of stories about goddesses and heroines is ideal inspiration for creating these super heroins" (qtd in Sethi). The super heroine trend in India started with U.S. based comics which introduced the character Maya. Recently, a partnership between Richard Barnson's Virgin Group and Gotham comics has led to a new company, Virgin comics which aims to turn India into the next Japan in terms of entertainment by creating new lines of comic rooted in Indian mythology and history (much like the Manga in Japanese culture). Among the first three series of comics, two are centered round a female protagonist whose past life is rooted in India as reincarnations of a Hindu Goddess. Devi created by the film maker Shekhar Kapoor has been enjoying a good response in U.S and has recently been launched in India. Kapur says that"Devi is a super heroine who is drawn largely from our own myths. It is a character who is a gentle, caring nurturer, and at the same time also an avenger". (qtd. in Sethi)

Snakewoman is a fictional character created also by Shekhar Kapoor and published by Virgin Comics with art by Michael Craydos, it depicts the story of Jessica Peterson, a young introspective midwestern girl. She is actually a reincarnation of an ancient 'Naga' demon. She is reborn in the form of a beautiful and unsuspecting female torn between her human brain (ethics, morality, intellect) and her reptilian one (instincts, senses and survival patterns). Jessica has to uncover this new part of herself. Snakewoman has a realistic touch in its illustration that creates a shadowy world suited to the thematic concern of the story. Shawn Hill in his review on Snakewoman endorses the concept of East West conflict and comparison. The story establishes a parallel between Western superstition and inscrutable Eastern faith. According to Hill, "It all boils down to a classic battle between East and West, Enlightenment and superstition, Christianity and Hinduism, with the ultimate verdict being an odd mix of"colonialism" is bad but Snake goddesses are scary". ("Hill , Shawn. Rev. of Snakewoman v1")

In this doctoral research and corresponding dissertation attempt has been made to analyse and investigate the concept of hegemony and market influence in the emergence of various comic strips. Both Devi and Snakewoman defy all the characteristics of comic association. Indian mythology is manipulated through Western stylisation for the expanding Indian market. The 'divinity' of mythological goddesses is de-mythified to take the form of an erotic female or is being transformed to a more sensuous and hybrid form of the human and divine. Such presentations and stylisations are based on the demands of market forces. They are the reincarnations of century old divine entities. But Devi and
Snakewoman in their seductive mode embody the commodification of female body/feminity that theoretically is a distortion of the Indian myth. Hegemonic construction operates here at two different levels: firstly, subsequent assimilation of such distorted dissemination of culture and heritage by Indians as consumers (readers) of these strips. Secondly, the hegemonisation process working through commodification of women as constructed by the male gaze (here the author-illustrator's) pretends to give them 'central' position and at the same time acts as a shaping factor that moulds the gaze of the reader. This falls in line with Laura Mulvey's theory of the gaze in her work *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* that establishes the fact that forms of looking that are depicted in a text cannot be separated from forms of looking at that text conducted by the reader or spectator:

In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure of looking has been split between active/ male and passive female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy into the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to- be -looked- at -ness(309).

But in the case of such comic strips, there seems to be a contradiction with John Berger who proposes in his *Ways of Seeing* asserts that "the way we see things is effected by what we know and what we believe" (Berger 47). This because for most of the Indian reader-consumers of Indian Super heroine comic strips, the assimilation of the author-illustrator's intended gaze is so dominating that the inherent knowledge about Indian belief, culture and heritage fails to operate. Comic book illustrator Orijit Sen says, "the success of desi super heroine's concept depends on its treatment. Just conjuring up the theme of a goddess with superpowers is not enough. The presentation has to be new and exciting. It has to make the readers sit up and take notice (qtd in Sethi). The presentation about which comic book illustrator Orijit Sen says, however is not limited to thematic and technical part only. There are much more for the readers to 'sit up and take notice'.

Ramayan 3392 A.D. (formerly called Ramayan Reborn) (Figure 1.6) exemplifies a distortion of myth in doing away with some of the traditional philosophy of the epic, which till today serves as an example of 'Dharma'(duty). Written by Shamik Dasgupta and illustrated by the Abhishek Singh, it features a rewriting of the classic in a post apocalyptic future. The series' prime protagonist is the human prince Rama who, alongside his brothers, aims to bring down the demon lord Ravan. The spiritual themes of the ancient epic are in this case replaced by technological ones, often culminating in the same situations. The basis of the concept can be identified as the reflection of the 'classical' Indian
belief that the history of the universe repeats in cycles, eventually leading history to repeat itself in similar yet alien ways. The success of American superheroes and of Marvel Comics in India inspired the Gotham Entertainment Group, the principal editor of comics in South Asia and the licence holders of Marvel in India, to create in August 2004, the series *Spiderman : India*, (Figure 1.7) designed by Jeevan Kang. The Indianised protagonist takes the name Pavitra Prabhakar, a phonetic distortion of Peter Parker.

The vernacular Bengali readers have been exposed to mostly Bengali translations of famous global strips like *Tintin, Phantom, Asterix* and so on. The phase of purely vernacular Bengali comic strips in all probability started by Pratul Chandra Lahiri's Sheyal Pandit for the daily newspaper *Jugantar*. But the most popular in the history of evolution of vernacular Bengali comic strips were *Handa Bhonda, Bantul the Great* and *Nante Fante* by writer-illustrator Narayan Debnath. When Debnath was introduced to Deb Sahitya Kutir, a Bengali publishing house in Kolkata, illustrator like Pratul Chandra Banerjee, Sahib Chakraborty, Balaibondhu Roy and Purnachandra Chakraborty were already associated with it. During the early 1950's, a request came from the children's magazine *Shuktara*, a Deb Sahitya Kutir Publication, to start a regular comic strip for its readers. The result was *Handa Bhonda*, originally launched as a two-page comic strip. According to Debnath, *Handa Bhonda* was drawn in the Laurel and Hardy mode, the fat one named Bhonda-cool and cautions. His counterpart was Handa, a bit too smart and pompous, and always getting into trouble ("The Indian who came before Wolvweline")

The appearance of *Bantul the Great* around 1965 was a kind of localisation of the superhero theme. A comparison can be made between *Spiderman: India* and Bantul on the ground of their relation to the superhero theme. *Spiderman: India* is the Indianisation of the western theme whereas *Bantul the Great* is local and original, illustrated out of innocence associated with comic genre. The comic art or the illustration also defies any imitative mode here. The concept of Bantul emerged when the editors of *Shuktara* wanted a comic strip with a difference. They wanted it to be printed in colour. Quite unlike the superheroes of western mode, Bantul is a hulk of man, with a bulging chest and muscular arms that makes him look invincible but disproportionately narrow in his legs with the face of a boy. He is a hero who survives all attempts to humiliate him with his dignity intact. The superhero in the west is mostly a protector from the evils of society. The storylines are serious and their activities never show any comic trait. But Bantul keeping intact the comic association betrays many traits. This Bengali vernacular superhero comic, thus, maintains the innocence associated with the genre.

However, the presentation of Bantul underwent a slight change immediately after its publication in 1965 because of a political incident. When the Indo-Pakistan war of 1971, closely associated with the Bangladesh war of liberation flared up, Debnath was asked by editors and publishers to add an aura of invincibility: "The editors of *Shuktara* wanted Bantul to go and fight enemies" (Debnath, Narayan Interview. Telegraph India"). So Bantul was shown lifting a tank, circling it above his head and
throwing it back to the enemies, or changing the direction of a canon ball by simply blowing through his mouth. This made Bantul more interesting and due to this war series Bantul became more popular now than in the initial stages. The success of *Bantul the Great* brought offers from *Kishore Bharati*, a children magazine by Patra Bharati publications, The result was *Patalchand, the Magician*, which, however did not become as popular as these two and ran for about three issues only. When Debnath realised that they actually wanted something in the same lineage of *Handa Bhonda*, he created *Nante Fante* in 1969 which is still popular. *Nante Fante* which was born deriving inspiration from *Handa Bhonda*, comprises of the escapades of two Bengali boys Nante and Fante who reside in a boy's hostel and confronts senior Keltuda. Although it had a slightly different storyline, it retains the apparent childish innocence like *Handa Bhonda*.

Debnath's illustration in all these strips has an inherent naturalness of communication: the idea progresses with the dynamicity of the panels. In an interview with Chirantan Kundu, Debnath emphasised the cinematic quality of comic strips by saying that both of them requires script and shot division with the only difference that while the former is movable the latter is static ("Debnath Narayan .Interview Parabaas"). It is pertinent here to relate what is said by Taylor and Willis:

In much the same way the viewers of film and television must learn to decode moving images, the comic reader becomes competent at building a relationship of meaning between the montage of separate graphic frames which constitute the narrative sequence. Narrative captions 'place' each frame and speech or think bubbles allow the characters to communicate directly with the reader. These are examples of the technical codes and conventions at work in comics. The framing of each image, the colour used in the graphics, the typography used to create the impression of sounds, such as 'POW', 'BZT WHRRR', or speech bubbles, can be designed to produce a variety of connotations by the producers (9).

But comic strips/comics have a dynamicity of its own. The story progresses with the continuity of images. *Handa Bhonda* and *Bantul the Great* are drawn in two pages with 18 panels divided into 9 panels in each page. No panel is delinked from the story and the story is told without any gap in sequence.

Nevertheless, the main objective of this research undertaken which is analysing comic
strips in general and vernacular Bengali strips in particular as a cultural product and a tool for the politics of marginalisation denies the apparent innocent and cute mode of comic strip genre. Attempt has been made to comprehend the division between the global and local strips by examining the existing hierarchy in the traditional literary canon. The strips that are written in purely vernacular languages are almost never translated to English or in other vernacular languages, though translation from English is a regular feature. This one-way non-reciprocative translational movement from the global to local is largely determined by social, economic, political and market forces as well as power structures that produce all forms of cultural phenomena and determine the mainstream/marginal hierarchy. It is however interesting to note that readership is all-inclusive and encompasses all communities. This often leads to an unconscious metaphoric assimilation of the codes, values system, and ideology of the dominant culture by the marginal and dominated culture.

Ironically, in a Chinese box like concentric structure, the marginalised culture in its attempt to relocate itself to the center itself perpetuates a cultural hegemony in which within its own ambit, the correspondingly lower or lesser cultures are marginalized. The male-female hierarchy as seen from dominant patriarchal ideology places women in the periphery depicting them as basically feminine, tender, beautiful and self seeking. The emergence of the superheroine genre in recent Indian market is a kind of intricate marginalisation strategy whereby apparently installing women in the center, their exploitation by the male gaze is facilitated. Inspite of possessing superpowers it is their female body which is focused as a subject of the male gaze thus negating their strength. What is commodified is not their valour and strength, but their erotic appearance. The seductive mode that is utilized at once relocates them in their subordinate position as objects of male desire in spite of being in the center. Aspects of 'Indianness' and 'Indian myth and legend' are here subordinated and what is highlighted is the female body and beauty.

