CHAPTER IV

COMIC STRIP MEDIUM AND ITS APPLICATIONS: CIRCUMSCRIBING BENGAL AS A LOCAL CULTURAL SPACE, PEDAGOGICAL USAGE, INTERVIEW AND THE REVELATION OF THE WRITER-ILLUSTRATOR’S PSYCHE

The main focus of this chapter has been to analyse the way in which Comic strip, both as a genre and a medium facilitates the creation of a local space, in this case the Bengal space with all its cultural implications more effectively by its combination of language-illustration texts and the resultant political problematic of appropriation and assimilation operating between West Bengal and East Bengal identity with obvious ramifications of privileging the former over the latter. Also this chapter aims to explore the manner in which Comic strip has been put to use for pedagogical purposes as an effective teaching tool for disseminating educational information and complex theoretical postulations. Moreover, this chapter has also taken into account a comprehensive interview with Sri Narayan Debnath, the writer-illustrator of the Comic strip *Handa Bhonda* and *Nante Fante* in an effort to theorise his opinions and viewpoints and to tally them with the hypothesis of this research. The interview has been included in its complete version in this chapter. The language of this interview was obviously Bengali as Sri Debnath was comfortable in Bengali only and for the sake of this research, the same was transcribed and then translated to English. It should also be remembered that the interview mode was video as it not only facilitated voice and conversation, but also enabled documenting silences and pauses as well as expressions and body language and their interpretations from the perspective of kinesics. The implications and inferences thus drawn are being viewed in continuum with the developments in the previous two chapters together leading to the grounding of the hypothesis projecting towards the conclusion in the next chapter.

It is relevant to note here that the very construct of Bengal as a cultural space is not monolithic but dualistic in structure. And the various factors that have contributed to this duality are a sense of geographical divide and a feeling of difference (very often exaggerated) between the language spoken, culture and emotional make up of the inhabitants of the two Bengals). West Bengal (the ‘Ghoti’) with its centre in Kolkata has always exercised a sense of and therefore privilege vis-à-vis East Bengal (the ‘Bangal’) with its cultural political centre at Dhaka. Infact the very construction of the Bengali diaspora hinges upon a debate about whether Kolkata or Dhaka is the diasporic centre. Historically and also culturally Kolkata has been privileged and empowered with a sense of centrality since it was once upon a time the capital of British ruled India. This facilitated establishment of education.
institutions (both school level as well as higher education) including residential as well as day schools as well as colleges and universities. Hence the rise of the Bengali intelligentsia saw a movement from the rest of Bengal including East Bengal towards Kolkata (erstwhile Calcutta in undivided Bengal). It was taken for granted that a promising student from the rest of Bengal has to move to Kolkata for higher studies (the rise of Bengali intelligentsia as is evident in the case of the renowned physicist Meghnad Saha who was born in East Bengal, but moved to Kolkata and not Dhaka for higher education. The examples could be easily multiplied). At the same time, from the point of view of economics, though East Bengal was the producer, trade and commerce centered around Kolkata. As a result Kolkata provided for a much more sophisticated and luxurious life style, the in thing for both the aristocratic zamindars and the new rich class, the latter rising to prosperity from flourishing trade in the city. Most of the zamindari families had their zamindari or estates in the agriculturally fertile East Bengal, their places (rather palaces) of residence in Kolkata. The Jorashanko Thakurbari to which Rabindranath Tagore belonged to is a case in point. Their zaminadri was located in Shilaidaha in East Bengal, while the place of residence was in Jorashanko, Kolkata. The flowering of the Bengal Renaissance also took place in Kolkata, thus culturally privileging it. Thus Dhaka's claim to the status of Bengali diasporic centre was more recent and politically justified and the result of the creation of Bangladesh with Bangla as the national language. It is necessary to mention here that the partition of India and erstwhile Bengal led to a situation of violence, bloodshed, riot and migration of Hindu Bengali refugees from Erstwhile East Bengal and now Bangladesh to West Bengal and more specifically Kolkata, whereas the people of West Bengal underwent no such displacement. This further aggravated the divide between the fortunate and the unfortunate.

Keeping these in mind, this chapter delves into the repeated reiteration of the writer-illustrator of *Handa Bhonda* and *Nante Fante* comics that he is a ‘Bangal’ (one who hails from East Bengal) on one hand and his construction of a Bengal space with linguistic and cultural affinities to West Bengal or ‘Ghoti’ on the other. The cause for this paradoxicality can probably be attributed to the unconscious reinforcement of the ‘Ghoti’ vs ‘Bangal’ hierarchy, since Sri Debnath himself belongs to a family that had migrated to Kolkata from Bangladesh. This paradoxicality is so pronounced that not only the main protagonists but also all other characters of his Comic strip have distinctly ‘Ghoti’ names such as Handa and Bhonda and Nante and Fante. The Bengal space that he constructs in his Comic strip with the comingling of language and image/illustration text circumscribes a distinctly West Bengal/‘Ghoti’ cultural space with the unmistakable residential boys' hostel, its greedy Super, the bullying senior and the Oriya cook. Debnath also predictably falls into the trend of writing into the more acceptable, urban and 'standardised' literary Bengali language or Bangla, spoken in Kolkata and in which majority of Bangla literature texts are written instead of ever using the other variation of Bengali or ‘Bangal’ which is considered to be more folksy and rural. The obvious conclusion from these facts is
that Sri Debnath himself suffers from a duality of existence, by virtue of his originally belonging to the
East Bengal (Bangal) cultural space on one hand but his circumscribing a West Bengal (Ghoti) cultural
space in his Comic strip. The other reason could be of catering to a Bengali readership who is used to
the latter space with its unmistakable 'standardisations' of language and cultural patterns.

For the sake of convenience the first section of this chapter deals with the interview
interspersed with theoretical inputs, analysis and deductions after answers by the interviewee wherever
necessary, with an effort at streamlining the inferences towards the hypothesis of this doctoral research
that Comic strip as modes of cultural production disseminate cultural messages and nuances of the
dominant culture. Hence instead of including the interview in a separate chapter or in the index, this
extensive interview has been incorporated in this chapter itself.

INTERVIEW- FIRST PART (Disc-1)

Conducted on 01-01-2011(Saturday)

Q. Comics or Comic strip is treated as popular/non-serious literature kept outside the grand
canon of literature. What is the place of comics/Comic strip in Bengali literature?

Ans. Comics do not enjoy a significant position in Bengali literature or literature in general. But
Comic strip/ comics are essentially and primarily literature as there is a narrative, a story.
The writer-illustrator has to write a story first and then illustrate it to give it a comic form. It
differs from cartoon in this aspect.

Q. Handa Bhonda was published in early 50s; Nante Fante was published much later, in
1969. To what extent are these strips your life writing? How much of your life or childhood
is reflected in them? Were these characters inspired by any real life characters?

Ans. When I was twelve or thirteen years old, I used to sit and see children playing and doing
childish pranks and naughty tricks. I immediately remembered those incidents when I was
asked to create something for children. Thus I created Handa Bhonda. I wanted to depict
the universal experience and portray the general temperament of childhood. My Handa,
Bhonda, Nante and Fante are not exactly inspired by any real life character, but depict the
childhood of every child.

Q. Handa, Bhonda, Nante and Fante are familiar realistic characters. But we can trace some
'fantasy' in Bantul of Bantul the Great. Could you possibly comment on this.

Ans. Handa Bhonda is much more real than Bantul. Bantul was created during the Indo-Pak
war of 1971. The publisher wanted me to show Bantul fighting against enemies. So I
created Bantul. The character of Bantul was meant to depict moral goodness, uprightness
and the spirit to fight for justice. He would help and rescue others from troubles. He could
be identified with 'superheroes' and could be classified in that tradition, but his superpowers
are not 'bestowed' by some extraneous being as in the case of superman or spiderman.
They were there within him. You would be surprised to know that ETV channel told me
that Bantul is 'Banglar hero' (laughs).

Q. Your first comic character in *Kishore Bharati*, Patalchand, the Magician was not so
successful. Was it because of the fact that children (the target readers) were unable to
identify with him?

Ans. Patalchand was a character who used to counter the enemy with the help of magic. The
publishers told me that perhaps it was becoming a little bit difficult for children to grasp.
Nante and Fante are character types with whom we can find similarity of many children of
that age group.

Q. Which time or age is depicted as the backdrop in *Nante Fante* and *Handa Bhonda*?
How far do they reflect the socio-economic condition of the then times?

Ans. An eternal or perennial time has been reflected, since the way children play and interact
remains the same always.

(INFERENCE: This question was not specifically answered. The researcher/interviewer
obviously wanted to underline the immediate contextual timeframe as the illustrations and
the other elements hinted at that and not the idea of universality. However from the physical
details of the illustrations and the construction of Bengali cultural space through a language-
image text combine, it can be inferred that the time frame depicted is 1960's Bengal).

Q. Comic strip contain illustration or pictures through which a background is reflected. Which
specific age/time is reflected through the illustrations/pictures in your comics?

Ans. To me incidents/events are more important in comics. The funny/humorous and interesting
events come sequentially one after another. Some changes are made conforming to time/
age. Today mobile phones have arrived, at that time they were absent. Now I can show
mobile phones in my comics. Comics shall reflect the changing milieu.

I did not make my three characters-Bantul and his two followers (chela¹) wear shoes. I
have also not given any names to the chela, readers call them by various names. I did not
give any name. When *Nante Fante* first started, it was like *Handa Bhonda*. Then the
boarding school was introduced with the result that Keltu and the Superintendent entered
the scene.

Many people asked Dineshbabu, my publisher, was it good to show boys/students bullying
and harassing and playing pranks successfully on the superintendent. He answered that the
superintendent was not so good a person. It was a perfect answer (laughs). These funny
events are shown in baengatwak² form.
Q. Can Nante or Fante and Handa or Bhonda be called caricature?
Ans. Nante or Fante or Handa and Bhonda are not actually caricatures. Rather Bantul can be called a caricature type of character.

(INFERENC[E: The concept of caricature is based on a style where a prominent and noticeable physical feature is magnified and presented in illustration so as to evoke laughter)

Q. How far would the children of today be able to identify with Nante or Fante and Handa or Bhonda?
Ans. Perhaps they would not be able to identify so much. Now a days children go to school with a bag load of books heavier than themselves.

Q. Nante Fante is shown in the channel 'Aakash Bangla". Do you enjoy it? Do you like it?
Ans. Its ok. They have changed it a bit. Actually my stories are short. They have stretched them to fit into the time schedule. They have done so after informing me.

(INFERENC[E: The writer-illustrator here refers to the process of intersemiotic translation from Comic strip to animation film and points out that lengthening of story length to fit in the time schedule of animation serial episode is a necessity of adaptation).

Q. Anandamela offered you to join their group (the Ananda Bazaar group of publications) with Handa Bhonda and Bantul the Great. Do you think that you would have got more exposure there? Do you regret for your decision?
Ans. No, I have not regretted till now. Shasthipada Chattopadhyay who used to write in Shuktara was given an offer from Anandamela and he joined. He also asked me to accept the offer. Later one day he told me that I was right. They just drain out all that you have and then dump you.

(INFERENC[E: Here the idea was to comprehend the issues of enrolment in a larger publishing concern that almost dictates Bangla publishing industry, the pros and cons thereof, market forces, promotional strategies, the writer's awareness of these issues and his willingness/ unwillingness to compromise to these dominant forces. There is a double jeopardy involved, one of authoring a 'Comic strip' which traditionally is relegated to the domain of the popular and the non-serious and the other to deny assimilation into a leading (read the largest) publishing house in Bangla and its coterie. This also brings to fore the politics of inclusion within the coterie that facilitates promotion and patronage vis-à-vis exclusion and resultant lack of all those facilities.)

Q. During the publication of Shutki Mutki objections were raised by women readers. What in your opinion was the reason behind?
Ans. I have not been able to assess it rightly even today. I felt perhaps they did not like it. They did not inform me directly. They informed the publisher's office through mail or something
else. According to me, probably in that era, they were not prepared to see girls doing naughty tricks and pranks and could not think of people enjoying it either. They could not accept it.

(INFERENCES: This falls in place from the perspective of feminism where, ironically women themselves were not ready to accept the non-conformistic roles shown to be played by women in the Comic strip. They rather preferred the gender stereotyped traditional roles).

Q. In Shutki Mutki, two girls are shown one of whom is fat and the other is skinny. Do you think the objection came because female readers preferred beautification of womanhood as par the established aesthetics much more than the naughty pranks?

Ans. May be. But when I was twenty two or twenty three years old, women of that time were also much accustomed to fashion like today. True they did not wear churidar or tight pants. That fashion was yet to come. They usually wore saree. Nowadays dresses border on indecency. I came across an incident in newspaper where objection was raised against someone for not wearing sari. I don't say that it is a must to wear a saree. It is not so important considering the age. But there should be some concern for taste and decency. A programme "Rannaghar" (a show on cooking) is shown in 'Akash Bangla' (a Bengali channel) at 5.30 pm. I have seen the host more than once in the programme. Sometimes she wears saree or something else. That day, I saw her wearing a tight pant and a top down to the waist. She has a huge figure. It was indecent to look at. I spoke about it in my house. Now-a-days no one is concerned about looking good or bad. Just go on with the fashion.

Q. Your comics reflect an age when most of the women wore saree and so did women characters created by you. Which dress for women would you prefer if you are to show the present age?

Ans. Yes, they wore sarees. Modern day dresses had not arrived then. Dresses are shown depending on situation, context and times. If situation demands a saree, then saree obviously, otherwise something else. I have done so a few years ago, but cannot exactly remember which strip it was. Eve teasing was the situation and it was shown that a girl was being tormented by a person holding her hand. She was clad in churidar. But to be precise, dress depends on situation and time.

Q. You wanted to depict the present age. Was that the reason for showing a woman in churidar?

Ans. No, it was not actually the present age but a situation much before in time. Then churidar had just begun entering fashion. Today churidar has become almost invisible. (INFERENCES: The idea was to find out whether the writer-illustrator semiotically coded saree as symbolising older times and churidar with modernity as a part of his Comic strip iconography. Throughout this research undertaken, the way in which Comic strip
iconography operates for the dissemination of culture in Comic strip as a cultural product has been analysed using semiotic models. And curiously this bit of information provided by the writer-illustrator conforms the hypothesis.

Q. The way your women characters wore saree was quite different. Do you want to portray a rural background and a certain lack of urbanity through that style of wearing saree?

Ans. Actually. In my comics, one can hardly find girls. They are very rare in my comics. There are little boys. And the women who appear are “mași-piși” types. They will obviously wear saree. They can't wear churidar at their age. It will also not look good and befitting. (laughs)

Q. A certain similarity of physical features (in illustration) is noticed between your male and female characters. What is the reason?

Ans. That is not true. There are many women characters which I have illustrated. Dress is done according to the description. Someone may write stories of ancient times, such as the stories of Buddha. Then saree as dress was not in vogue, not obviously like today. Then the writer would describe to me the dressing pattern of the women of that age. Then I had to think and visualise what kind of dress they wore. Suppose the events depicted are of Egypt. I cannot show women wearing saree. It would not be relevant. I shall have to do research on the way they dressed.

Q. Actually my question was on the facial profile of women characters in your Comic strip. Sometimes it becomes difficult to distinguish between male and female characters as they are almost similar in illustration.

(reacts casually and laughs)

Ans. It should not be so as the facial profiles are different. Actually the face of a boy and a girl are almost similar in childhood except for the fact that girls have long hair. If boys are given wigs, then it would not be that easy to differentiate between a boy and a girl. If not observed minutely one cannot differentiate between boys and girls in childhood. In case of boys in adolescence changes occur in appearance such as the growth of moustache. But sometimes it occurs due to inefficient drawing. And the fact that it is almost similar in childhood is also a reason.

Q. My question was on aged or adults.

Then the criticism is welcome. It will be a deficiency/error if Bantul's facial profile becomes like that of a girl. But I have to retain the same face for a single character throughout, which is both very important and difficult. It is necessary since readers must recognise/identify him. Infact I have often been asked as to how I manage to do this. Some inquired through letter also, but I did not answer. It has been achieved through practice actually. This is quite
different from doing a cartoon character only for once. It has to be done again and again.
I do not know about foreign comics strips. I have heard that they have their own industry.
Marvel Comics is one such. There the person who writes stories, only writes, one who
illustrates only illustrates. There was a strip in our times- one story with four strips with the
title “Khuro” (meaning paternal uncle in Bengali). Then the newspaper discontinued. Most
probably it was created by Prafulla Lahiri who published under the pseudonym of 'Kanfi
Khan'. There is another person Chandi Lahiri whose style of illustration is just like Kanfi
Khan. Tirthak was being published in Anandabazar after Kanfi Khan's death. I was much
surprised to see an illustration that resembled that of Kanfi Khan. Actually it was done by
Chandi Lahiri.

Q. Was there any full fledged Comic strip in Bengali before your creation?
Ans. No, there were no full fledged comic stories. I was the first one to start it in Shuktara.
Q. Your illustrations are quite distinct. Did you follow any European or Indian model, or any
distinct art form of Bengal's own?
Ans. No, I did not follow any model consciously. It was entirely my own. I had written stories
since my childhood when I was asked to script for children, I was happy to do so.
Q. And what about illustration?
Ans. It was also my own. I can draw. I did not face any difficulty in illustrating.

Q. The titles of your comics are male centered and central characters are also male. Is it
because of the fact that the way they are depicted is suitable for males only, or because
women were not so advanced in the time frame shown? Was there any concern of preference
on the basis of readership?
Ans. It is right. The way boys can do or manage to do everything, girls cannot. When boys
indulge in “doshipona” or naughty pranks it is natural. Girls do not do so and that's why
it is male centric. The publishers or owners of the newspapers also want it to be male centered. They told me not to continue Shutki Mutki as objections were raised from women themselves. It was about girls and if the girls themselves do not like it, then there is no use of continuing (smiles). Another reason is that the extent to which one can do/go with boys, the same is not possible with girls. Hence, this male-centricism.

Q. Do you think that this is why all the popular Comic strip are male centric?

Ans. “Comics jeta, cheleder comics, sekhane kintu cheleder niyei sab” (this is in Bengali transcription and literally translated means comicstrips for boy’s deals with boys only and is therefore male centric). Yes, they are predominantly male centric, the events centre round boys. They are put into troubles by others, such as the long narratives of Tintin. My comics are comparatively shorter in length. The way Tintin gets into trouble is unconceivable in the case of a girl. My comics are therefore on boys.

Q. Now-a-days some Comic strip are being created with women at the centre. But their illustrations have been done in such a way so as to highlight the glamour of womanhood in a very superficial manner. What is your opinion about this?

Ans. I will tell you what I think. Its entirely my opinion. Many people and some newspaper may agree with me. The reality shows now-a-days mainly focus on women. They are being projected in such a way that it crosses the limits of decency. Each and every channel is doing the same. I would call it nothing but blatant commodification of women. The channels try to profit by showing what the audience prefers. But there should be a limit to everything which, now-a-days, is being regularly transgressed. I can understand the reason behind it.

(INFERENCE : The idea was to trigger responses from the writer-illustrator regarding gender issues in Comic strip in general and his Comic strip in particular. The male-centrism that is the focus pertains to all Comic strip and even when this is not the case, as in superheroine comic sub-genre, the portrayal of women tends to shift to the other extreme of the paradigm with glamorisation, glorification and often deification of the central woman protagonist. The general lack of the golden mean of realistic portrayal of women in Comic strip was the concern, but the writer-illustrator showed his conformity and acceptance of the way it is, choosing to run on the beaten track of patriarchal bias).

Q. There is a tendency in Bengali literature, films, theatre etc to portray people from Orissa, often comically, as "radhune bamun" or cook in a Bengali household. This process is called negative codification. The purpose or tendency is to elevate Bengali culture in comparison to Oriya culture creating and conveying a certain sense of cultural supremacy. In your illustration also there is such a tendency of negative codification. Are you conscious of it?
What is your opinion about this? Can it be called neo-cultural imperialism? Do such characters appeal more to the Bengali readers?