The localisation of the superhero theme is much more simple in the vernacular Bengali
Bantul the Great. He is a hero, and not a heroine. Therefore, perhaps no attempts were made by the illustrator to beautify him. Rather he is a creature with such physical traits and deformities that can arouse laughter. Bantul is not marginalised directly or indirectly and is central in a comical way and often undermines his valour and physical prowess. Traditionally a male figure in a comic strip need not decorate himself to be either beautiful or handsome. A comparison can be drawn here between superheroine genre of comic strips with female protagonist and a purely vernacular Bengali strip Shutki Mutki (literally translated to 'The Skinny and the Fatty') which was published after the huge success of Handa Bhonda, Shutki Mutki did not appeal to the Bengali reader with their naughtiness because the latter was accustomed to their gender stereotyping as pretty and not mischievous (more apt for boys like Handa and Bhonda and Nante and Fante) such as 'Desi superheroines' with their physical femininity hitting the market. However, Debnath's illustration of female figures in Nante Fante and Handa Bhonda to some
extent negatively and reductionistically depicts the female presence itself. They occupy a marginal space in the male dominated world and are carelessly illustrated portraying every women character in the same manner- persons of generally minimal significance with almost the same appearance, dress and behavior.

Since this research has attempted to understand how comic strips act as a mode of cultural production and cultural dissemination, it becomes pertinent to also discuss various connotations of culture as an axiomatic determiner of human life in general and this academic exercise in particular and then undertake an exploration of the domain of culture studies as the perspective for analysis. Culture can be called the way of life for an entire society. As such it includes codes of manners, dress, language, religion, norms of behavior and systems of belief. Various definitions of culture reflect differing theories for understanding, or criteria for evaluating human activity. Sir Edward B. Taylor (1871) described culture as: "culture or civilization, in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society". ("culture"). More recently, UNESCO (2002) Report describes culture thus : “Culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, way of living together, value system, tradition and beliefs,” (ibid).

Culture in a broader sense, is the collective utilisation of natural and human resources to achieve desired outcomes. Differences in culture can exist if people propose different goals, use different methods to achieve those goals. Cultures differ in varying this emphasis rather than quality. Culture generally refers to pattern of human activity and the symbolic structure that give such activities significance and importance. Cultures can be "understood "as a system of symbols and meaning that even their creators contest, that lack fixed boundaries, that are constantly in flux, and that interact and compete with one another. There are four components of culture-values, norms, institutions and artefacts assimilated with the active formulation of society, social group and human activity. If we consider 'text" as a cultivated outcome of a culture or a mode of cultural production, then the creator (both writer and illustrator in the case of comic strip) in this case acts as a member of society/social group or culture whose writing is a process of sanctioning and disseminating the norms of that culture from which he/she writes. In this case the method 'sanctions' is not enforced by the culture, but by the writer as an active agent of that culture who expresses his concept/view of that particular culture that has come down to him across generations by learning mingled with one's own experience and perception of culture including geographical space and time. The receptivity of any 'text" involves the concept of its penetrability to the reader's consciousness in such a way that it perpetuates a cultural identification or assimilation. It is this assimilation that prompts a creator consciously or unconsciously to mould a text/production in a culture specific manner or, in other words, disseminate culture specific nuance and stances through the text/cultural production as in
a comic strip. Comic strip is a cultural product that effectively disseminates predominant cultural connotations shaped by its specific cultural context all the more since it is a very popular medium of entertainment for children and adults alike. In fact, cultural assimilation and cultural dissemination are parallel processes that tend to define human civilization. Actually, dissemination often leads to assimilation in the sense that when culture specific stances, customs, conventions and perspectives are disseminated across the reading population through a text (such as comic strip with its language-illustration combine), the readers often unconsciously tend to internalise and assimilate those stances. This is true even in the case of those readers who are either negatively portrayed in the text, or are silenced or stereotyped or even symbolically annihilated there. The tacit hierarchy that such a text tends to create and perpetuate makes the marginalised representatives of a different culture (including women characters within) victim of cultural, racial, sexist and professional bias. This research is an attempt to highlight how comic strips perpetuate a tacit hierarchy and thus propogate the politics of marginalisation and cultural domination.

The area of this research is vernacular comic strips (Bengali *Nante Fante* and *Handa Bhonda*) and how they portray the 'other' with respect to the 'self'. To locate this phenomenon of vernacular strips, various instances of stereotyping from global comic strips also has been shown to historically trace the existence and operation of such intent, content and operation in this genre whose advantage of pictorial quality enable it to work as a mode of cultural production and cultural dissemination more effectively.

This research involves cultural studies as a prime theory in the substantiation of the hypothesis. As this research is based on an analysis of various facets of culture such as production, dissemination and assimilation and their operation in the comic strip genre, the same has been discussed in the light of various theories as feminism, semiotics, gender studies and post colonialism. Cultural studies as an academic discipline combines political economy, communication, sociology, social theory, literary theory, media theory, film/video studies, cultural anthropology, philosophy, museum studies and art history/criticism to study cultural phenomena in various societies. It concentrates on how a particular phenomenon relates to matters of ideology, nationality, ethnicity, social class and gender. Comic strip as a part of popular culture establishes a link between dominant ideology/ideological position and those who internalises it to be often unconsciously indoctrinated. It is a cultural product/genre with its presupposed innocent/simple/nonserious mould that comes closer to pop culture categorisation, but at the same time defines/affirms dominant ideological position by means of disseminating symbols, icons, signs, images of that culture and its dominant ideology. Popular culture has always been assigned the job of disseminating a nationalist programme, Examples can be cited from the national's educational programmes through mass media such as animation, film, etc. Even "when a specifically nationalist programme begins to find articulation, "political" demands are made on the popular genres and the modern is inscribed on to the popular" (Niranjana 8). The same applies for comic strip genre.

Cultural studies has the objective of understanding culture in all its complex form and of
analysing the socio-political context in which culture manifests itself. Comic strip is that cultural and literary space where culture manifests itself both in political and economic terms. As a purely vernacular Bengali cultural product *Nante Fante* and *Handa Bhonda* or any other cultural product for that reason is a space where the dominant culture manifests its ideology through symbols, icons, codes and signs that are to be disseminated within and across that culture. As a subject matter of cultural studies, this embodies cultural practices and their relation to power. Cultural studies while applying a Marxist model to the required praxis space, attempts at comprehending mass production of culture by identifying power manifested with those producing cultural artefacts. From the Marxist perspective, those who control means of production (the economic base) essentially control a culture. But other approaches to cultural studies such as Feminist cultural studies and later American developments in the field distance themselves from this view. They criticise the Marxist assumption of a single dominant meaning shared by all for any cultural product. The non-Marxist approaches suggest that different ways of consuming cultural artefacts affect the meaning of the product.

The division or binary between mainstream-marginal, male-female and class based readership and their consumption of a cultural product has been analysed here to show how the research was conducted. *Nante Fante* or *Handa Bhonda* are local comic strips dominated by majority Bengali cultural ideology. But their consumption by non-Bengali readers or by those who are silenced or stereotyped or given a negative codification and corresponding attributive meaning within the text of the comic strip requires scrutiny. The inclusion of such readership facilitates the operation of hegemonisation process by the dominant power structure. Ultimately, this perspective criticises the traditional view assuming a passive consumer. Other views challenge this particularly by underlying the different ways, people read, receive, and interpret cultural texts. In this view, a consumer can appropriate, actively reject, or challenge the meaning of a product. These different approaches argue that consumption plays an equally important role, since the way consumers consume a product gives meaning to an item. Some closely link the act of consuming with cultural identity. However, in the context of cultural studies, the idea of a text not only includes written texts, but also films, photographs, fashion or hair styles. The texts of cultural studies comprises of all the meaning, artefacts of ‘culture’ et al. ‘Culture’ for a cultural studies researcher not only means traditional high culture or popular culture, but also meaning and practices embedded in them. Cultural studies concerns primarily with the culture of common people against the canonical elitism (high culture) of the middle class and upper class. It considers every product as 'texts' embedded in context. Literature is accounted for as merely one of the many forms of ‘signifying practices’ (Abrams 53). By doing this it resists the 'high' tag associated with high culture and places every text (production) in the same plane. Comic strip if viewed from cultural studies perspective resists the hegemonic superiority of literature/typographical text and defies its presupposed identity as children/pop/low literature. This provides the impetus to view it as a cultural product with embedded signs and
codes from the cultural study perspective and also as a tool for cultural dominance. It is concerned not with how people accommodate themselves to a passively inherited culture, but with what people do with cultural products that they encounter in everyday life. Cultural studies practitioners focus on how culture is made—or how cultural practice leads different groups and classes to struggle for cultural domination. The history of cultural studies has provided it with certain distinguishable characteristics that can be often identified with what cultural studies aims to do and can be enumerated as follows: (Sardar 9)

1. Cultural studies aims to examine its subject matter in terms of cultural practices and their relation to power. Its constant goal is to expose power relationships and examine how these relationships influence and shape cultural practices.

2. Cultural studies is not simply the study of culture as though it was a discrete identity divorced from its social or political context. Its objective is to understand culture in all its complex forms and to analyse the social or political context within which it manifests itself.

3. Culture in Cultural studies always performs two functions: it is both the object of study and location of political criticism and action. Cultural studies aim to be both an intellectual and pragmatic enterprise.

4. Cultural studies attempts to expose and reconcile the division of knowledge, to overcome the split between tacit (that is intuitive knowledge based on local cultures) and objective (so called universal) forms of knowledge. It assumes a common identity and common interest between the knower and the known, between the observer and what is being observed.

5. Cultural studies is committed to a moral evaluation of modern society and to a radical line of political action. The tradition of cultural studies is not one of value-free scholarship but one committed to social reconstruction by critical political involvement. Thus cultural studies aims to understand and change the structures of dominance everywhere, but in industrial capitalist societies in particular.

A major concept of cultural studies is that of sign. Sign is the medium/code from which specific meaning is generated through decodification. The physical form is the signifier and what the sign refers to, its mental association, is known as the signified. The theory of signs developed from the work of Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, but his followers stretched it to semiotics to establish the basic features of signs and explain the way they work in social life. While Saussure argued that language is a cultural phenomenon, and it generates meaning in a special way, Roman Jacobson adds that the principles that govern linguistic system also organise other type of communication systems. The way people socialise, dress and eat, according to Roland Barthes can be studied as signs as they communicate things about themselves (Abrams 54). Signs are often organised as codes governed by explicit and implicit rules
agreed upon members of a particular culture or social group and hence can be said to be culture specific. A system of signs may thus carry encoded meanings and messages that can be read only by those who understand that codes being sharers of the same codebook. A signifying structure composed of signs and codes is a text that can be read for its signs and encoded meanings. Text does not refer only to linguistic text, it can be any kind of 'product' such as films, comics, advertisements, hoardings, etc. Text can only be fully appreciated if seen in context. The context comprises of social and power relationship which when examined, discloses the historical forces that shape the text and subsequently the understanding of the texts.

Representation is the key concept of the study of signs. The process and practice by which signs are attributed their particular meaning is representation. This aspect of semiotics is akin to post-colonial studies where ways or processes of representation are examined to counter Western dominance. Such representation or stereotypes have its origin, not in reality but in ideological construct. The 'dumb blonde' stereotype is an interesting construct. Clearly hair colour is not related to intelligence. Blondeness may be attractive in British and North American society because of its comparative rarity just as the same way the dark hair in Scandanavia. A blonde may be sexually attractive but there is no relation of it with being dumb. Nick Lacey substantiates that it is here that this stereotypes reference to the world takes on ideological overtones. If a woman was sexually attractive and intelligent then there is a likelihood that she would be the dominant partner in any relationship a role that bourgeois ideology defines as male (140). Same is the racist stereotypes and others that have been analysed in detail in the later part of this chapter. Lisa Taylor and Andrew Willis define stereotypes as following:

A stereotype is the selection and construction of undeveloped, generalized signs which categorise social groups or individual members of a group. The crude selected signs used to construct stereotypes usually represent the values, attitudes, behaviour of the group concerned. Implicit within the stereotype is the fact that the signs chosen make common assumptions about the group in question. Instead of expressing a diversity and difference between members of a group or a community, stereotypes, by the nature of their simplicity, focus on broad similarities and identifying characteristics. (Taylor and Willis 41).

The stereotypes show relations of domination and subordination; the groups have been defined as such not by themselves, but by those who hold greater degrees of dominant forms of social power. Taylor and Willis refer to Richard Dyer's article "Stereotyping" (42). The article makes an important distinction between stereotypes and what he calls social types. Using Orrin E Klapp's book *Heroes, Villains, Fools* (1962), Dyer argues that social types are simplified representations of those who are considered to belong to society. Dyer says this about the social type: “A type is any simple, vividly memorable, easily grasped and widely recognized characterization in which a few traits are foregrounded or change or "development" is kept to minimum” (28). Stereotypes in contrast are
marked as those who do not belong, those who are thought of as outsiders. The deciding factor in the question of who belongs and who does not is power: those who are powerful are the insiders: those who lack social power are outsiders. Dyer argues:

Types are instances which indicate those who live by the rules of society (social types) and those whom the rules are designed to exclude (stereotypes); for this reason, stereotypes are also more rigid than social types. The latter are more open-ended, more provisional, more flexible, to create the sense of freedom, choice, self-definition for those within the boundaries of normalcy. These boundaries themselves must be clearly defined, and so stereotypes, out of the mechanisms of boundary maintenance, are characteristically fixed, clear-cut, unalterable. You appear to choose your social type in some measure, whereas you are condemned to a stereotype (qtd in Taylor and Willis 42 - 43).

The same process also excludes the stereotypes or the outsiders from narratives or any product of the mainstream. It is important here to relate what Sudipto Kaviraj says in "The Imaginary Institution of India":

Narratives are not for all to hear, for all to participate. in to an equal degree, for the recipient of the narrative can not be just anybody. It is only some people belonging to particular categories who are privileged. As A. P. Acharya has shown, Muslim Children could not come easily under the narratives contracts held out by Abanindranath Tagore's wonderfully coloured folk tales. There are very real frontiers of indifference and contempt which would keep them out (16).

The name 'cultural studies' derives from the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham, established in 1964. Earlier cultural studies aimed at exposing
the question of culture in a class based society of England. Founding fathers like Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams, E.P. Thompson and Stuart Hall worked with the role and effect of culture at a critical point in England's own history. Rapidly changing social environment of post Second World War was not able to suppress the pre-war class politics. Popular American culture that shaped public consciousness was an addition to that and it highlighted the class-ridden character of English cultural life. Cultural studies at that time was concerned with one kind of resistance. Hoggart and Williams emphasized the culture of common people against the canonical elitism (high culture) of the middle and upper classes. They celebrated 'the authentic' popular culture of the new industrial working class. The dominant elite expressed their power by giving legitimacy and exposure to their cultural forms and practices -by projecting their 'fields of value'. Cultural struggle thus involved a war for legitimacy and cultural status. Hoggart was concerned with the way through which imported American pop culture was 'colonising' the working class. He drew a distinction between urban working class life and mass culture. He described authentic working class life and culture as an interconnected whole. It merges neatly with family structure, language patterns and community activities (qtd in Sardar 28). According to Hoggart, the mass culture of imported American pop music and television programmes, comics and crime and romance novels displaced the traditional popular culture which is more connected to the social condition of the working classes-those who produce and consume it.(ibid)

Raymond Williams argues that there is no such thing as masses, only ways of seeing people as masses. We can have good as well as bad mass culture. He criticises the practice of assigning value as an intentional exercise. Value can be used to support and prop up existing ideological structures and as an expression of contempt for the common efforts of ordinary people. E.P.Thompson differs from Marxist point of view of culture and argues that class should not be viewed as a structure or category. It is a historical phenomenon. His The Making of the English Working Class (1978) attempts to demonstrate the emergence of the English working class in a specific historical period and to recover the agency, the experience of the mass of the English population ignored by the dominant tradition of conventional history (Sardar 31). According to Thompson, working class culture does not have different source from 'high culture'. It only creates new areas of engagement, association and creative activity of its own. Culture must be understood through the experience and contributions of the winners and losers. Thompson's ideas opened up a new facet in the field of cultural studies in its consideration of popular mass culture as not a creation of consumer society, but as having a history of its own. Moreover Thompson's distinction between a culture made for the working class rather than by the working class is important.(ibid 32)

The formation and development of New Left is seen by many historians as a precursor to cultural studies. In fact it was deeply influenced by the New Left. The intellectuals of former British colonies played a key role in the formation of the New Left. But the concerns of colonial intellectuals
did not enter British cultural studies until the 1980s. In the 70s British cultural studies was obsessed with the 'style' and behavior of English working class men. The behavior of such groups as mods, rockers and punks and the 'styles' of their dress, hairdos, music and dance hall rituals were 'read' and 'interrogated' for symbols of resistance. It is only when privatisation and free market policies become the norm, cultural studies started including subcultures and subgroups of women and minorities to analyse and expose the impact of 'liberalisation' on the marginalised elements of society. British cultural studies has two distinguishing features: first, it is distinguished by the remarkable diversity and originality of the topics that have been studied. Apart from the studies of youth subcultures and television news programme, British cultural studies has focused on the images of woman, masculinity and the history of sexuality. It has examined how the past is presented in museums. It has uncovered the politics of sports, gender and expertise and social construction of science. Secondly, British cultural studies always had a political dimension. It has sought to emphasise the value of politically engaged intellectual work. It has aimed at empowering people by encouraging them with the resources to understand the intrinsic relationship between culture and various forms of power, and thus to develop strategies for survival.

The key concepts of cultural studies such as production, consumption, ideological apparatuses owe much to theoretical proponents like Louis Althusser and Antonio Gramsci. Althusser conceptualised society as a structured whole which consists of relatively autonomous levels-legal, political, cultural whose mode of articulation is determined only "in the last instances" by the economy (qtd. in Goldstein 23). Althusser borrowed the term 'overdeterminism' from Freud. It designates an effect which arises from a variety of causes, that is from several causes acting together, rather than from a single (in this case, economic) factor. This concept of linked and interacting causes is intended to undercut simplistic notions of a one-to-one correspondence between base and superstructure. "Ideology is a system (possessing its logic and proper rigour) of representations (images, myths, ideas or concepts according to the case) endowed with an existence and historical role at the heart of a given society." (ibid). Althusser makes a useful distinction between state power and state control. State power is maintained by what Althusser terms 'repressive structures' (qtd. in Barry 164). These are the institutions like the law courts, prisons, the police force and the army which operate by external force. But the power of the state is maintained subtly to secure the consent of its citizenry. These subtle ways are what Althusser terms 'ideological apparatuses'. These include political parties, media, churches, the family and art (including literature) that fosters an ideology-a set of ideas and attitudes which is in compliance with the aim of the state and the political status-quo. Dissemination of this ideology hides imposition and renders it as individual choice.

The concept of discourse can be related to this. Though discourse cannot be pinned down, the relevant connotation about it is that there will always be a particular discourse, a set of rules or conventions that govern the working of society, the fashioning of a discourse is always controlled and
organised by disciplines and organisations which act as agencies of codes and conducts and other social procedures. Discourse gives rise to dominant ideas that are responsible for the strict control exercised in society, almost in the nature of the 'panopticon' (Foucault and Bentham 67)-a circular prison invigilated by a single warden at the centre, that is responsible for the surveillance of a society according to the dictates of the elites. Ideology is more of an overtly political term implying a "simplistic and negative process whereby individuals are duped into using conceptual systems which were not in their own interests" (Mills 29-30). On the other hand, discourse owing to its overt detachment of political affiliations may be linked to Gramscian hegemony, in which people are complicit in their own subordination.

However, the Althusserian distinction is closely related to Gramsci's 'hegemony'. Gramsci contrasts 'rule', which uses force when necessary and hegemony (as defined by Williams) which is 'the whole lived social process as practically organized by specific and dominant meanings, values and views of a kind which can be extracted as 'world view' or 'class-outlook' (Williams 101). Williams relates hegemony to culture in general and ideology in particular. Hegemony is like an internalised form of social consent which makes certain views seem 'natural' or 'invisible' so that they hardly seem views at all, just the way things are. The 'trick' whereby we are made to feel that we are choosing when we really have no choice is called by Althusser 'interpellation' (qtd. in Barry 165.). According to Gramsci, the binding of society together without the use of force is achieved when the upper classes supplement their economic power by creating 'intellectual and moral leadership"(qtd. in Sardar 48)). Both 'negotiation' and 'consent' are essential terms for understanding hegemony. Ideas, values and beliefs are not imposed from above, neither do they develop in a free and accidental way, but are negotiated through a whole series of encounters and collisions between classes. Culture is one of the key sites where struggle for hegemony takes place and it is in the arena of popular culture that the issues of 'moral and intellectual leadership' are resolved. Gramsci's view about intellectual finds its clarification in his proposition that all men are intellectuals, but all men do not have the function of intellectuals. However, in cultural studies, hegemony theory does not operate as Gramsci originally formulated it. Class power and relations have expanded to issues of race, gender, culture and consumerism, meaning and pleasure. The hegemonisation process, nevertheless, remains the same.