(INFERENCE: His facial expression betrays that he also thinks it right and endorses the view but his answer tends to avert the real issue. From the perspective of kinesics his silence and thoughtful facial expression instead of outright denial reveals the fact that he subscribes to this view. Kinesics was first used by Ray Birowhistell, an anthropologist. Drawing heavily on descriptive linguistics he argued that all movements of the body have meaning and that these non-verbal forms of language (or paralanguage) have a grammar that can be analysed in similar terms to spoken language. His avoiding of any direct answer and providing erroneous details about the racial origin of the cook in his Comic strip is to be noted, since traditionally Oriyas have been associated with cooking in Bengal, especially West Bengal and Biharis, more popularly known as Bhojpuris or in a more derogate manner as “Khotta”, are considered to be doorman apt in wrestling.)

Ans. The “Thakur” in my 'Nante Fante' is not Oriya. My Thakur is Bihari.

(INFERENCE: This is factually erroneous as his illustrations show otherwise. This could be considered as a kind of skirting away the real issue, since this discourse tends to become extremely controversial and racially oriented).

Q. But his illustration, especially his 'tiki', dressing as well as way of speaking clearly shows him to be Oriya?

Ans. I do not know whether the “ure bamun” keeps 'tiki' or not, but Biharis definitely keep “tiki”. I do not think that Oriyas keep tiki. Not only in stories, Bengali films and serials even today are full of ’ure bamun’. Majority of such characters are Oriya perhaps because they speak Bengali language with an Oriya intonation, sounding comical. Another rampant practice is to portray comic characters using the language of East Bengal, that is 'bangal bhasa' to either ridicule or to evoke humour and laughter. Our origin is in East Bengal and we converse in Bangal language even in Shibpur (a place in Kolkata and his residence). But our children are not accustomed to this language. They are more comfortable in the language of this place (West Bengal). This is a 'created' type of 'Bangal' language with an artificial accent and intonation never to be found in real life and hence sounds odd. There are some artists whose origin is in East Bengal. When they speak it becomes clear that they actually/really belong to that place (East Bengal). It is clear from the writings of Prafulla Roy that he originally belongs to East Bengal. I had visited those places in my childhood which he describes in his writing. My uncle lived there. We used to go there once or twice a year. There are detailed descriptions of such place in his stories. The language he used was distinctly of that place. Then I could understand that he originally belongs to that side.
of Bengal.
There is another famous person who originally belongs to East Bengal. Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay. I had met him in a programme "Mukhomukhi" organised by a channel. The two writers converse face to face in this programme. He told me while returning, "Do you belong to East Bengal?" I asked, 'How have you understood?" Actually when someone from originally East Bengal speaks it becomes evident that they belong to East Bengal. It is not 'learned'and artificial.

(INFERENCES: It is very interesting to note that in spite of being and feeling ‘Bangal’ (resident of East Bengal), in his Comic strip he does not present an East Bengal or ‘Bangal’ cultural space. Right from the naming of his characters to the setting, the cultural space that he constructs is decidedly of West Bengal or ‘Ghoti’. This paradoxicality of real life and literature is theoretically an interesting case study as it reflects a duality of existence—of being sentimentally a ‘Bangal’ in real life but representing only a ‘Ghoti’ literary reality).

Q. Do you think that you are successful in exactly representing the way the residents of Bihar speak Bengali?
Ans. Actually, he is not speaking Bengali in its original form. His language can be called 'broken Bengali', some Bengali, some Bihari. Bengali has become his usual language as he is residing here. But Bihari language also interrupts or comes in. Thus, my Bihari Thakur is proceeding. (laughs)

(INFERENCES: The author is unaware of the fact that there is no such language as 'Bihari'. There are a number of languages and dialects spoken in Bihar such as Hindi, Brijboli, Maithili, Bhojpuri and so on. The author's lack of knowledge about the culture of the 'other' that he is portraying and his lack of awareness about this realm of knowledge reveals a tendency towards naturalisation of popular myths, something which he himself accused others of doing with regard to use of 'Bangal' language in popular cultural representations. This is the irony that he can be accused of the same injustice towards the 'others' such as the residents of Bihar and Orissa about whom his lack of knowledge leads him to simplistic and reductionist assumptions about these two races. Actually, what he was also unconsciously doing was 'code switching'. Moreover, probably the term 'Bihari' itself is derogatory).

Q. That means 'Bihari Thakur' has become an object of ridicule?
Ans. Not so much. The whole story of Nante Fante is funny. And one of the elements of fun is this Bihari Thakur.
Q. You say that the language of East Bengal is included when there is need for comedy or humour………………….

Ans. Definitely. (agrees and supports strongly). In a comic situation either the Bangal language, or language of Orissa, or broken language of the Biharis is introduced.

Q. Is there any tendency of the dominant culture to show a peripheral or marginal culture at a lower rank and as inferior when the latter comes in contact with the former?

Ans. There is one thing I would like to share. Even today some people are in the habit of calling the people of East Bengal 'Bangal' or 'Dhakai Bangal' and it refers to negative codification and is generally derogatory in intent. Till now this tendency persists among the people of West Bengal. This is the reason. (laughs). This is a matter of culture and sense actually. Where there is comedy, there is Bangal language or Oriya language. This is way of subordinating their status so as to make the 'other' inferior.

Q. If your 'Bihari Thakur' is criticised from this perspective, would you say the same thing?

Ans. Yes, of course, definitely. We were called ‘Bangal’. Our ancestors belonged to East Bengal. My grandmother, mother would speak 'Bangal' language at home. We were constantly teased thus: "Oi je bangal"- “There goes the Bangal” (translation mine).

Q. That means that residents of Orissa or Bihar have also become objects of ridicule, inferior to the majority and the mainstream and is looked down upon in your strips.

Ans. Yes. But one noticeable thing is that most of the famous persons of West Bengal originally belonged to East Bengal. But that does not matter. The reason behind this ridicule is their identity "Bangal" (laughs).

Q. When a peripheral culture is seen from the perspective of dominant culture it becomes object of slight and ridicule. The way Europeans used such terms as savages and more 'sympathetically' noble savage, do you think that the same thing is happening and the same tendency is being observed in your Comic strip- here residents of Orissa or Bihar have also become object of ridicule, inferior to the majority and the mainstream and is looked down upon?

(INFEERENCE : The idea was to elicit responses that would vindicate theoretical stances in praxis related to perspectives of viewing the other as in the Orientalist paradigm of Edward Said.)

Ans. Yes, it is a general tendency of people of one region towards a person of another region. It can be termed as an instance of lack of taste or refinement- 'ruchihinota' (in Bengali).

Q. There is a target reader or audience when we create a story or drama or Comic strip or movie. Are such characters created conforming to the taste and expectation of the target reader? If a person from West Bengal is portrayed as an object of ridicule perhaps that
shall not be acceptable to majority readers from West Bengal. However, they prefer to see a person from another culture in such ridiculous and humorous roles.

Ans. Those who create such characters perhaps do not respect the language and the culture, but does not aim at the person. Generally it is not possible to identify a person by his physical appearance. When he speaks in his own language, his regional identity will become clear. The people of West Bengal find Bangal language funny. They encounter difficulties in understanding the language of East Bengal. They perceive a streak of humour and the comic in the speaker.

(INFERENCE: The idea of ridiculing and making fun of the people of East Bengal by inhabitants of West Bengal especially Kolkata is not just a linguistic phenomenon. Rather the roots of such a tendency is embedded deeper into the psyche and is actually a combination of several factors of which partition of India, influx of refugees from erstwhile East Bengal or East Pakistan to West Bengal, depleting of resources as a consequence etc. are very significant. However the interviewee seemed to be unaware of these and had thus reduced and simplified them to a monolithic level).

Q. In a front cover of Nante Fante colour series the complexion of the “Thakur” is dusky while all the other characters are done in similar fair complexion. Do you think that it was consciously created to differentiate him from other mainstream Bengali characters- a sort of neo-apartheid, so that the mainstream Bengali readers who prefer to see him as such would accept him?

Ans. The colour usage you mean? He is kept aside for the fact that he is a cook (randhune bamun). It is not a matter of demeaning anyone. They are like that only. Actually we do not give much respect to persons who do household works in our houses. It is very true that we do everything for them, but treat them differently. But that is not what can be termed as ridiculous or for making fun. Another fact is that complexion varies from character to character. The difference in complexion is meant to show difference in characterisation. All of us are not alike, someone is dusky and someone is fair. That is why it is differentiated in this manner.

Q. That means the purpose was to separate or differentiate, if not demean?

Ans. Yes, that he is a ‘Thakur’ (cook) by profession is emphasised. And ‘Thakur’ is not so good a person. He is also like other characters with vices. He steals food. That means everyone is of same trait of character (laughs).

(INFERENCE: This was not at all convincing logically simply because to differentiate one need not use different colour codes unless and until racial difference on the basis of colour is intended. The unspoken and the untold facts are a matter of logical conjecture that the
writer-illustrator has unconsciously perpetuated a sense of neo-apartheid as a mode of discrimination between the central and dominating Bengali characters to which race he himself belongs and the displaced resident of Orissa (or according to him Bihar) who has to do a not so respectable job of a cook in a Bengali household.

End of Disc I

Interview - Second Part (Disc 2)

Q. Do you yourself colour the strips?
Ans. Yes. But I don't colour now. I do it in just black and white and they colour it on computer. But the person who is doing the job of colouring does not know. I think he does not have the slightest knowledge of colour usage. Sometimes it may also happen that a stone is given yellow colour. The colour is given according to their choice, not mine. I don't prefer such colouring. They say that they will manage.

Q. Then has the dusky complexion been done by them in computer?
Ans. The colour you mean? Yes. Now every comic be it Nante Fante, Handa Bhonda or Bantul the Great is done by them. They say that they will manage. But if I am asked about colour strips, I will definitely say that they are not up to the mark at all.

Q. If they requested you to colour your strips?
Ans. They want to make it in colour. They do it on computer. I do not like the way they do it. Since they say that they will manage I have nothing to do.