An elaboration of these theoretical constructs in this dissertation is necessitated by the fact that this research has attempted an understanding of comic strips (vernacular Bengali Nante Fante and Handa Bhonda) in terms of cultural production and dissemination taking into account Althusserian and Gramscian concepts of culture, production, hegemony, ideology, meaning et al from the perspective of cultural studies. Moreover, this thesis also interrogates the grand and established literary canon in all languages (Bengali being no exception) that excludes comic strips on the ground of a pulp literature or children's literature. The thesis proposes to subvert the canonical position by situating comic strips in
the literary canon. Comic strips has its own theory, grammar, vocabulary, etc. Will Eisner, the pioneer in this field has recognised in the foreward of his book *Comic and Sequential Art* “Traditionally, most practitioners with whom I worked and talked produced their art viscerally. Few ever had the time or inclination to diagnose the form itself. As I began to dismantle the complex components, I found that I was involved with an 'art of communication' more than simply an application of art ("Comics and Sequential Art").

Eisner demonstrates that comics have its own vocabulary and grammar in both prose and illustration. He refers to an article by Tom Wolfe in the *Harvard Educational Review* (August 1977), expanding the term 'reading' to mean more than just 'reading words'. (ibid). Comic strips has its own place in the history of visual art. As the genre was meant especially for children, it is placed in the popular literature implying a certain non-seriousness. But with language of its own kind it conveys the serious overtones working beneath the surface. It is actually serious for analysis both in form and technique of storytelling. Eisner's chapter on imagery, timing, the frame, expressive anatomy, writing and sequential art elaborates the formal aspects of comic strips thus attempting to situate and establish it in the canon. This thesis attempts to establish a counter-canon alternate to the existing literary canon that excludes comic strips so as to comprehend and communicate its essential complexity of operation as a cultural product meant for disseminating the dominant cultural stances under its apparent simplicity and naivete. Infact this research also proposes that the label of popular, nonserious and children's literature attributed to the comic strips genre facilitated its secretive operation and function of dissemination and hegemonisation in culture.

The purpose of comics is certainly that of narration, which is an important factor in defining the art form. Comics, as sequential art, emphasises the pictorial representation of a narrative. This means comics are not an illustrated version of standard literature, and while some critics argue that they are a hybrid form of art and literature, others contend comics are a new and separate art (Eisner etal); an integrated whole, of words and images both, where the pictures do not just depict the story, but are part of the telling. In comics, creators transmit expression through arrangement and juxtaposition of either pictures alone, or word(s) and picture(s), to build a narrative. And hence the very hegemonic construct of considering comic strips to be inferior and subordinate to standard literature has been denied and defied by this research as one of its objectives.

The illustration of *Nante Fante* and *Handa Bhonda* technically pertains to one line drawing, either in black and white or in bi-colour tones conforming to the content of the strips. The one dimensional figures are not as realistic as illustrations/paintings of mythological and historical strips like *Amar Chitra Katha* or action genres such as *Spiderman*, *Superman* etc. which are multicoloured. Thus the 'naturalness'of strips goes with the content. While *Amar Chitra Katha* series presents real characters with an iconic resemblance, it has the advantage/disadvantage of portraying them as such. The concept
of iconic effect is relevant here. *Amar Chitra Katha* series follows iconic effect in its execution of illustration. In the case of mythologies, there are no real figures to illustrate. But when it is based on historical figures or the comic strip is the adaptation from a film or popular television programme there is no scope for alteration except for the slight distortion for comic effect if at all. But *Nante Fante* and *Handa Bhonda* are much more imaginative and present a naturalness and reality of their own. Such strips create a make-belief world both in content and illustration.

The advantage of comic strip narration is that it can convey passage of time, build suspense or highlight action. Two types of communication can be expected from any kind of art form:

1. Communication creates a sense of reality. It is thus an attempt to approximate reality;
2. Communication facilitates conveyance of the message from sender to receiver in any form.

*Nante Fante* or *Handa Bhonda*’s illustration in this respect conforms to the second type of communication. This thesis proposes that comic strips such as *Nante Fante*, *Handa Bhonda*, *Tintin* et al conveys the message of the text through the one dimensional figures similar to that of ancient art forms both Eastern and Western. They have evolved a new pictorial language different from oil paintings or photographs. The latter are a much more recent development. This dissertation thus attempts at rewriting a history of comic strips technique, structure and style of illustration by comparing it with various schools, traditions and styles of paintings based on similarity such as the primitive cave paintings, Egyptian hieroglyphics, Patochitra of Kalighat, (Figure 1.8) Rajput paintings (Figure 1.9) and paintings at Ajanta and Ellora (Figure 1.10) pertaining to the Indian school of painting, to name a few. The idea on which this is grounded is that the comic strips illustrations as well as all these varied schools and traditions of paintings are essentially line drawings, flat in dimension with a technique of outline and colour filling to create a desired effect. All these are old in form and are communicative of symbols and a system. Nick Lacey in *Image and Representation: Key Concepts in Media Studies* gives an analysis of history of Western images (122). According to him the analysis is necessary because

1. All images have histories which contribute to their meaning
2. When we are analysing images from the past we need to be aware of the codes current at the time of the text's creation; they may well have had very different meanings to contemporary audience. (ibid)

This history demonstrates how different world views, or ideologies lead to different media languages, or modes of representation (Lacey 123). While analysing Egyptian paintings, Lacey demonstrates that these are non-naturalistic but concludes that the ancient Egyptians were not a deformed race; their modes of representation in the visual arts were to portray different parts of objects from their most recognisable angle. This makes sense when we realise that potentially, we can get much more information from this representation than we can from what appears to us to be a naturalistic perspective (Lacey 124). He analyses the Greek paintings and paintings of the pre-Capitalist era and points out that the
representation is somehow influenced by the ideology of that era. Gombrich commented on Greek paintings, "These paintings are not actual views of particular country houses or beauty spots. They are rather a collection of everything which makes up an idyllic scene". (qtd in Lacey 124, italics mine). The pre-capitalist era was characterised by a strict class system in which the king was subordinate only to God or God's representative on earth, the Pope. As in Greek paintings, the world view or ideology is reflected in the paintings of the feudal period. The size of a person in a painting represented not their size relative to other people in the painting, but their importance in the hierarchy.

Comprehending the socio-political and cultural forces at work in determining the techniques of painting and the positioning of the details on the canvas and taking cue from the above, a similar discourse on the style of comic strip illustration can be initiated. The concept of a particular style of art in comic strips triggers some important questions: Whether the illustration style in comic strips is the determiner of exclusion of the genre from the grand literary canon as non-serious? What is the impact of cartoony style and realistic style in comic strips? Does cartoon-like illustration hide its serious implication and function according to its intentional intent of hegemonic construct and cultural dissemination more conveniently? What is the correlation between content and illustration? Does realistic or photographic representation convey the same comic spirit? What does realism in art imply in comic strip and what is its objective and function?

As far as the 'sadanga' of Indian art is concerned the cartoony style does not follow all the six limbs. Around 1st century BC the Sadanga or 'Six Limbs' of Indian painting were evolved, a series of canons laying down the main principles of Indian art. Vatsayana, who lived during the 3rd century A.D., enumerates these having extracted them from ancient works. These 'Six Limbs' have been translated as follows:

1. Rupabheda: the knowledge of appearances.
2. Pramanam: correct perception, measure and structure.
4. Lavanya Yojanam: infusion of grace, artistic representation.
5. Sadrisyam: similitude.
6. Varnikabhanga: artistic manner of using the brush and colours.

The subsequent development of painting by the Buddhists indicates that these 'Six Limbs' were put into practice by Indian artists, and are the basic principles on which their art was founded. A comparison initiated as a part of this research shows that comic strips more or less follows Rupabheda, Bhava, Sadrisyam and Varnikabhanga as a part of the technique and stylization of illustration governed by its content and intent, but excludes the other two limbs viz. Pramanam and Lavanya Yojanam which relate more to realistic art.
The illustrations in *Nante Fante* or *Handa Bhonda* exemplify the constructed nature of a text or a genre. The illustration creates an estrangement from literary or more realistic comic strip illustrations such as action genre or *Amar Chitra Katha* series by creating one-dimensional figures. It works as a code emphasising it as comic genre apparently not meant for serious reading. David Carrier in his book *Aesthetics of Comics* explains the relationship of this artistic genre to other forms of visual art. He traces the use of speech and thought balloons to early Renaissance art and claims that the speech balloons define comics neither as purely visual nor a strictly verbal art form but as something radically new. Comics, he claims, are essentially a composite art that, when successful, seamlessly combine verbal and visual elements ("Penn State University Press"). Carrier looks at the way an audience interprets comics and contrasts the interpretation of comics and other mass-culture images to that of Old Master visual art. The meaning behind the comic can be immediately grasped by the average reader, whereas a piece of museum art can only be fully interpreted by scholars familiar with the history and the background behind the painting. Finally, Carrier relates comics to art history. Ultimately, Carrier's analysis of comics shows why this popular art is worthy of philosophical study and proves that a better understanding of comics will help us better understand the history of art.(ibid). Speaking about Carrier’s proposition, Arthur Danto writes about revaluating comic strips history and resisting the exclusional politics of the established literary canon against this genre thus:

The ingenuity with which the classical comic strip artists found ways of telling whole stories in four or five panels has been insufficiently appreciated by philosophers or historians of art. Carrier has written a marvelous book on these narrative strategies, from which we cannot but learn something about how the mind processes pictorial information and how the Old Masters coped with the urgent stories simple people had to understand.12

In fact, as has been already pointed out, one of the objectives of this research is to extend comic strip history to antiquity based on similarity of technique and stylization with other traditions and schools of painting. Comic strip illustrations have resemblance with Indian murals, such as cave paintings and miniature paintings like Rajput paintings, Kalighat patochitra, Madhubani paintings, etc. The basic similarity is that of line drawing technique. One characteristic feature of the Indian miniature painting tradition is the outline within which every figure is enclosed. This can be either thick or thin depending on the area and the period to which the figure belongs. In Rajput paintings very few human characters with front face are seen. Most of the characters are seen from side profile. Big eyes, pointed nose, and slim waist characterise these paintings that projects their similarity with Egyptian style as pointed out by Lacey
The skin colours of human being are brown and fair. The skin colour of Lord Krishna is blue. The colour of the hair and eyes is black. Women characters have long hair. Human characters have traditional Indian dress, slippers and shoes. Men have turbans on head. Mostly natural colours and dyes -black, red, white, brown, yellow, blue etc were used in these paintings. In Madhubani paintings too, for instance, the same technique of line drawing and colour filling is used. The women don't use camel hair brushes to create their works of art, but use only plain, slatted bamboo sticks with wads of cotton to apply the paint. Anmala Devi, a Madhubani artist herself, explains: the “colours are made from vegetable dyes or are of natural origin and are prepared by the women themselves. For example, black is made by mixing soot with cow dung, yellow from turmeric, blue from indigo, red from red sandalwood, green from leaves and white from rice paste. The black outlines are drawn first and then the colour is filled into the spaces ("Madhubani Painting").