Q. Was the demand for colour strips from the readers?
Ans. Yes.

(INFERENCEx: The technicality aspect of the strips in question is to be noted here. As discussed in Chapter 1, the technical details of line drawing and colouring play a significant role in Comic strip and are the means by which the history of Comic strip can be written by linking such technicalities with similar line-drawing and colour-filling styles seen in Oriental and Occidental traditions such as cave paintings by primitive man, Egyptian hieroglyphic style, Rajput and Pahari paintings, Kalighat Patochitra, Bengal school of art and so on. The writer-illustrator in his Comic strip illustration style show remarkable affinity to the Oriental especially Indian schools in general and Bengal school in particular that stylistically shows more fondness for black and white and less for colour (such as in the paintings of Nandalal Bose\(^4\)). The dissatisfaction with computerised colouring of the strips is probably justified as that which started preliminarily with manual drawing leads to a sense of dissatisfaction to the writer-illustrator who, as the originator of the strips in question, automatically feel a loss of control and authority on his domain when they are coloured by a machine. The power equation of authority and the threat perception of waning of control
is evident here, justifying that there is a hegemonic structure disseminated through the Comic strip as a cultural product no doubt, in addition, there is also a hegemony operative between the writer-illustrator and the translator machine duo who translates and colours the strips).

Q. *Nante Fante* or *Handa Bhonda* is intimate to the childhood of any Bengali reader. The children of 'prabashi' (non-resident) Bengali populace are not supposed to be familiar with Bengali language. Is there any demand to translate these strips into English so that their children becomes familiar with Bengali culture?

Ans. I have heard that *Nante Fante* is being translated into English. They have told me. They have informed me earlier also that some books are being translated into English and *Nante Fante* is one of them. They informed me through letter some days ago. The editor of *Kishore Bharati*\(^\text{15}\) and the proprietor of Patra Bharati, the publishing house of *Nante Fante* telephoned me that *Nante Fante* is coming in English in this Book fair (2011). Around four years back, the managing director of Deb Sahitya Kutir told me that they will publish *Handa Bhonda* and *Bantul* in English version, but I have not heard anything from them since then. Now *Kishore Bharati* has initiated to launch *Nante Fante* in English. The English version cannot be published in the same size in which Bengali strips are. A larger space is required, such as *Tintin* comics.

Q. That means there is demand to recreate them in English version?

Ans. They say that everybody does not know Bengali, but majority are at least acquainted with English. Then comes Hindi. Hence they will be translated in English first so that everybody can understand. Right now these strips are limited in a Bengali space. Their circulation is limited only to those places where there is Bengali population. The marketability rate is very poor beyond Bengal. When they will be published in English version the circulation will definitely increase.

(INFERENCES: This validates the hypothesis of this research that translation process is predominantly governed and determined by market forces at work and factors such as commercial viability. Moreover, the need to transcend regional vernacular spaces and restricted community readership and move on to a larger national and international readership via English translation is constantly felt and registered by the writer-translator of the strips. It is interesting to note that he is unaware of the larger issues of trans-culturization involved and the need to preserve the source culture of the ST from getting lost).
Q. Language is a part of culture. What can be the difficulties in English translation process, in your opinion?

Ans. I want to say something here. Every Friday in *The Telegraph* I had done seven or eight serialised Comic strip also. The organisers told me to do something political or something else on Howrah as I am a resident of Howrah. I told them that I cannot do anything political. Actually I will not do so. I can do something interesting or comic. She wanted a long one. I told that I can do strips- a story with four strips. I did so in Bengali, illustrated and wrote dialogues and also translated some of these.

A girl named Dalia Mukherjee covers the news of Howrah. She told me that she will manage translation. I would write the dialogues in Bengali and she translated them. I asked her how would she translate the funny and humorous words specific to Bengali language into English. She told that it is a difficulty /problem but it has to be done. Actually there are certain words in Bengali that cannot be translated in Bengali, and if translated they do not sound that interesting and sweet. There is a loss in translation.

I continued it for six or seven serials but problems in time schedule came during Puja. I had to deliver four pages of *Handa Bhonda*, four pages of *Bantul*, eight pages for *Nante Fante*. So I could not continue.

(INFERENCE : The question of cultural specificity and untranslatability comes in here. The writer-illustrator is aware of the problematic of translation process and the dynamic of hegemonic structure operational between the language and culture and target language and culture. It is relevant here to relate the hypothesis generated by Ashes Gupta, a translator of Kokborok poetry in English. He considers translation as a ventriloquism. According to him, the author-translator hegemony in English translations of Kokborok poetry "creates a hierarchy situating the translator at a higher position than the author by virtue of being a privileged language user (here English) and a representative of the dominant culture (here Bengali)" (107). The obvious question that ensues is whether translation is ultimately an act of cultural and linguistic ventriloquism, where the author's voice and identity in translation are those of the translator's conveniently replaced. *Nante Fante* translation in English is also an example of language hierarchy between the source language (here Bengali) and the target language (here English), the latter being the dominant one.)

Q. Do you think that Illustration facilitates translation of Comic strip?

Yes. A major part of translation is being done through illustration. The events are same. They proceed in a certain continuity with an interesting event. It is static cinema. The incidents occur one after another just in the mode of cinema. It also requires a script. First the story is created. Then the script has to be prepared according to the story. Where to put a
certain character has to be decided. The placement cannot be same as it requires different sequences. Then comes illustration. So comicstrips is similar to film media. The comics are static illustrations and the film is movable picture. Nowadays these static pictures are being made movable by animation.

(INFERENCE : This is in consonance with the Comic strip and motion picture analogy as well as consonance discussed in the Chapter 1 (Introduction) to this thesis where the anchorage and relay function of Comic strip are being referred to according to Roland Barthes model).

Q. To what extent would the English translation of Nante Fante be successful in your opinion? Would it be successful in portraying the very own world simulated by these comics?

Ans. I cannot say anything accurately for sure unless and until I get the translated version. But as I have said earlier, there is difference between funny and interesting terms and sayings of Bengali language and English language.

Q. Do you think that visual representation is an effective medium for disseminating culture?

Ans. Comics had begun in foreign countries much before. They are well acquainted with it. But here it has begun just few years ago. Before that there was nothing called comics. It is true that Comic strip are an effective media for cultural dissemination. In foreign countries the stories of famous writers are published in the form of 'serious comics' such as Spiderman, Superman etc. I have also heard that some of the famous stories are published in comic book format. It is not done here. Of course the effort has just begun as some of the stories of Satyajit Roy\textsuperscript{16} are being published in serious comicstrip form. Although there is a comic character in Feluda\textsuperscript{17} stories known as Jatayu\textsuperscript{18}, but we can term it serious comic safely. He is a comical character as people find him funny. There are many such stories, but they have not been adapted into Comic strip format yet. This should be done as illustration has the capability to make comprehension/understanding easier. Illustration is important in any story as it heightens the importance of the story. This understanding is not to be found here. An illustrator or artist is hardly given the importance that others get. That is why it should be done. Goutambabu (Goutam Ghosh \textsuperscript{19}, whom I met some days ago in a talk-show) told that the picture/illustration that is relevant to the story heightens the dignity of the writer. Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay, once told me, "you have a plus point which I do not possess. You can draw, I cannot". But illustration or illustrator is not given due importance.

(INFERENCE : The writer-illustrator has touched upon many such issues as the communicative efficiency of comicstrips for cultural dissemination that forms a kernel of the portion on pedagogical implications of comicstrips in the later part of this chapter; the comparative lack of respect for the illustrator (here writer-illustrator) of the Comic strip,
and the hegemony that works between 'serious literature' and the Comic strip as 'popular, non-serious and children's literature. The necessity of adapting famous stories into 'serious Comic strip format (according to the writer-illustrator), through the process of inter-semiotic translation, as discussed in previous chapters of this thesis is being referred to by the writer-illustrator Sri Debnath. The implications of the term 'comic' in Comic strip is being highlighted here which, with the inclusion of serious stories with slight or no humour at all under this genre characterised by language text and image text combine, has broadened and the interviewee shows his awareness about these issues, validating the hypotheses of this thesis).

Q. What is the differences between doing illustration for stories written by others and doing your own illustration for comics?
Ans. I did one story 'Rahasyamay shei Barita'. Dilip Chattopadhyay wrote it and I illustrated. The illustration was more significant than the writing or description. It was a serious story. I did the entire illustration. The tension is less in case of illustration for other's story as I need not to think of a storyline or plot. I just have to illustrate reading the description and extend it if necessary. But to illustrate after writing a story all on my own is a very difficult task.

Just before two days on Thursday, I got a call from Jhamapukur enquiring when I shall be able to deliver the strips that are due. They know that I am coming here (Agartala). They told me if I could give something before coming. It was not possible (laughingly). It is not like writing a story where whatever comes to mind can be written immediately. Infact, I have done one page of Bantul before coming. After my return, I will do the second page and give. Then Handa Bhonda and the cover page where there is a serious story. So I said it is easier to illustrate from other stories.

Q. While illustrating other's stories do you sometimes feel that you are not doing the illustration at par with the description?
Ans. Sometimes I feel confused as to what story I should give since I have done so many. I cannot allow repetition. But sometimes they get repeated. It is difficult to remember all. I have to think what will be the story of Handa Bhonda while doing Bantul. Then there is the Koushik series and Nante Fante.

Q. You have done works such as 'Rabir Chabi' in Anandamela and also a completely own creation like Nante Fante. Which one is more comfortable for you?
Ans. Both are different. One is written by others. Rabir Chabi was written by 'Moumachi'. It was serially published in Anandamela from Anandabazar publication. Then I worked on Vivekananda. Such strips cannot be based on imagination alone. You have to depend on

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their picture or rather portraits and cannot take liberties with them. There is little difficulty in doing this as they are real characters and cannot be given a caricature type look. That is the difference actually. It is a harder task.

Q. That means there is less freedom in such biographical strips.
Ans. Yes, freedom is less.

Q. Do you think that visual media can disseminate culture more effectively?
Ans. Comic strip can communicate more effectively.

Q. A Gorkha singer was shown in the role of chowkidar (doorman) in a TV show titled “Indian Idol”. It raised much controversy as he was negatively stereotyped in the role. The members of the community protested since it showed Gorkhas suitable for this role only. How do you respond to this?
Ans. This was exactly what was before. I have seen this myself. A large house was built by someone in Shibpur near our house. They were the zamindar of Shantipur. They had two Ghorkha doormen always standing on the gate. Then it was a trend to keep either a Nepali doorman or Bihari with great moustache (laughs).

Q. But there are also Bengalis doing the job of doormen. They are not shown. Is this also a tendency of the mainstream culture to subordinate the position of other culture?
Ans. I do not know. But I think The Nepalese keep a weapon with them and that is why they are kept in the job of doorman. It is their religious custom to keep “bhojali” as the Punjabis keep “kirpan”. But Bengalis do not have any such thing. If someone comes with ill intention the Nepalese shall use “bhojali” and the Punjabis “Kirpan”. But Bengalis do not posses any such thing. That is why the Gorkhas were given preference or priority as doorman.

(INFERENCES: Not a viable and credible substantiation at all. Surely he is not so naïve as to put forward such a logic for negative stereotyping of races and communities who belong to the 'other' in popular cultural traces as well as his own Comic strip creations. This again
goes against the very idea that he is unaware of and unconscious about his portrayal of the residents of Bihar and Orissa as cook and doorman respectively.)

Q. But why there is a tendency to show them again and again?

Ans. (laughs). There was a film called *Bahadur* with this theme. Danny 23 was the servant in a house. He was a Nepali and he had a “bhojali”. The owner of the house took this from him and kept it with him. But when the story progresses to an unfavourable situation the owner gave it to him again saying that it was his 'sudarsan chakra' and he had the right to use it. He defeated all the enemies of his owner but he remains a servant after all.

Now the situation has changed. But it is rooted in the belief of the people that a cook should be Oriya or Bihari and a doorman should be Bihari with moustache or Nepali with bhojali.

(INFERENCE : This is really ironical that the writer-illustrator seems to be totally insensitive to the negative codification of the 'other' prevalent in cultural products such as films and other popular media. The kinesics of his laughter interspersing his conversations about this subject is evidence enough to his insensitivity. Moreover this also explains his sustained depiction of residents of Orissa as cook and those of Bihar as doorman. The writer-illustrator also shows how he has legitimised and naturalised this not only in his psyche but also in his Comic strip).

Q. Comics are being treated as a vital area of research now. You are probably the first one to give Bengali comics a place of its own. Research is being done on your work also. How do you feel?

Ans. Frankly speaking, now I do not enjoy doing it. I do not find that enthusiasm as before. I have reached a certain age. I do not do it with enthusiasm as I used to do before. I do it out of commitment now. A book on my collected works will be published from Lalmati publication. When I will be no more, my works will be there. I will be known at least in my own country if not in foreign lands.

Q. How do you create your strips, is it only with ink and brush as you said computer is used to colour.

Ans. Earlier I used to colour the strips. When *Bantul* was published they told that they will do it in bicolour- red and black. *Handa Bhonda* was always in black and white. For *Bantul the Great*, I would categorise the colours as deep red, light red by covering a tracing paper over the strip. Then zinc block was made. They made it and gave it to me. I gave instructions about colours. Now they do it. These things are done in the name of colour. All these are going on for sixty or sixty five years every month(laughs). Now I have to
touch the colours for the cover page in which a detective story “Koushik” is published every month. I do it in colour and they publish it.

Q. Your Nante Fante or Handa Bhonda or Bantul will always remain same. They will not grow and will never become aged. .......... 

Ans. When I will be no more, Nante Fante will still remain and in the same age. Two years ago a woman called Bandhabi Chowdhury wrote a letter to me telling that her age was sixty five and she still reads my comics (laughs).

Q. Did you ever have any purpose to advise the children through your strips?

Ans. No. I did not have such purpose. I never wanted to advise. The children don't like it if they are told not to do this or that. I just wanted to present fun so that children would read and enjoy.

End of Disc 2

The focus of this section is to locate the factors, complexities and intricacies involved in construction of a space, production of a 'text' and role of readers. As this thesis proposes to analyse Comic strip/comics in general and vernacular Comic strip Nante Fante and Handa Bhonda in particular, the interview with writer-illustrator Narayan Debnath has been investigated to delve into construction of Bengal as a cultural space that includes within itself two entities - East Bengal (Ghoti) vs West Bengal (Bangal). While answering the questions on negative codification or stereotyping of other cultures such as those of Bihar or Orissa in his Comic strip, he draws analogy of the ridicule which is suffered by the 'Bangal' in West Bengal. He himself belongs to East Bengal and later came to West Bengal probably as a refugee of partition. He says that the Bangal was a butt of ridicule because of his identity. The fact that he has not included any such character or this cultural bias in his comics inspite of the fact that it would appeal more to the readers of East Bengal and West Bengal, hints at the cultural consciousness of writer-illustrator himself. He constructs stereotypes of other marginal cultures. The choice of characters is dictated by the dominant majority culture and the hierarchy operative in between. Both popular cultural texts and so called high brow texts are full of such Bangal characters as butts of ridicule and fun all accentuated by the partition of Bengal and resultant refugee status attributed to people from East Bengal due to a political decision. This point is also highlighted by the writer-illustrator in the interview. Thus Bengal as a cultural space entails a duality of existence among the later inhabitants i.e Bangals who are given a subordinate status because of their identity and their migration during partition as refugees. These two cultures are constantly at loggerheads with each other, the conflict ranging from football field to matrimonial advertising and even cooking style. Boria Majumder and Kaushik Bandopadhyay in the chapter entitled "Ghoti-Bangal on the Maidan: Subregionalism, Club Rivalry and Fan Culture in Indian Football" analyse the conflict in the football field as socio-cultural rivalry:
The Ghoti-Bangal conflict has sent ripples across the football field. As the immigrants sought to preserve their cultural identity and integrity in a new society, they searched for avenues to assert themselves. Football in this context was appropriated by the East Bengali Hindus as a cultural tool to establish their social identity and cultural excellence. Consequently the maidan became a cultural space where the opposed identities of the Ghotis (settlers) and Bangals (immigrants) came to be produced and reproduced through a bitter rivalry between Mohan Bagan, the club of the Ghotis and East Bengal, the club of the Bangals (93).

The settler or the 'immigrant' identity ascribed was not so much due to cultural reason as for the political upheaval of partition. And this two terms can be contested on the ground as to whether people from West-Bengal (Ghoti) can be considered as settlers or not. Under colonial conditions, Indians played football to express nationalist and regional identities as was the case with Mohun Bagan Club winning IFA shield for the first time against a British team. Mohun Bagan was the first Indian team and the first Asian team to have defeated a foreign team when they won the July 1911 IFA Shield defeating Yorkshire Regiment 2-1. The change from colonialism to independence added a further dimension to football. In the aftermath of partition, large scale Hindu Bengali migration from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) to West Bengal created serious socio-demographic tension resulting in a distinct cultural conflict in Bengali society. The sub-regional (Bangal) identity of the East Bengali Hindus clashed with the established Hindu Bengali (Ghoti) identity of West Bengal, who designated their East-Bengali counterparts derisively as Bangals. The Ghoti-Bangal conflict thus epitomised a socio-cultural rivalry. Cultural traces of Bengal that tend to construct a Bengali cultural space abound in such derogatory representation of the Bangal as the other and the Ghoti as the self. This almost led to an exclusion of the former from the cultural space of the latter. An analysis of such negative stereotyping of the Bangal by the Ghoti in popular cultural traces of Bengal has been summarised thus.

One such typecasted character was Bhanu Bandopadhyay, the famous comedian of Bengali film industry. He is always shown to be perceived as a misfit in so called Bengali mainstream cultural space (popular cinema). He was paired with Jahar Roy who played the Ghoti counterpart. His famous dialogue 'mashima malpo khamu' ("Aunty I want to have maalpo") (trans. mine) in Share Chuattor, an Uttam Kumar-Suchitra Sen starrer, became a popular catchword. His roles were seldom given the
touch of intelligence. The conversation in the Bengali comedy film *Bhanu Elo Kolkatay* ('Bhanu comes to Kolkata', trans. mine) where he attempts to correct his pronunciation according to the norms of the language of West Bengal settlers (?) is indicative of both the lack of refinement to fit into the Ghoti cultural space as well as his lack of intelligence and education. A hierarchy is thus formed within these two spaces and the people of East Bengal are often denied intellectual status. Habul Sen, another Bangal Character in ‘Tenidar Ahijan’ ('Adventures of Tenida', trans. mine) by Narayan Gangopadhyay, is distinctly known by his Bangal accent, but he is not projected as totally dumb. He hails from Bikrampur, Dhaka. He is a good student in comparison to Paelaram and Tenida himself, both being his Ghoti friends. But the tendency to make such characters butts of ridicule prevails here also. He is laughed at by other characters for his accent. His character portrayal can be interpreted as an attempt to cater to the demand of the dominant reading populace of West Bengal, the space where the ‘text’ is produced. Inherent in such character portrayal is a cultural conflict that creates a tension between both the cultures, between the tendency to fit in and that of exclusion. It is also a stereotypical representation that does not have base in reality except the difference in pronunciation and accent. In the Comic strip and animation Habul Sen's physical characteristic can be distinguished from others. He is fat and looks older than them. But interestingly while in the animated version and photofilm clips such as *Tenidar Gymnastic Kirtan* by Prabir Kundu ('Tenida's Gymnastic Kirtan,' trans. mine) his East Bengal accent is distinct, in the Comic strip version titled “Dadhichi, Poka o Biswakarma” ('Dadhichi, Insect and Biswakarma', trans. mine) he is shown speaking in the West Bengal accent like other characters. The comics “Matsyapurran” illustrated by Arijit Datta Chowdhury clearly disseminates Bengali culture of West Bengal and circumscribes a Bengali cultural space in such linguistic and pictorial codes as “Bangeswari Mistanna Bhandar”25, “rajbhog”26, the picture of Goddess Kali in the frame, etc. However, the tendency to project East-Bengal characters as a misfit in the intellectual and cultural space of West Bengal is strongly opposed by the writer-illustrator Narayan Debnath in his personal interview, though his own Comic strip show the same tendency.