The patochitra paintings of Kalighat in Bengal is connected with folk culture and has popular cultural appeal. Mostly religious figures were drawn in lines with colours filled in. These paintings are more a craft than an art. The patidars or patuyas, inhabited separate localities, mostly rural, and formed guilds of their own to protect their interests and help each other in every possible way. The craft received popular patronage in those days, although the patidar community was never an affluent one. In order to enlist larger patronage, the patidars moved from door to door showing their pictures, accompanied with narrative songs of ballads explaining the themes depicted. They either composed the verses themselves, or collected them from folk singers in an attempt to impress their customers. The themes were mainly from ancient Indian mythology and the Mangal Kavyas of medieval Bengal. The Puranic gods and goddesses like Siva, Chandi, Manasa appear repeatedly in their pictures. Scenes from the Ramayana, the Savitri-Satyavana episode from the Mahabharata, the Behula-Lakhindara episode of Manasa-Mangala and the Kamale Kamini vision of the Chandi-Mangala are common themes. In modern times, they have used important historical events and cult figures to cater to contemporary tastes. Episodes from India's struggle for freedom hold sway in modern scroll paintings. This is a clear proof of the ability and flexibility of the painters to move with the times. The style of the painters varies from place to place and group to group. Generally, they depict heavy monumental figures of deities with rich ornamentation in bright deep colors with the intention of making an immediate and abiding impact on the minds of the simple rural folk. The concept of line drawing communicating an immediate message as a part of popular and mass culture is also a feature that connects the Kalighat Patochitra to comic strip intent beside sharing technical similarities of line drawing and colours filling. In all these traditions of paintings viz. comic strips, Egyptian paintings, Rajput paintings and Kalighat patochitra there is a certain flatness-a distinct one dimensionality to remind the viewer of a distanciation from reality almost in Brechtian terms.
Scott McCloud's seminal work *Understanding Comics* identified the different styles of art used within comics. While almost all comic strip art is in some sense abbreviated, and also while every artist who has produced comics work brings their own individual approach to bear upon their technique, some broader art styles have been identified within this genre. The basic styles have been identified as realistic and cartoony, with a huge middle ground for which R. Fiore has coined the phrase liberal. Fiore has also expressed distaste with the terms realistic and cartoony, preferring the terms literal and freestyle, respectively (“Fiore, R”). Scott McCloud in *Understanding Comics* has created a big triangle as a tool for providing a perception about comics art (34). He places the realistic representation in the bottom left corner, with iconic representation, or cartoony art, in the bottom right, and a third identifier, abstraction of image, at the apex of the triangle. This allows placement and grouping of artists by triangulation. Below is provided a diagrammatic representation of McCloud has created ‘The Big Triangle’:

![The Big Triangle Diagram](image)

According to McCloud:

1. The cartoony style uses comic effects and a variation of line widths for expression. Characters tend to have rounded, simplified anatomy. Noted exponents of this style are Carl Barks and Jeff Smith. (ibid 35)

2. The realistic style, also referred to as the adventure style is the one developed for use within the adventure strips of the 1930s. They required a less cartoony look, focusing more on realistic anatomy and shapes, and used the illustrations found in pulp magazines as a basis. This style became the basis of the superhero comic book style, since Joe Shuster and Jerry Siegel originally worked *Superman* up for publication as an adventure strip. (ibid)

3. Abstract art uses a visual language of form, color and line to create a composition which may exist with a degree of independence from visual references in the world. Abstraction indicates a departure from reality in depiction of imagery in art. This departure from accurate
representation can be only slight, or it can be partial, or it can be complete. Early intimations of a new art had been made by James McNeill Whistler who, in his painting *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The falling Rocket*, (1872), placed greater emphasis on visual sensation than the depiction of objects. Although Cubism ultimately depends upon subject matter, it became, along with Fauvism, the art movement that directly opened the door to abstraction in the 20th century. Pablo Picasso made his first cubist paintings based on Cézanne's idea that all depiction of nature can be reduced to three solids: cube, sphere and cone. However the genre comic strip/comics can not be created by purely abstraction of image because this art employs a communicating process much distinct and different from that of comic/comic strip.

McCloud also notes that in several traditions, there is a tendency to have the main characters drawn rather simplistic and cartoony, while the backgrounds and environment are depicted realistically. Thus, he argues, the reader easily identifies with the characters, (as they are similar to one's idea of self), whilst being immersed into a world, that's three-dimensional and textured. Good examples of this phenomenon include Hergé's *The Adventures of Tintin* (in his "personal trademark" Ligne claire style), Will Eisner's *Spirit* and Osamu Tezuka's *Buddha*, among many others.

Stereotyping and negative codification through verbal-visual combine of comic strip medium has a long tradition and history parallel to the human history of exploitation and domination. This proves that analysing comic strips as mode of cultural production and cultural dissemination which is the objective of this research is an exploration of a long tradition. The predominant stereotypes in early graphic art of all kinds were Black characters. They were drawn in a stylised fashion emphasising certain physical features to form a recognisable racial caricature of Black faces. The features incorporated were mainly indicative of the slave tradition of the Blacks such as long unkempt hair, broad noses, enormous red-tinted lips, dark skin and ragged clothing. The indication of identity also operates by their depiction as speaking accented English (Pidgin). These kinds of representations were frequent in the early 20th century U.S. newspaper strips and political cartoons. But Lothar was the first character to have appeared in a syndicated comic strip. He appeared in *Mandrake the Magician* in the 1930s. The subordination/marginalisation process is here seen operating through both the illustration of Lothar and by assigning a specific role to him. He was Mandrake's sidekick: the circus strongman and bouncer, who wore a Tarzan style costume, was drawn in the sambo18(Figure 1.11) style of the time and was poor and uneducated. Another instance close to Lothar was Ebony White, a character who appeared in *The Spirit* by Will Eisner (Figure 1.12). He is a young African American sidekick of the Spirit. In fact, since the introduction of Lothar, the treatment that Black characters received was not positive. William H. Foster, associate professor of English at Naugatuck Valley Community college wrote: "they were comic foils, ignorant natives or brutal savages or cannibals".19 Author-illustrator Will Eisner has been
severely criticised for his depiction of Ebony White. Eisner's confessed that he consciously stereotyped the character but said that he tried to do so with "responsibility" of creating humour and argued that "at the humour consisted in our society of bad English and physical difference in identity". The argument he gave is a strong indication of his involvement (being in the centre) in creating mainstream/marginal hierarchy. His society is mainstream white American society to which Blacks (others) were butts of ridicule and marginal. However, such criticism resulted in the development of the character beyond the intended stereotype as the series progressed and Eisner also introduced Black characters as the plain speaking Detective Grey who defied popular stereotypes.

The depiction of the people of Belgian Congo as almost animals earned much criticism for Hergé. According to critics, Hergé's first comics Tintin in Congo presented the typical colonial view that Belgians had about people in Belgian Congo, including the idea that missionaries were bringing civilisation to the uneducated blacks. The imperialist tendency is shown in the portrayal of the Congo people who are facially indistinguishable from monkeys and in the deification of Tintin and Snowy by the people of Congo (Figure 1.13). Nevertheless, a 'de-racialisation' process of Black stereotypes was attempted following the disappearance of overtly racialised African caricatures in American comic magazines. The result was the introduction of a number of anthropomorphic animal characters like Krazzy Kat and Mickey Mouse. This type of characters are described by Ian Gordon, author of Comic Strip and Consumer Culture, 1890-1945, as owe[ing] something to stereotypes of African-Americans. In the 1970s, several African-American heroes were created and paired with established white heroes as side-kicks and black protégés. Black Goliath, for example, became a black and slightly inferior (in terms of scientific ability and combat experience) version of his white mentor.

However, the Black Nationalist movement gave a backdrop for creating Black characters with a difference and dignity. In the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s many African-American heroes were created in the vein of Blaxploitation-era movie protagonists. Unlike the Black stereotypes these (predominantly male) heroes were often martial artists, came from the ghetto, and were politically motivated. Their struggle with white villains represented the Black struggle against 'The Man': a catch-all phrase popularised during the African-American civil Rights movements to represent the white power structure. However, the attribute of hypersexuality remained common instead of the difference between early racial caricatures and Blaxploitation-era superheroes. They were still highly masculinised, reminiscent of the Mandingo stereotypes and were frequently seen sexually dominating white female characters. Examples include Luke Cage, Bronze tiger and Black Lightning (Figures 1.14;1.15;1.16).

America's real-world frustrations and political distrust of foreign Asian powers found an outlet in comics portraying the conflict between Asian characters and White American protagonists. These characters were frequently of foreign nationality (usually Chinese) and possessed a stereotypically Asian appearance (for example, a long wispy moustache and yellow tinted skin). With elaborate plans
for world domination, they symbolised America's phobia of the Yellow Peril\textsuperscript{28}. One such humorous Yellow Peril villain was DC's Egg Fu,\textsuperscript{29} (Figure 1.17) a giant communist egg with facial features and prehensile moustache. Dr. Fu Manchu (Figure 1.18) was another Chinese villain who featured in a series of novels by Sax Rohmar in the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century. Subsequently, DC comics and Marvel comics featured Chinese villains resembling Fu Manchu who were either unnamed or differently named. Examples include Marvel's Yellow Claw(Figure 1.19) and The Mandarin and DC's Red Dragon.

Another kind of stereotyping regarding the Asian descent were the clumsy, foolish and bumbling sidekicks of white male superheroes. These characters were frequently caricatures of the Chinese Coolie, appearing short in stature, sporting bucket teeth and a queue and speaking pidgin English. The strategies of subordination and marginalisation were highlighted by using them as comic relief or as a convenient hostage for the villain of the day. The most prominent among them was controversial Chop-Chop (aka Wu Cheng) of DC's Blackhawk team. Wing-How, sidekick of the Crimson Avenger\textsuperscript{30} is another example. The portrayal of Chop-Chop's character is indicative of the ever persisting racist tendency of Americans even after many transformations it underwent. Chop-Chop was the chef of Blackhawk\textsuperscript{31} resembling other Chinese caricatures typical of the era. Chop-Chop was short with bright yellow skin, bucked teeth and a queue. Strangely, Chop-Chop was the only member of the Blackhawk's who did not wear a Blackhawk uniform; instead he wore traditional Chinese shirt and pants. Chop-Chop portrayed the disparity faced by Asian-American characters in the comic industry and their stereotypical image. Chop-Chop was treated and portrayed as a full member of the team in 1964's issue\textit{New Blackhawks}-an attempt to modernise the team. But certain stereotypical features were still in play like the proficiency in martial art (a positive/negative attribute typical to Asian characters). In Jan-Feb 1976s issue when Chop Chop becomes chopper, writer Mark Evanier and artist Dan Spiegel avoided all the racial and ethnic stereotypes but they put him back in the coolie outfit that the character has worn for the large part of his existence.

Proficiency in martial art, otherwise a positive attribute, takes the shape of stereotyping because many Asian characters were portrayed as having only this skill or ability. Examples include DC's Katana, Lady Shiva(Figure 1.20) and Marvel's Shang-Chi and Psylocke. At the same time Black female characters in comics is one dimensional and perpetuates several stereotypes including that of the mythical superwoman and the hyper emotional and overly aggressive Black woman. Female Asian characters in comics are frequently depicted as hypersexualized, cold blooded and untrustworthy. Such a racial caricature frequently referred to is the Dragon lady. This stereotyped references the popular villainess of the same name who first appeared in the Vintage comic strip, \textit{Terry and the Pirates}. Marvel's Fah Lo Suee is a Dragon lady, a stereotype who appeared in Sax Rohmer's\textsuperscript{32}series of pulp novels featuring Dr. Fu Manchu. Her name meant 'sweet perfume'. She is a hyper-sexualised temptress with the power of hypnosis. As far as depiction of Middle Eastern characters is concerned
comics like Marvel's *Fasaud* figures Arabia as an exotic land of romance that has generally been the notion in American popular culture. In the 1920s Weird Tales frequently set stories of wonder and spectacle in Arabian backgrounds. The stereotypes included characters having mystical power as Johny Quest's sidekick Haji. However, the most common portrayal of an Arab is as a terrorist. As far back as 1953, in an issue of John Wayne Adventure Comics, John Wayne captures an Arab who is attempting to drive American oil companies out by launching a terrorist campaign. In these portrayals, the American superheroes are pitted against the evil Arab extremist. An 'US versus them' mentality pervades these stories which perpetuate themes of Arab Anti-Americanism, fanaticism, and sub-humarity.

Some aspects of Tintin's adventure have resulted in accusations of anti-Semitism. Before the war, there were some instances of sinister Jewish-looking figures in Tintin's adventures. In *The Broken Ear* Tintin interrogates a shopkeeper who is selling copies of the fetish he is looking for; the man wears a kippah, speaks in broken French, has a sinister expression on his face and rubs his hands with "invisible soap". The most serious instance of anti-Semitism, however, featured in *The Shooting Star* (1941), which appeared during the German occupation. In a scene that appeared in *Le Soir* on 11 November 1941, two evil-looking Jewish men, Issac and Salomon, watch Philippuulus, the Prophet inform Tintin that end of the world is near. One of them in broken French, looks forward to the end of the world as he will not have to pay off his creditors (Figure 1.21). In addition the sponsor of the rival expedition is given the appearance of a stereotypical Jewish businessman.

The binary of the hero or the representative of the mainstream culture (civilised) on one hand, vis-à-vis the representative of the marginalised culture (uncivilised, lesser civilised or savages) on the other has a long history of depiction in comic strips. The writer/illustrator is automatically included in the former category. In the context of Indian and more specifically Bengali comic strips such as *Handa Bhonda* and *Nante Fante*, the binary is of the 'civilised' and 'lesser civilised'. The savage category does not operate here. The historical backdrop of master/slave relationship of white American and Black American leads to the binary of civilised and savage. The Indian and Bengali cultural context do not provide such extreme relationship historically. The existence of the servant class in relation to the master/employer class shows a tendency of the writer/illustrator as well as the mainstream culture to which he/she belongs to create urban/rural division in which the master/employer is urban whereas the servant is rural. The use of suffixes indicating relations such as Ramukaka, Dinukaka (frequently seen in films and TV serials) shows a tendency of the urban culture to bring the servants within a family bonding probably for their effective utilisation and for maintenance of work discipline. This is a very utilitarian way of maintaining/containing social hierarchy. Racial stereotyping is also seen frequently in films, advertisements, theatre where certain dress codes, physical features, embellishments of the body are highlighted as the representative codes of a particular culture or race. The white upper garment and join cloth as well as the mark of bibhuti (meaning sacred ash) smeared on the forehead are used to
represent South Indian origin very often referred to as 'Madrasi'. It is interesting here to note that the term Madrasi was a blanket term used for inhabitants of entire Southern Indian including Tamilnadu, Karnataka, Kerala, and Andhra Pradesh as a part of the simplistic and reductionist strategy of domination of the 'mainstream' North India evident in popular cultural traces such as films etc. The use of a single label to ignore and overlook the class distinctions and differences between the cultures of these four different states was a strategy of the Northern film makers and cultural producers to belittle the Southern/Dravidian culture and civilisation and establish their own supremacy in contrast (perpetuating the top down hierarchy).

The projection of this paradigm of the 'self' and the 'other' in a particular film called Padosan (produced in Hindi and directed by Jyoti Swaroop) can provide an insight into the present segment being discussed. The story of this film/comedy centers round the theme of winning over a North Indian girl Bindoo (role played by Saira Banu) by Bhola (Sunil Dutt) and Masterji (Mehmood)- Bindoo's music teacher. The binary is seen between two competitors - Bhola (more privileged in the treatment being a North Indian and is the 'self') and Masterji (stereotyped not only in appearance but underprivileged in being assigned a subordinate persona and is the 'other'). The 'conspiracy' (though funny being a comedy) and the consequences suffered by this character can be comprehended as a projection of racial discrimination. He is someone who should be excluded and should not be allowed within the territory of the 'self'. When Masterji is almost successful in winning the heart of Bindoo by his proficiency of singing (Karnatic classical parodied), Bhola seeks the help of his Bengali friend Guru (Kishore Kumar) who is also proficient in singing (modern and popular music). Interestingly enough, an alliance of North and East is seen to defeat the South. The exclusion is depicted comically but the conscious/unconscious politics of marginalisation is seen operating at different levels. In the wedding ceremony of Bindoo and Bhola Masterji is seen playing nadaswaram (Southern classical flute) outside the kalyanmandapam. His racial identity counters and resists even his tragic glorification.

A good contrast of this paradigm can be seen in the film Ek Du Je Liye directed-produced by Southern director K.Balachandru)-a tragic love-story between a Northern girl (Swapna) and Southern boy (Basu). Being directed by a southern director, Basu, the hero here does not end up in a stereotyped codification, but his tragic plight is glorified through his death at the end. The territorial prerogative is seen operating in both the films where 'inclusion' of the 'other' culture in the domain of the 'self' is not allowed. But whereas Padosan drives away, excludes and ridicules the 'other' by projecting him as 'unworthy', Ek Du Je Liye, primarily because it is directed by a South Indian director is not intended to ultimately present a strategy of domination or work as a tool for marginalisation. It presents the tension and insecurities of two separate cultures (typified by Swapna's mother and Basu's father) that do not allow the lovers to be united even though their difference in culture and language could not prevent them from falling in love. Being located and contextualised in a specific culture of the 'self' generates a superiority
complex that prejudices the ways of looking at the culture of the 'other'. The tendency of the socially and economically privileged mainstream to enforce their ideology on the marginal is at play in the visual media more effectively because of the image-text presentation that can thus be conveniently de-codified and analysed. Along with the so called 'Madrasis' another community that is also frequently stereotyped and negatively codified is the 'Gorkha' community, the most common being as chowkidaar (security guard) embodying loyalty and trustworthiness. This act of stereotyping and negative codification enraged the entire “Gorkha” community a few years back. Prashant Tamang (of Indian Idol 3 fame), a Kolkata police constable was made to dress up as a “Chowkidaar” for July 20th 2007 telecast (Figure 1.22). His cliché-wrapped attire upset the hills from where he came at a time when agitation by Gorkha Janamukti Parishad's agitation in the hills of North Bengal and particularly Darjeeling was at its heights. Tamang was enacting Pran's role in the 1974 film *Kasauti*, where Amitabh Bachchan and Hema Malini play the “sahib” and “memsahib” duo to whom he sings in a parody of the Gorkha speaking Hindi where every /s/ is substituted by /z/ in pronunciation. The marginalisation process through stereotyping and negative codification is brought out in both cases most specifically through dress code and the language (difference in the pronunciation of the sound /s/ which is pronounced by the Gorkha's as /z/).

When Sony channel was asked about this, a spokesperson in Mumbai said that Tamang was dressed to suit the song just another contestant was dressed as a Tamilian to suit the song in his performance. But interestingly, Tamang was not performing. This song was included to give an extra shade to the relationship (which was projected by Sony as a part of the scripted theatricality to increase the TRP rating and the popularity of the show) between other two participants - Deepali and Cheng. The song was included perhaps as Gorkha was there among the participants. Protesting against the telecast, the commissioner of a Darjeeling Municipality Ward Tenzing Khambachay said that “this has humiliated the entire Gorkha community. Does the channel want to send a message that Gorkhas are only meant to be Chowkidaars.” *(The Telegraph, Calcutta. Saturday, 21 st July, 2007).*

The famous advertisement of Coca Cola that frequented the smallscreen two to three years back is another instance of stereotyping the Gorkha community where Amir Khan enacts the role of a local guide to tourists. His language and pronunciation of /z/ for /s/ is indicative of his identity. His role is subordinate to that of mainstream tourists. The recent advertisement of the products of Amway also presents a person from Gorkha community as a car washer where the tool for recognition of his identity is his language and dress. These instances of stereotyping find parallel in post-colonial studies where the representation of the colonised is the projection of an assimilated prejudiced idea of the coloniser about the 'other' culture. This is a marginalisation through 'politics of recognition' and the same strategy operates in presenting stereotypes through negative codification in comics. Homi K. Bhaba in *Location of Culture* endorsed the point of representation thus, "What does need to be questioned, however, is the mode of representation of otherness”(qtd in Young, 83).
The representation he refers to is the coloniser's representation of the colonised which often becomes a derogative projection. This kind of representation is not always based on the knowledge of the 'other' culture. It is the assumed idea (because it is an outsider's view) of the 'lesser' civilised. The same also operates in the process of stereotyping embedded in a cultural product especially in popular mediums such as comic strips et al where the mode of production is controlled largely by dominant power structures. The mode of dissemination of a particular culture (dominant) is done through a stereotyping (very often through negative codification) of the marginal where mainstream enjoys a position similar to that of the coloniser determined by hierarchy and power relation. Robert J.C. Young elaborates the point by analysing an image simply entitled 'Arab Woman' in a color post-card to emphasise the kind of European stereotypical representation of East in the colonial period (80). The post-card was produced in Egypt by one of the many German photographic firms based in the Middle East at the time of its production dating around 1910, which was the high noon of imperialism. What is focused in the image is the veil - a symbol of oppression of women from the Westerner's gaze:

The representation has objectified the woman it depicts. A real Egyptian woman, with a name, a family, a voice and a history, has been transformed into an 'Oriental', a universal, generic 'Arab Woman'. The woman has been specially constructed for the eye of power suspended in the Westerner's gaze, and precipitated into the one-way street of 'politics of recognition' (Young, 80)

The items of clothing in a particular culture are a historically evolved system ethnic to that culture. It embodies culture with its corresponding value-system. This projection tends to perpetuate the Westerner's view of the Arab. This representation of veil symbolises the subordination and oppression of woman in patriarchal Islamic societies as viewed by the European. But in Islamic societies veil has a cultural and religious identity that carries social class and rank as well. The image is a construction of an outsider view about what an 'Arab Woman' ought to be like. This recognition has come to the producer from many such representation that form part of his collective visual heritage. Young also refers to an image of Christmas in contrast so as to show how such representation works in the viewer's mind instantly:

A representation of Christmas has to show us a snow covered scene if it is going to evoke Christmas properly. This is the case even though in many, if not most, places of the world, Christmas actually never looks like that. In England, for example, it is generally a mild day with a bit of sunshine and
drizzle. There is very rarely any snow. To show a drizzly day on a card, however, would not evoke 'Christmas' in the way a snow scene does— even when we know that in terms of our experience, the mythical white Christmas is completely untrue. (Young 82).