It is argued that the present is embedded in the cultural past. The dynamics of change in cultural space occur at that juncture where the reconstructed past is linked with the present. It is in this present space that the social construction of cultural space takes place by retaining and defining certain events. The writer-illustrator of *Nante Fante* and *Handa Bhonda* Comic strip is conscious about the ridicule of people from East-Bengal (the Bangal), but the cultural past experienced by him ironically gets relocated in his own portrayal of marginal characters through negative codification and stereotyping. Interestingly, the same tendency of legitimisation and naturalisation of such negative codification and resultant negligence of the Bangal language as it is spoken in Agartala, Tripura, through a process of erroneous ideology of standardisation (where the standard is fixed as West Bengal/Kolkata Bangla) by members of the Bangal community or people of East Bengal settled in Agartala themselves provides a
curious analogy as given below. This only proves that such tendencies when perpetuated by the 'others' themselves, become all the more culturally threatening. When a reader from Orissa, Bihar or Nepal reads/ watches such texts embedded with cultural biases against him and fails to recognise them, or when a writer-illustrator who as a member of the 'other', himself being subjected to the same sort of negative codification, repeats the same against some 'other', the vicious cycle continues refueled.

While attempting to initiate a discourse on Kolkata-Bangla and Agartala-Bangla, it is really interesting to find that the hegemonic construct of language vis-à-vis dialect that operates between the so called 'standard' Bangla spoken in Kolkata (henceforth referred to as Kolkata-Bangla) and Agartala-Bangla respectively is more socio-political and cultural. Rather the usual discriminatory and arbitrary standardisation that has promoted Kolkata-Bangla as standard, is the effect of several extra-lingual and extra-literary factors that include delineation of the diasporic centre at Kolkata, privileging Kolkata in the hierarchy as well as favoring Kolkata-Bangla and consequently Bengali literature written in and from Kolkata over that written in Bangla away from it. The root is deeply embedded into the politics of centralisation and marginalisation to which it has been subjected to. In the pre-independence as well as pre-partition times the erstwhile East-Pakistan served as the granary of undivided Bengal. Kolkata being the economic, political and cultural centre of undivided Bengal, its variety of Bangla shared its centralised status. On the other hand irrespective of the often numerical majority of speakers, East Bengal-Bangla (with close affinities to Agartala-Bangla) was marginalised simply because it did not enjoy economic, political and cultural limelight. And hence when refugees migrated to this side of the border, they carried a language legacy that was already subordinated to Kolkata-Bangla. Economics thus had a major role to play in determining the status of the Bangla spoken in East Bengal (with its clear affinity to Agartala-Bangla) vis-à-vis Kolkata-Bangla. Moreover for generations of landless, homeless refugees who had migrated to Tripura after partition a sense of endemic cultural inferiority was symptomatic. Their sense of being uprooted and made homeless by a decision of political convenience adversely affected their life and psyche and made them devaluate their language and culture in contrast to the speakers of Kolkata-Bangla who had never been forced to such a traumatic exodus. The former's history was one of loss and forced migration whereas the latter's was that of a peaceful settled life without the slightest displacement. Having settled in Agartala, the refugee psyche had difficulty believing that it could be a contender to language and not dialect status. However, the effort to draw the Bangla diaspora with Kolkata as its diasporic centre has been long problematised with the emergence of Dhaka as the more politically appropriate contender for the position post-Bangladesh Muktijuddha, all the more since the national language of Bangladesh is Bangla. And the discerning critic has to decide which should be the diasporic centre-Kolkata or Dhaka. Such being the problem, it would be very naïve to consider Kolkata Bangla as 'the language' and Agartala-Bangla as the 'dialect'.

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It is also necessary to carefully scrutinise the resultant ideology of standardisation to which Agartala-Bangla has been subjected to, the prescribed standard being Kolkata-Bangla. A random survey of various cultural artifacts and social entities would be useful to comprehend how this arbitrary standardisation has been working overnight. Culturally, Kolkata-Bangla has always been projected as the standard with literary texts in Bangla, be it poetry, prose fiction written in it. Moreover as a general rule the language of the subaltern characters is Agartala-Bangla (close to East Bengal Bangla). The landlord and the aristocratic gentry speak in the former whereas the servant and members of lower social strata speak in the latter thus making Agartala-Bangla a sociolect (a dialect that is associated with a particular social class can be termed a sociolect) by compulsion since such broad generalisations tend to deny or overlook the social reality that actually even the higher-ups in Agartala including the kings of this erstwhile princely state used to speak in this language. Classical and semi-classical compositions have their lyrics written in Kolkata-Bangla while folk songs and songs of rural life are almost invariably in Agartala-Bangla. The same scenario is true for Bengali films and theatre where a comedian like Bhanu Bandopadhyay has his screen and stage antics in Agartala-Bangla or East Bengal Bangla while the hero or the heroine speaks in Kolkata Bangla. Even the villain does not speak in the latter, such is the neglect for the language. At the social and familial spheres too Agartala-Bangla has been subjected to neglect and step-motherly attitude. In the average urban middle class Bengali family in Agartala, the parents encourage and even pressurise their children to speak in Kolkata-Bangla while within themselves and with servants, drivers and other members of the labour class they speak in Agartala-Bangla. The same is promoted in schools and other educational institutions across the state capital. The result is that the children are subjected to an artificial and simulated linguistic environment which leads to a neglect of the language avoided, a language which by virtue of their birth in that language community is their own. At the same time the difficulty of negotiating two different languages in very close familial, social and cultural planes leads to lack of proficiency in both. This is certainly alarming as today Agartala-Bangla has a diminishing number of speakers and very few takers. In normal day to day conversation even if Agartala-Bangla is used, a resident of Agartala invariably switches over to Kolkata-Bangla when addressing a meeting or a gathering or speaking in a mike. These and many such instances only validate the fact that Agartala-Bangla is endangered because of the socio-cultural neglect that it is subjected to and this endangerment is not just the result of neglect by anybody else, but by the speakers born into this language itself. Infact, Comic strip such as Handa Bhonda and Nante Fante by writer-illustrator Narayan Debnath (who ironically speaks of being ridiculed by original ‘Ghoti’ inhabitants of Shibpur, Kolkata) are written in 'standard' Kolkata Bangla and not in Bangal. Even the Comic strip Senapati Ray Kachag by Alak Dasgupta (discussed in details in chapter III of this thesis) published from Agartala is not written in Agartala Bangla.
Thus it is evident that social and cultural processes explain how meanings are contextualised and interpreted at any given present moment where the present and past are commingled. Culture does not exist outside human experience. Culture is considered to be a set of practices, habits and recipes for daily interaction emerging from the experiences of everyday life. It is by using the past to make sense of the present that the social construction of culture comes into existence. Such practices are internalised through daily interaction in the form of social scripts and other forms of structuring. The mental space is reflected in the temporal and socio-cultural space. Another important facet is the attempt at constructing and circumscribing a local Bengal space through the illustration of comics/Comic strip genre as against the national or the global that tends to threaten the former. It is in this context that the comprehension of boy's hostel as a spatial entity in the Comic strip of Nante Fante and Handa Bhonda can be facilitated. The presentation of boys' hostel in Nante Fante can be interpreted as a socio-culturally gendered space. The writer-illustrator of Nante Fante does not project his East-Bengal identity anywhere in the strip explicitly. The name of the characters reflect typical West-Bengal (Ghoti) identity. But the boys hostel implies the concept of 'non-home'. The non-home is not definitely for the inhabitants but for other/outsiders who come to reside there because of socio-cultural compulsions.

Children literature texts are characterised by a pre-determined audience. But the construction of the would-be reader that the text tends to cater to is grounded in a certain sense of familiarity and acquaintance with the space that it generates/creates. Children's literature should be studied employing theoretical stances specifically meant for it and not abridged from those of the grown-ups, so as to bridge the gap of serious and non-serious implication. Similarly the term serious cannot have a single monolithic meaning both for adults and children. Unlike elderly or grown up readers, children read literature or any text of that literature including comics as their primary reading material. This literature hence is equally serious for children and the idea is to view children's literature and its texts from children's perspective only. So the constructedness of the text also constructs the child's understanding of the world through it. Comic strip is primarily literature as there is a story. According to the writer-illustrator of Nante Fante and Handa Bhonda Narayan Debnath to create a comics first a story or narrative has to be composed, then panels are to be illustrated. Because of their pictorial quality they appeal more to the children. Alice in Alice in Wonderland is surprised to see that her sister is reading a book that contains no picture (11). Since it is an accepted fact that any book meant for a child for should have illustrations whose primary aim is to acquaint and familiarise with the world around. The response of the writer-illustrator of Nante Fante is relevant here as is given in the interview and validate this. It is also pertinent here to relate that children do not understand the implicit moral or ethical factor or the implied value system that delineates good- bad dichotomy in Comic strip or cartoons. Children have their own ways of generating meaning that might even violate or subvert culturally codified and intended meanings, They make use of colour perception - white for good, black or gray for bad
with respect to body colour of the characters. (The interview with Sourasnata Debnath, a boy of six years old as discussed in chapter II of this thesis validates this.) Complex concepts such as punishment for wrong doing presented through such texts lie beyond their perceivable area of the text. When they are asked about the teaching value of such texts they reiterate the funny element in them such as a particular catch phrase or the particular sound that a character makes as a mannerism.

But Comic strip or comics is a potent pedagogical tool too. It is proved that students learn more by using pictures along with the language text. Comic strip and comic books have widespread appeal to all age groups and levels of society because they reflect both the language and cultural context more efficiently through social commentary, delineation of human idiosyncrasies, stereotypes and conflicts in life that contribute to a richness in plot development. This medium depicts real life and language context as well as every other facet of society and its people. It is a potent tool because it's variety of visual and linguistic elements and codes appeal to students with different learning styles and skills.

Serious subject matters or theories are now being presented in comicstrips like illustration for easy and better understanding. Icon Books' *Introducing* series is in a combined format of text and illustration and contain titles covering areas of philosophy, psychology, science, politics, semiotics, sociology, religion, literature, linguistics, culture studies, gender studies, economics and anthropology. On *Introducing Freud*, Guardian comments "immensely resourceful, comic and dramatic . . . a remarkably effective introduction" and it considers the format as "a miracle of modern publishing .." The book on culture studies projects the complex theories in comic and dramatic format in such a way that it becomes penetrative and easily understandable. The readers participate in the content of the text much more than in a typographical theoretical text. The chapter on “Orientalism” is an example of how the theory is made more comprehensible through the image-text combine (Figure 4.1). The illustration in the chapter “Women and Gender” communicates the concept as well as the stereotyped representation of women in cultural texts at the same time (Figure 4.2). The book contains illustration by Surrealist artist and illustrator Borin Van Loon whose work ranges from oil paintings to a cut-out book on DNA. *The Beginners Documentary Comic Book* series on Philosophy and Psychology published by Orient Longman are in a similar format. The back cover of the title *Freud for Beginners* cites that: “whether motivated by curiosity or the need to cram for exams, *Freud for Beginners* aims to educate readers of every generation who are interested in the on-going history of Psychoanalysis". The book, unlike any previous book, places psychoanalysis in its historical, political and intellectual context. The back cover also cites: "Written for the layperson it is enlivened by classic Comic strip style illustrations, giving a distinctly pop twist to the presentation of Freud's complex ideas. For instance the story of Oedipus is the subject of conversation between Freud and a trenchcoat-wearing detective".