This goes to prove that visual representation as a strategic mode of cultural production and cultural dissemination to serve specific ideological purposes has always prevailed in human cultural history. The same in the comic strip medium generates a discourse on the nature and modus operandi of such stances. This research in the forthcoming chapters has attempted a careful analysis of the same.
NOTES

1. A formal writing system used by the ancient Egyptians that combined logographic and alphabetic elements. Scholars generally believe that Egyptian hieroglyphs came into existence a little after Sumerian script, and, probably [were], invented under the influence of the latter. For example, it has been stated that it is probable that the general idea of expressing words of a language in writing was brought to Egypt from Sumerian Mesopotamia. Hieroglyphs consist of three kinds of glyphs: phonetic glyphs, including single-consonant characters that function like an alphabet, logographs, (a grapheme which represents a word or a morpheme [the smallest meaningful unit of language].) representing morphemes; and determinatives, which narrow down the meaning of logographic or phonetic words.

2. Emakimono (‘picture scroll’), often simply called emaki, is a horizontal, illustrated narrative form created during the 11th to 16th centuries in Japan. Emakimono combines both text and pictures, and is drawn, painted, or stamped on a handscroll. They depict battles, romance, religion, folk tales, and stories of the supernatural world. Emakimono also serve as some of the earliest and greatest examples of the otoko-e (Men's pictures) and onna-e (Women's pictures) styles of painting. There are many fine differences in the two styles, appealing to the aesthetic preferences of the genders. But perhaps most easily noticeable are the differences in subject matter.

3. The visual arts of indigenous peoples of the Caribbean, North, Central, and South Americas until the late 15th and early 16th centuries, and the time period marked by Christopher Columbus' arrival in the Americas. Pre-Columbian art thrived throughout the Americas from at least, 13,000 BCE to 1500 CE. Many Pre-Columbian cultures did not have writing systems, so visual art expressed cosmologies, world views, religion, and philosophy of these cultures, as well as serving as mnemonic (mnemonic device, is any learning technique that aids memory) devices.

4. An embroidered cloth—not an actual tapestry—nearly 70 metres (230 ft) long, which depicts the events leading up to the Norman conquest of England concerning William, Duke of Normandy and Harold, Earl of Wessex later King of England, and culminating in the Battle of Hastings. The tapestry consists of some fifty scenes with Latin tituli (captions), embroidered on linen with coloured woollen yarns. It is likely that it was commissioned by Bishop Odo, William's half-brother, and made in England in the 1070s. In 1729 the hanging was rediscovered by scholars at a time when it was being displayed annually in Bayeux Cathedral. The tapestry is now exhibited at Musée de la Tapisserie de Bayeux in Bayeux, Normandy. The tapestry was cited by Scott McCloud in Understanding Comics as an example of early narrative art and British comic book artist Bryan Talbot has called it "the first known British comic strip." On the other hand its purpose was quite different: to beautify a cathedral and to be uplifting and instructional, not to be entertaining. See McCloud 1993. Understanding Comics pp.11-14 and The History of the British Comic, Bryan Talbot. The Guardian Guide, September 8,
This art form has resemblance with “Nakshi Kantha” of Bengal in respect of its characteristic of narrating a story through embroidered picture. “Nakshi Kanthar Math” is a Bengali poem by Jasim Uddin. It narrates how Saju, a village girl records his life story in a “kantha” (a kind of quilt) while longing for his husband, Rupai.

5. William Erwin "Will" Eisner (March 6, 1917 - January 3, 2005) was an American comics writer, artist and entrepreneur. He is considered one of the most important contributors to the development of the medium and is known for the cartooning studio he founded; for his highly influential series The Spirit for his use of comics as an instructional medium; for his leading role in establishing the graphic novel as a form of literature with his book A Contract with God and Other Tenement Stories; and for his educational work about the medium as exemplified by his book Comics and Sequential Art and Graphic Storytelling and Visual Narrative.

6. “Tiki” is small ritualistic tuft of hair usually at the back of the head to serve as a marker for a caste or creed such as the Brahmans and the Vaishnavites. “Gamcha” is handspun piece of cloth meant to serve as a towel generally in Eastern Indian states of Bengal, Assam, Orissa and Bihar. In Assam it is a cultural symbol.

7. Chinese comics originally produced in China. HongKong and Taiwan have been the places of publication of most manhua thus far, often including Chinese translations of Japanese manga. Modern Chinese-style manhua characteristics is credited to the breakthrough art work of the 1982 Chinese Hero It had innovative, realistic drawings with details resembling real people. Most manhua work from the 1800s to the 1930s contained characters that appeared serious. The cultural openness in Hong Kong brought the translation of American Disney characters like Mickey Mouse and Pinocchio in the 1950s, demonstrating western influence in local work like Little Angeli in 1954. The influx of translated Japanese manga of the 60s, as well as televised anime in Hong Kong also made a significant impression. Unlike manga, manhua comes in full colour with some panels rendered entirely in painting for the single issue format.

8. Le Vingtième Siècle was a Catholic and conservative newspaper from Brussels, led by abbot Norbert Wallez. In 1925, 18 years old Hergé (Georges Prosper Remi), the creator of Tintin, worked there, first as a clerk and, after he fulfilled his military service, as an illustrator for the main pages and for some supplements like the weekly arts pages and the female section. In 1928, the abbot decided to start a weekly 8 page youth supplement, appearing every Thursday. He called it Le Petit Vingtième (The Little Twentieth). Hergé was named Editor-in-Chief. Hergé started working on his own comic. On January 10, 1929, in issue 11, Tintin in the Land of the Soviets began.

9. The Japanese word for "comics" and consists of comics and print cartoons. In the West, the term "manga" has been appropriated to refer specifically to comics created in Japan, or by Japanese authors, in the Japanese language and conforming to the style developed in Japan in the late
19th century. In their modern form, manga date from shortly after World War II, but they have a long, complex pre-history in earlier Japanese art. Historians and writers on manga history have described two broad and complementary processes shaping modern manga. Their views differ in the relative importance they attribute to the role of cultural and historical events following World War II versus the role of pre-War, Meiji, and pre-Meiji Japanese culture and art. Modern manga originated in the Occupation (1945-1952) and post-Occupation years (1952-early 1960s), while a previously militaristic and ultra-nationalist Japan rebuilt its political and economic infrastructure. An explosion of artistic creativity occurred in this period, involving manga artists such as Osamu Tezuka (Astro Boy) and Machiko Hasegawa (Sazae-san).

11. Sadanga, or, The six limbs of painting is a book by Abanindranath Tagore. It was published in 1921 by Indian Society of Oriental Art in Calcutta and was written in English.

13. Madhubani painting has religious implications. It is a medium of expression of the women-folk in absence of any formal education. It traditionally passes from generation to generation and confined in household only. The perception of women/the world view of women is reflected in such paintings. The paintings are mostly pictorial depictions of gods and goddesses from the Hindu pantheon like Rama, Krishna, Shiva, Ganesha, Lakshmi, Durga and Kali. Durga, the goddess of energy, sitting on her “vahana” (vehicle), a lion, is often seen in their creations as is the amorous couple of Hindu mythology, Radha and Krishna - with Krishna playing the flute and Radha offering water to a bird from her pot. Goddess Lakshmi too is often depicted in their paintings. Special events like marriage ceremonies and court scenes are also depicted, besides themes from nature. Geometrical designs fill up all the gaps, leaving hardly any empty space in this style.

14. The story occurs as a multiple embedded narrative in the Mahabharata told by Markandeya. When Yudhisthira asks Markandeya whether there has ever been a woman whose devotion matched Draupadi’s, Markandeya replies by relating this story. Savitri is a pure woman who knew that her husband’s death is predestined, yet she marries Satyavan. Yama himself, the god of Death, comes to claim the soul of Satyavan. Savitri follows Yama as he carries the soul away. When he tries to convince her to turn back, she offers successive formulas of wisdom. First she praises obedience to Dharma, then friendship with the strict, then Yama himself for his just rule, then Yama as King of Dharma, and finally noble conduct with no expectation of return. Impressed at each speech, Yama praises both the content and style of her words and offers any boon, except the life of Satyavan. She first asks for
eyesight and restoration of the kingdom for her father-in-law, then a hundred sons for her father, and then a hundred sons for herself and Satyavan. The last wish creates a dilemma for Yama, as it would indirectly grant the life of Satyavan. However, impressed by Savitri’s dedication and purity, he offers one more time for her to choose any boon, but this time omitting "except for the life of Satyavan". Savitri instantly asks for Satyavan to return to life. Yama grants life to Satyavan and blesses Savitri’s life with eternal happiness.

15. The legendary folk heroine and one of the main characters of *Manasa Mangal*. Under a curse, Aniruddha and Usa were sent to earth as Lakhindar, youngest son of Chand Saodagar of Champaknagar, and Behula, daughter of Sayven of Ujaninagar. Behula refused to accept her husband's death. She placed her husband's corpse on a banana raft and set out on a hazardous journey towards the abode of the gods. Despite all the dangers and temptations she encountered, Behula steadfastly continued her journey and finally succeeded in reaching the abode of the gods. She pleaded for her husband's life and promised Manasa that Chand Saodagar would worship her. Moved by Behula's love for her husband, Manasa not only restored Lakhindar, but also his brothers whom she had killed earlier. Behula returned home with her husband and brothers-in-law, and Chand Saodagar finally bowed before the might of Manasa. Lakhindar and Behula then returned to their heavenly abode as Aniruddha and Usa.

16. It is a medieval Bengali classic about the serpent-goddess Manasa. These stories related to mythology are the main elements of the Pat-chitra culture. Patuas, like the kumars, started out in the village tradition as painters of scrolls or pat telling the popular Mangal Kavya stories of the gods and goddesses. Originally they would have been painted on cloth and used to tell religious stories such as the medieval Mangal poems. Today they are also used to comment on social and political issues such as the evils of cinema or the promotion of literacy. Mangal kavyas are auspicious poems dedicated to rural deities and appear as a distinctive feature of medieval Bengali literature. Mangals can still be heard today in rural areas of West Bengal often during the festivals of the deities they celebrate, for example Manasa puja in the rainy season during July-August when the danger of snake bite is at its peak. Interestingly, it is the mangal stories connected with this particular art form that provide us with some of the earliest clues about the worship of clay images in Bengal. The two most famous poems in this respect are the *Chandi Mangal* and the *Manasa Mangal*. In the *Chandi Mangal* of the Bengali poet Mukundarama Chakravarti (16th c), known as Kavikankana, the village goddess Chandi takes on the form of the Puranic deity Mahisasuramarddini (Durga) before the startled eyes of the hunter Kalketu and his wife.

17. A syndicated newspaper comic strip, created by Lee Falk, which began June 11, 1934. Phil Davis soon took over as the strip's illustrator, while Falk continued to script. The strip was distributed by King Features Syndicate. Davis worked on the strip until his death in 1964, when Falk
recruited current artist Fred Fredericks. With Falk's death in 1999, Fredericks became both writer and artist. Lothar is Mandrake's best friend and crime-fighting companion. Mandrake first met Lothar during his travels in Africa. Lothar was then "Prince of the Seven Nations", a mighty federation of jungle tribes. He passed on the chance to become king and instead followed Mandrake on his world travels. One of the first black crimefighting heroes ever to appear in comics, Lothar made his first appearance alongside Mandrake in 1934 in the inaugural daily strip. In the beginning, Lothar was little more than Mandrake's servant. He spoke poor English, wore a fez, short pants and a leopard skin. His muscles far exceeded his mental abilities.

18. *The Story of Little Black Sambo* is a children's book written and illustrated by Helen Bannerman, and first published by Grant Richards in October 1899 as one in a series of small-format books called The Dumpy Books for Children. Sambo is a South Indian boy who encounters four hungry tigers, and surrenders his colourful new clothes, shoes, and umbrella so they will not eat him. The book has a controversial history. The original illustrations by Bannerman showed a caricatured Southern Indian or Tamil child. The story may have contributed to the use of the word "sambo" as a racial slur. The book's success led to many pirated, inexpensive, widely available versions that incorporated popular stereotypes of "black" peoples. In 1932 Langston Hughes criticised *Little Black Sambo* as a typical "pickaninny" storybook which was hurtful to black children, and gradually the book disappeared from lists of recommended stories for children.


21. Herge was a Belgian citizen ,Congo was a Belgian colony.In the latter decades of the 20th century and the early years of the 21st, Tintin in the Congo came under criticism for its racist attitude towards Congolese people, portraying them as infantile and stupid, and drawing them in a stereotypical manner.

22. An American comic strip created by cartoonist George Herriman, published daily in newspapers between 1913 and 1944. It first appeared in the *New York Evening Journal*, whose owner, William Randolph Hearst was a major booster for the strip throughout its run. The characters had been introduced previously in a side strip with Herriman's earlier creation, The Dingbat Family. The phrase "Krazy Kat" originated there, said by the mouse by way of describing the cat.

23. A cartoon character created in 1928 by Walt Disney and Ub Iwerks at The Walt Disney Studio. Mickey is an anthropomorphic black mouse and typically wears red shorts, large yellow shoes, and white gloves. He is one of the most recognisable cartoon characters in the world and is the mascot of The Walt Disney Company. Mickey Mouse's global fame has made him both a symbol of The Walt Disney Company and as of the United States itself. For this reason Mickey has been used
frequently in anti-American satire, such as the infamous underground cartoon "Mickey Mouse in Vietnam".


25. A film genre which emerged in the United States circa 1970. It is considered an ethnic sub-genre of the general category of exploitation films. Blaxploitation films were originally made specifically for an urban black audience, although the genre's audience appeal soon broadened to cross racial and ethnic lines. The term itself is a portmanteau of the words "black" and "exploitation," and was coined in the early 1970s by the Los Angeles National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) head, and ex-film publicist Junius Griffin. When set in the Northeast or West Coast, blaxploitation films typically take place in ghettos and feature plotlines which entail crime, hit men, drug dealers, and pimps. Ethnic slurs against whites (e.g., "honky"), and antagonistic white characters such as corrupt cops, politicians, prostitutes, and gullible gangsters are common plot and or character elements. Meanwhile, blaxploitation films set in the South often take place on a plantation dealing with slavery and miscegenation.

26. A 1975 film, based on the novel *Mandingo* by Kyle Onstott and upon the play based thereon by Jack Kirkland The film was directed by Richard Fleischer and featured James Mason, Susan George, Perry King, Lillian Hayman, boxer-turned-actor Ken Norton, and bodybuilder and pro wrestler-turned-actor Earl Maynard. On Falconhurst, a run-down plantation owned by the widowed Warren Maxwell (James Mason) and his son Hammond (Perry King), a 'Mandingo' slave Ganymede, or Mede (Ken Norton), is trained to fight other slaves. Hammond neglects his wife Blanche (Susan George), whom he rejects on their wedding night after discovering she was not a virgin. Hammond instead ravishes his slave Ellen (Brenda Sykes), while Blanche seduces Mede. These various, conflicting affairs all eventually come together causing the film to end tragically.

27. Born Carl Lucas,(also called Power Man) is a fictional superhero appearing in Marvel comics, . was created by writer Archie Goodwina and artist John Romita Sr.First appeared in *Luke Cage, Hero for Hire* 1 (june, 1972).Bronze Tiger (Ben Turner); a martial artist is Superhero of DC comics. First appeared in *Dragon's Fist*, a novel by Dennis O'neill and Jim Berry. Black Lightning (Jefferson Pierce) . African American Superhero in DC comics was created by Tony Isabella and Trevor Von Eden.

28. Yellow Peril (sometimes Yellow Terror) was a colour metaphor for race that originated in the late nineteenth century with immigration of Chinese laborers to various Western countries, notably the United States, and later associated with the Japanese during the mid 20th century, due to Japanese military expansion. The term refers to the skin color of East Asians, and the belief that the mass immigration
of Asians threatened white wages and standards of living. In the 1870s and 1880s various legal discriminatory measures were taken against the Chinese. These laws, in particular the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, were aimed at restricting further immigration from China. Although the laws were later repealed by the Chinese Exclusion Repeal Act of 1943. The Yellow Peril was a common theme in the fiction of the time. Perhaps most representative of this is Sax Rohmer's *Fu Manchu* novels. The Fu Manchu character is believed to have been patterned on the antagonist of the 1898 Yellow Peril series by British writer M. P. Shiel. Film adaptations of the novels are typified by *The Mask of Fu Manchu* (1932), with Boris Karloff playing the title role.

29. Chang Tzu (Chung Zhu) is a fictional supervillain published by DC Comics. DC's first logo appeared on the April 1940 issues of its titles. (The letters "DC" stood for Detective Comics, the name of Batman's flagship title. The small logo, with no background, read simply, "A DC Publication"). Originally a Silver Age creation named Egg Fu who battled Wonder Woman, his character was revamped for the weekly 52 series. He first appeared in Wonder Woman #157 (October 1965), and was created by Robert Kanigher and Ross Andru.

30. The name of three separate fictional characters, superheroes—Lee Walter Travis, Albert Elwood and an African-American lady, who exist in the DC Comics universe. The original *Crimson Avenger* made his first published appearance in Detective Comics #20 (October 1938). He was a wealthy newsman named Lee Walter Travis who took up the identity of the Crimson Avenger to battle crime. He had a faithful Chinese servant, Wing, who knew his identity, and functioned largely as his driver, though he did capture a fugitive on his own once. Wing was capable of speaking clear English. Albert Elwood made a single appearance as the Crimson Avenger, in *World's Finest Comics* #131 (February 1963), in a story entitled "The Mystery of the Crimson Avenger". Eccentric inventor Albert Elwood adopted the guise and attempted to help Superman, Batman and Robin thwart the robberies of the Octopus Gang. The African-American woman possesses the powers of teleportation and intangibility.

31. A long-running comic book series, was also a film serial, a radio series and a novel. The comic book was published first by Quality Comics and later by DC Comics. The series was created by Will Eisner, Chuck Cuidera, and Bob Powell, but the artist most associated with the feature is Reed Crandall. The Blackhawk Squadron, usually called the Blackhawks, are a small team of World War II-era ace pilots of varied nationalities, each typically known under a single name, either their given name or their surname.

32. A stereotype of East Asian women as strong, deceitful, domineering or mysterious. The term's origin and usage is Western, not Chinese. Inspired by the characters played by actress Anna May Wong the term was coined from the villain in the comic strip *Terry and the Pirates*. Today, "Dragon Lady" is often applied anachronistically to refer to persons who lived before the term became part of American slang in the 1930s. It has also been misogynistically to refer to any powerful but
prickly woman, usually in a derogatory fashion. The term does not appear in earlier "Yellow Peril" fiction such as the Fu Manchu series by Sax Rohmer or in the works of Matthew Phipps Shiel such as The Yellow Danger (1898) or The Dragon (1913). However, a 1931 film based on Rohmer's The Daughter of Fu Manchu, titled Daughter of the Dragon, is thought to have been partly the inspiration for the Caniff cartoon name. Whereas "Dragon lady" is a stereotype in Western culture, it is not in Eastern culture. For one thing, Western dragons are fire-breathing. Eastern dragons mostly live in water and their job is to bring rain. The term sometimes has a positive connotation in Chinese.

33. An American fantasy and horror fiction pulp magazine first published in March 1923. It ceased its original run in September 1954, after 279 issues, but has since been revived. The magazine was set up in Chicago by J. C. Henneberger, an ex-journalist with a taste for the macabre. Edwin Baird was the first editor of the monthly, assisted by Farnsworth Wright. The "sub-genre" pioneered by Weird Tales writers has come to be called weird fiction.

34. Sacred ash obtained from the ritualistic offerings in the “yajna”, smeared on the forehead as part of the Hindu ritual and also used as a marker for the Brahminical sect.
WORKS CITED