The publication of such books or series points out the effectiveness of popular genre to understand even classics as well as theories. It blurs the distinction between the so called high literature
and low or pop literature and bridges the gap between serious and non-serious literature thus destabilising the grand literary canon and situating comicstrips within the serious, an objective which this research and thesis also aims at doing. The book is written by Richard Osborne and illustrated by Maurice Mechan. Similarly the book *Saussure for Beginners* claims that it offers "the only comprehensible presentation available in English of Saussure's intriguing concepts of "anagrams". The illustrations are works of art and not merely doodles. The concept of anagram is elaborated in the book in page 105-108. The illustration and textual elements dramatically communicates the complex concept (Figures 4.3; 4.4). It is designed in "both look and language" to introduce the lay reader to the brilliant, mystifying Saussure. The comment on the back cover also hints at the necessity of structuring such texts thus, as space of participation for the readers:

Ferdinand de Saussure's work is so powerful that it not only redefined modern linguistics, it also opened our minds to new ways of "doing" anthropology, literary criticism and psychoanalysis. Genius like Saussure's is meant to be shared, it is shameful to confine it to the "experts". Unfortunately, unless you were a linguist, Saussure was virtually unreadable. Until now, *Saussure for Beginners* is a clear accessible guide to one of the most influential and difficult thinkers of the twentieth century.

Comic strip as a pedagogical tool disseminates two things at the same time-the theory (text) and its centre of production (cultural context). Therefore it disseminates the theory and also the culture or the cultural context in which the theory originated. *Thus Saussure for Beginners* along with contents of a course in general linguistics depict the culture of its origin. There is a transformation from French to English, but it retains the source culture and effectively communicates the theoretical postulations. Thus Comic strip work as a pedagogical tool in a space of cross-cultural understanding along with communicating the theory through image-language text combine that is made to suit the needs of the target learners. Therefore this transformation/translation from the critical text to Comic strip cultural text is also effective at the level of cross-cultural understanding and disseminates the source culture when created for learners of another language.

Comics, in fact, can serve as an intermediate step towards comprehension of difficult disciplines and concepts. Sally Kindberg and Tracey Turner's *Comic strip History of the World* explains to children everything from the origin of the universe to what ancient civilisations thought of the stars, through astronomers discovering the truth about planets, right up to current space missions.
gives a solid understanding of how things came about and how human beings came to understand their place in the universe. A review of the book *Comic strip History of Space* cites:

There's something very special about books that manage to edify without being dull, and entertain whilst teaching you lots. It's not dry and worthy, but anyone studying space at school will have a greater understanding of all the concepts for having read it. It should have a place on every child's bookshelf.

The only downside is that having covered the entire history of Earth and now the universe, it's hard to know what could come next. Whatever does come next, I'll certainly be looking out for it. ("Comic strip History of Space")

The notion thus redefines the concepts of serious 'reading' and complexity associated with literary and theoretical texts and places Comic strip medium (categorised as pop/low and non-serious literature) as a comprehensible access to such complex ideas and theories. This implies the necessity of including comics in the serious academic realm as well. Comic format is an effective and potent medium of dissemination and communication because of its rich visuality. The term comic is undergoing a transformation both in such texts and graphic novels. In the later genre comic is being replaced by satire. The graphic novel *The Barn Owl's Wondrous Capers* is an apt example of it. It satirically illustrates (both in language and illustration) the Babu culture of colonial Kolkata.

However, the focus of this section is to consider Comic strip/comic book or rather comic format as an emerging space that blurs the traditional distinction between serious and non-serious and places itself as a space for multilayered possibilities of research in such fields as semiotics, culture studies and media studies etal and thus demanding serious study and a place in the academia. Comic strip studies is becoming increasingly more common at academic institutions across the world. Some notable examples include: University of Florida, University of Toronto and University of California Santa Cruz which have incorporated research and study Comic strip. Besides formal programs and degrees, it is common to see individual courses dedicated to comics and graphic novels in many educational institutions. Scholarly publications dedicated to comics studies are growing both online and in print with more on the way. *ImageText* is a peer reviewed, open access journal that began in the spring of 2004 and is based at the University of Florida. There are many others in circulation, such as *European Comic Art, Image and Narrative*, and the *International Journal of Comic Art*. Comics Studies is an academic field that focuses on comics and graphic novels. Although comics and graphic novels have been generally dismissed as less relevant pop culture texts, scholars in fields such as semiotics
and composition studies are now re-considering comics and graphic novels as complex texts deserving serious scholarly study. In the field of composition studies, an interest in comics and graphic novels is growing, partially due to the work of the comicstrip theorists but also due to composition studies' growing focus on multimodality and visual rhetoric. Composition studies theorists are looking at comics as sophisticated texts and sites of complex literacy. Multimodality is "the use of several semiotic modes in the design of a semiotic product or event, together with the particular way in which these modes are combined" (Kress 20), or, more simply as any text whose meanings are realised through more than one semiotic code. Kristie S. Fleckenstein in “Embodied Literacies: Imageword and a Poetics of Teaching,” sees the relationship between image and text as "mutually constitutive, mutually infused"-a relationship she names "imageword." Fleckenstein sees "imageword" as offering "a double vision of writing-reading based on [the] fusion of image and word, a double vision of literacy" ("Comic studies"). Dale Jacobs in “Marvelling at The Man Called Nova: Comics as Sponsors of Multimodal Literacy,” sees the reading of comics as a form of "multimodal literacy or multi-literacy, rather than as a debased form of print literacy"(ibid). According to Jacobs, comics can help educators to move "toward attending to multimodal literacies" that "shift our focus from print only to multiple modalities". He encourages educators to embrace a pedagogy that will give students skills to effectively negotiate these multiple modalities.

William Marston theorises that the appeal of comics medium is woven into the very fabric of its nature. He comments that "the potency of the picture story is not a matter of modern theory but of anciently established truth. Before man thought in words, he felt in pictures. It's too bad for us "literary" enthusiasts, but it's the truth nevertheless, pictures tell any story more effectively than words" (qtd. in Yang). Children and all of humankind have a natural attraction to comics. By inviting comics into their classrooms, educators can take advantage of the "fantastic motivating power of comic books. . Comics being composed of pictorial and other images, is a fundamentally visual medium. It is comics' primary advantage over other literary forms. Pictures and text shoulder the burden of the story together. The interplay of the written and visual quite literally put a human face on a given subject, resulting in an intimate, emotional connection between the students and characters of a comicstrip story.

Comic strip has a permanent, visual component. So it can be used as pedagogical tool in class. Film and animation, in contrast to comics, are visual but time-bound. Language and actions in film and animation are fleeting. The medium, rather than the audience, dictates how quickly the viewing progresses. The same is true of a traditional face-to-face lecture; the speaker has primary control over the speed of the lecture. The text medium, on the other hand, shares comics' permanent component but not it's visual component. Visual permanence, then, is unique to comics. It is pertinent to cite McCloud's comment . McCloud (1993) describes this quality in another way: "In learning to read comics we all learned to perceive time spatially, for in the world of comics, time and space are one and the same" (100). Time within a comic book progresses only as quickly as the reader moves her eyes across the
The pace at which information is transmitted is completely determined by the reader. In educational settings, this visual permanence firmly places control over the pace of education in the hands (and the eyes) of the student. As stated earlier, comics can serve as an intermediate step towards comprehension of difficult disciplines and theoretical concepts. Many language arts educators have used comics in this manner with tremendous success. Comics can lead students towards the discipline of reading, especially those who don't enjoy reading or have a fear of failure. Versaci (2001) takes the intermediary quality of comics one step further. Using comics, Versaci challenges college literature students to consider, evaluate, and question the very concept of a "literary canon." Because comics are rarely considered literature, Versaci can surprise his students with well-written comics dealing with mature themes. Versaci then leads his class in a discussion on literary worth. He has found that discussions on comics are generally livelier than those on classic novels, possibly because of a misguided notion that books in the traditional canon are above question. Through comics, Versaci encourages his students to think critically about the literary worth of books and the formation of the literary canon (Yang). Apart from comics the very act of creating comics is an interdisciplinary activity. In addition to reading and writing, comics-based projects can develop drawing, computer, and research skills. Many of the skills used in comicstrip creation can be applied to film-making, illustration, and even web design.

Randy Duncan and Matthew J. Smith in *Power of Comics: history, form and culture* draws attention to the power of comics and its relation to the storytelling. He refers to Professor Charles William Hatfield, the author of *Alternative Comics: An Emerging Literature* (2005). Hatfield goes beyond the normally defined canons of literature as he examines storytelling outside narrow dictates of high culture staples such as Shakespeare and Hemingway. He says that he enjoys “bringing the everyday and popular into focus and not just the elevated material.” (qtd. in Duncan and Smith). Explaining the use of works by cartoonist Harvey Parker he says that he wants “students to recognise that popular forms may be wrestling with the same issues as other, so called higher forms of culture” (ibid). The comics/Comic strip as a space invites tools and technicalities of literary criticism because it has accumulated a great number of conventions which allow still frames to represent an enormous range of things including speech, movement, relationships, emotions, cause and effect, reader-involvement and the fictional nature of the comic itself and its characters. Comic strips are effective in introducing culture specific lexical items without written correlate such as ‘Uh-oh’, ‘psst’, ‘uh’, etc that permeate everyday language. Comics are effective in identifying different family roles and stereotypes. Martin Barker's *Comics: Ideology, Power and the Critics* analyses the reader's involvement or participation in comics and generation of meaning. Readers have to learn the skills of understanding the relation between separate pictures. Each one is a 'still frame' out of a moving sequence; and that one is later than this one. Umberto Eco reports an interesting piece of research in this respect. An Italian researcher showed a comic story in which a man was being shot by a firing squad. The frame showed him standing blindfolded,
then the guns being fired, then the man dead on the ground. She found that people tended to fill in an extra frame of the man falling. In other words, in making sense of the casual connections, they imagined the necessary frame and attributed it to the comics (6) in a curiously involved, participative and interactive reading model.
NOTES

1. A colloquial Bengali word that literary means followers or disciples. The word is generally used in case of someone younger in age or someone who engages in misdeed along with the guru and has an implied sense of psychofancy.

2. Satirical and comical

3. A children's periodical in the Bengali language published by ABP Limited (Ananda Bazar Patrika Group) from Kolkata, India. Although the fortnightly regular issues of Anandamela started much later, The Puja Number started in 1971. Anandamela has been criticised in the past for their over-dependence on foreign comics. Later, after Paulami Sengupta Sarkar took charge as the editor, original comics, and comics, based on Bengali literature were introduced, and all foreign comics were pulled, including The Adventures of Tintin, that was the hallmark and flagship brand of Anandamela. Also, the standard of Anandamela deteriorated significantly over the last couple of years due to lack of professionalism and transparency in the process of selection of stories.


5. The name of two characters in the Comic strip by the same name. It was written and illustrated by Narayan Debnath, the creator of the popular comics Nante Fante and Handa Bhonda and published by Dev Sahitya Kutir. Shutki can be literary translated as skinny, and Mutki as fatty.

6. Bengali words that mean sister of the mother and sister of the brother respectively in Bengali culture. The word is sometimes referred to connote an elder generation or women of elder age.

7. A common usage in Bengali language to denote the uncontrollable naughty pranks of children. The word comes from the word 'dosshu' meaning demon/pirates.

8. A term that usually refers to a person belonging to Orissa (usually a Brahmin) in mainstream Bengali culture. Such persons are engaged as cooks in Bengali household. The term is derogatory in sense

9. A distinguished Bengali writer. He was born in 1934 in a village in Dhaka district, now in Bangladesh. He started writing at the age of nineteen. The partition of India in 1947 provided one of the major themes in his writing, the other being rural poverty and most of his writing in this area emanate out of his experience of life in the economically backward state of Bihar. Some of his well-known novels are- Megher Kalo Rod, Ratha Jatra, etc.

10. A Bengali author who writes Bengali books. He has written stories for both adults and children. Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay was born in Bikrampur (currently in Munshiganj District), now in Bangladesh. He is associated with the Bengali magazine Desh. A comics based on his book Bipinbabur Bipad was released. With artwork by Swapn Debnath, the 48-page comic was published in monthly
issues of *Anandamela* (September 2006 to December 2006). His many novels has been adapted into movie.

11. A term used to refer to the people of East Bengal (usually from regions around Dhaka and Barisal), now in Bangladesh (as opposed to the Ghotis of West Bengal). The term is used to describe Bengalis from the east, who are marked by a distinct accent. Some of the people from East Bengal, mainly Hindus, migrated to West Bengal during the Partition of India in 1947. The term is derogatory in sense and indicates the construction of hierarchy on the basis of space and culture. Bangals and Ghotis keep up their cultural rivalry through their respective support of the football clubs East Bengal (Bangals) and Mohun Bagan (Ghotis). They also cherish a rivalry through claim of supremacy of their respective cuisines and especially river-food delicacies, i.e., Chingri (prawn) for Ghotis and Ilish (hilsa) for Bangals.

12. It expresses the concept an idealised indigene, outsider (or "other"), and refers to the literary stock character of the same. In English the phrase first appeared in the 17th century in John Dryden's heroic play, *The Conquest of Granada* (1672), where it was used by a Christian prince disguised as a Spanish Muslim to refer to himself, but it later became identified with the idealised picture of "nature's gentleman".

13. Said effectively redefined the term "Orientalism" to mean a constellation of false assumptions underlying Western attitudes toward the Middle East. This body of scholarship is marked by a "subtle and persistent Eurocentric prejudice against Arabo-Islamic peoples and their culture." He argued that a long tradition of romanticised images of Asia and the Middle East in Western culture had served as an implicit justification for European and the American colonial and imperial ambitions. Just as fiercely, he denounced the practice of Arab elites who internalised the US and British orientalists' ideas of Arabic culture. A central idea of Orientalism is that Western knowledge about the East is not generated from facts or reality, but from preconceived archetypes that envision all "Eastern" societies as fundamentally similar to one another, and fundamentally dissimilar to "Western" societies. Following the ideas of Michel Foucault, Said emphasised the relationship between power and knowledge in scholarly and popular thinking, in particular regarding European views of the Islamic Arab world. Said argued that Orient and Occident worked as oppositional terms, so that the "Orient" was constructed as a negative inversion of Western culture. Said can be seen to have been influenced by Gramsci's notion of hegemony in understanding the pervasiveness of Orientalist constructs and representations in Western scholarship and reporting, and their relation to the exercise of power over the "Orient". The same thing is operating in representing the "other" in cultural 'texts'.

14. A notable Indian painter of Bengal school of art. A pupil of Abanindranath Tagore, Bose was known for "Indian style" of painting. He became the principal of Kala Bhawan, Shanti Niketan.
in 1922. He was influenced by the Tagore family and the murals of Ajanta, his classic works include paintings of scenes from Indian mythologies, women, and village life.

15. A magazine published from Patra Bharati Publication. *Nante Fante* has been published in this magazine since 1969.

16. A distinguished writer, artist and filmmaker. He won Oscar Award for his film *Pather Panchali*. Ray created two very popular characters in Bengali children's literature-Feluda and Professor Shonku, a scientist. He was a prominent writer of science fiction. Feluda often has to solve a puzzle to get to the bottom of a case. The science fictions of Shonku are presented as a diary discovered after the scientist had mysteriously disappeared. Ray also wrote a collection of nonsense verse named “Today Bandha Ghorar Din”, which includes a translation of Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky". He wrote a collection of humorous stories of Mullah Nasiruddin in Bengali.

17. A series of Bengali novels and short stories written by Satyajit Ray. Feluda, the detective and the central figure of the series, is actually Prodosh Chandra Mitra, who uses the anglicised name Pradosh C. Mitter. The detective lives at Rajani Sen Road, Ballygunge, Kolkata, West Bengal. Feluda first made his appearance in a Bengali children's magazine called *Sandesh* in 1965. His first adventure was “Feludar Goendagiri”. Feluda is always accompanied by his cousin Topshe, and in later stories, by a popular thriller writer Jatayu (Lalmohan Ganguly).

18. A character in the Feluda stories written by Satyajit Ray. He writes crime thrillers, but is quite weak and nervous in real life. He is fairly wealthy due to the immense sales of his books; he writes two books a year. His crime fiction stories have very interesting names, often characterised by alliterations like 'Sahara-ey Shiharan', 'Vancouver-er Vampire', 'Honduras-e Hahakar', 'Atlantic-er Atanka' etc. The detective of Jatayu's novel, Prakhar Rudra, is a character with incredible intellect and power. Lalmohan's grandfather gave his name Swarbogya Gongopadhyay but Lalmohan does not use that name. He first meets Feluda in the story Sonar Kella (The Golden Fortress) and from then on he accompanies Feluda and Topshe on all their major adventures.

19. One of the most acclaimed film directors of modern India. Made his first documentary *New Earth* in 1973 followed by *Hungry Autumn* which won him the main award at the Oberhausen Film Festival. Has since made ten feature films including *Maa Bhoomi, Dakhal, Paar, Antarjali Yatra, Padma Nadir Majhi, Patang, Gudia, Dekha, Abar Aranye, Yatra*, *Kaalbela* and *Moner Manush*. Has made a number of prominent documentaries including *Meeting A Milestone* (on Ustad Bismillah Khan), *Beyond the Himalayas, Land of Sand Dunes, Ray* (On Satyajit Ray),

20. A Comic strip created by Narayan Debnath. It appeared in the cover page of the children magazine, *Shuktara*. Koushik is a spy. His physical abilities are well above those of average human beings. The Comic strip differs in its illustration from *Nante Fante* or *Handa Bhonda*. It is in colour and avoids cartoony style of Comic strip.

22. A ceremonial sword or dagger carried by Sikhs. It is a religious commandment given by Guru Gobind Singh (the tenth Guru of Sikhism) at the Baisakhi Amrit Sanchar (a holy religious ceremony that formally baptizes a Sikh) in CE 1699, all baptised Sikhs (Khalsa) must wear a kirpan at all times. The word Kirpan (Gurmukhi) has two roots - the first root is: "Kirpa" which means Mercy, grace, compassion, kindness and the second root is "Aan" which in turn means Honor, grace, dignity. So together the word stands for "the dignity and honor of compassion, kindness and mercy".

23. Tshering Phintso Denzongpa, widely known by his acting name "Danny" Denzongpa, is an Indian actor of Sikkimese ancestry working in Bollywood films. He has acted in numerous Hindi films.

24. A common and popular "pithe" (a dessert) made in Bengali household generally in Pous Sankaranti.

25. It connotes the cultural space of Bengal in its name.

26. A popular and favourite sweet of Bengal. The name connotes large size.

27. In August 1947, the Partition of British India gave birth to two new states; a secular state named India and an Islamic state named Pakistan. Pakistan comprised two geographically and culturally separate areas to the east and the west of India. The western zone was popularly (and for a period of time, also officially) termed West Pakistan and the eastern zone (modern-day Bangladesh) was initially termed East Bengal and later, East Pakistan. Although the population of the two zones was close to equal, political power was concentrated in West Pakistan and it was widely perceived that East Pakistan was being exploited economically, leading to many grievances. The Liberation War (Muktijuddha) broke out on 26 March 1971 as army units directed by West Pakistan launched a military operation in East Pakistan against Bengali civilians, students, intelligentsia, and armed personnel who were demanding separation of the East from West Pakistan. Bengali military, paramilitary, and civilians formed the Mukti Bahini. India provided economic, military and diplomatic support to the Mukti Bahini rebels. On 16 December 1971, the allied forces of the Indian army and the Mukti Bahini defeated the West Pakistani forces deployed in the East. The resulting surrender was the largest in number of prisoners of war since World War II.
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