Chapter Four

Spectacles of Freedom and Misogyny: Representations of Women in Bengali Political Theatre Developing around the Emergency in India (1965–1978)

Introduction

Moving forward chronologically from the previous chapter, this chapter will attempt to study representations of female political agency and authority on the Bengali stage from the mid-1960s to the end of the Emergency in 1977. The chapter is divided into two parts; the first will study the deliberatively and increasingly positive representations of women's revolutionary leadership in the plays of Utpal Dutt from the late 1950s to late 1960s. In doing so, it will attempt to keep in view the fact that the build-up to the crisis of the Emergency began much earlier in West Bengal than many other parts of India, as a result of critical political events such as the ‘Khadya Andolan’ and the Naxalbari movement. These successive crises in the political life of the state made governmental repression a part of the quotidian lives of the people of West Bengal. The two instances of President’s rule (in 1968 and 1970) only added to this sense of crisis and pervasive political oppression. I will attempt to analyse how Dutt’s plays develop and posit the figure of the female revolutionary in this political context. The second part of the chapter will then move on to look at first, the broader political context of the national Emergency in India, its implications for the idea of the ‘nation’ and the political authority of women within it. It will then go on to examine the work of Sambhu Mitra as playwright in Chandbaniker Pala, published in 1977, where the dystopic view of a failed heroic nation coalesces with a deeply fearful and hostile representation of female authority. This section of the chapter will try to analyse what the connections of this dystopic misogyny might have been with the experience of female

421 The ‘Food Movement’: a movement that developed around the shortage and inflation in the prices of food in the late 1950s and gathered force in the mid 1960s.
leadership in the *realdpolitik*. Like Dutt, Mitra too explores gender relations in *Chandhaniker Pala*, but with a sort misogynistic dismissal of ‘woman’ as reactionary, which leaves the male hero very much at the centre of political action at the end. However, both these playwrights envision in their texts a face-off of some finality between the imagined ‘ideal nation’ and the then degenerate form of the postcolonial state, and in both cases, gender appears as a determinate rather than a peripheral concern. In a larger sense, this chapter will attempt to map the complexities, limitations and subtexts of both the ostensibly ‘negative’ and putatively ‘positive’ representations of women’s political agency. It will thereby endeavour to reach some broad conclusions regarding the implications of these cultural products for politics: specifically, vis-à-vis the negotiations of a failing postcolonial polity with the subject of legitimate political authority, as well as the deep imbrication of ‘gender’ as a determining cultural factor in these complex and largely ambivalent negotiations.

1. **Utpal Dutt and the Gender of Revolution (1959-1967)**

   The figures of revolutionary women that appear in Utpal Dutt’s plays from the late 1950s to the early 1970s are often individuals who have stepped out of their usual gender roles and taken on the mantle of political activism/leadership. They seem, however, neither to have turned into men nor lost their potential to bring about radical political change. Conventional notions of sexual chastity are questioned at many junctures in these plays; to be revolutionary in the struggle against class oppression seems to be the only thing necessary to turn women into political heroes. These plays seem ostensibly to be primarily about class war, but Dutt still engages himself closely with sexual politics and gender relations, questioning at several crucial moments in the texts the territorial laws of property that seem to govern conjugal relationships. The dominant model of women in mainstream theatrical and cultural representations at this time was of course of the long-suffering mother and wife, the appendage to family. These women are sharply different in that respect, but not uncomplicatedly so. (For example, the revolutionary’s Shardul Singh’s wife in Dutt’s play *Kallol* (1965) insists on life-long devotion to her husband even when he has rejected her).
Dutt’s women are, of course, exceptional in the amount of revolutionary agency allowed to them for the time in which they are created. However, if one were to come down to numbers, women in supportive roles were far greater in number than revolutionary women on stage, even in Dutt’s texts (as was also perhaps the case in the actual revolutionary movements of the time).\footnote{See Mallarika Sinha Roy, \textit{Gender and Radical Politics in India}.}

In speaking of Dutt’s work around the Emergency, it would be usual to speak of plays like \textit{Barricade} (1972), \textit{Dusshapner Nagari} (1974) and \textit{Ebar Rajar Pala} (written and performed towards the end of the Emergency in January 1977). I will, however, concentrate primarily on three of his other landmark plays written and performed in the period between 1959 and 1967 – \textit{Angar} (1959), \textit{Kallol} (1965) and \textit{Teer} (1969). These plays demonstrate, in my view, the development of his singular intent to create a revolutionary theatre. In this period, he moves from plays of radical critique and ‘exposure’ of bourgeois domination/exploitation towards plays that begin to teach directly the methods of revolutionary action. This emerging pattern serves as a blueprint for many of his plays building up to the Emergency. In the three above plays particularly, there is also a growing concern with creating the right sort of revolutionary protagonist, who would form the basis and the fulcrum for the most effective revolutionary organisation. Interestingly for us (and unusually for the time) questions of gender and sexuality are often foregrounded in this exploration. Dutt engages himself closely with the problem of female revolutionary agency and its relationship to the values governing sexuality in \textit{Kallol}, in \textit{Teer} and in several other plays of the time like \textit{Shon Re Malik} (1968) and \textit{Ajeya Vietnam} (1966).

As we have pointed out earlier, the national Emergency in 1975 was not a political condition entirely novel to West Bengal, given the state’s experience of two instances of the imposition of President’s Rule in 1968 and 1970. The unrest and chaos of the Naxal rebellion, and the severe state repression and violence that had followed it, were still fresh in the minds of most Bengalis. Things had, in fact, been building up towards a crisis in Bengal since the ‘\textit{Khadya Andolan}’ in 1965-1966, where the severe food crisis had caused extensive riots and unrest in several parts of the state. State repression had been a usual fact of life from this time onwards and the failure (or Governor recommended dissolution) of the two
successive United Front governments (in 1967 and 1969) had caused resentment against the
central government to increase exponentially. Utpal Dutt had, at this time, begun to attempt
to capture the nature of this political, social and economic crisis in his work. One of the key
issues was his distrust of the Congress government and his reading of their role in national
history as that of 'bourgeois traitors'. Far from being a historical question once removed
from contemporary political life, this was a subject still raw in its urgency in Bengal, given its
increasingly fraught relationship to the central government in Delhi. There was seething
resentment against the Congress government, especially on the part of a section of the
communists (this in spite of the CPI's conciliatory stance vis-à-vis the centre, especially
under Nehru), dating from the time of the centre's severe repression of party workers in the
period immediately following independence (1948-1951). This schism within the Party
(with regard to its attitude to the centre, the question of participation in parliamentary
democracy and the Soviet Union vs. China debate) led ultimately to a split in 1964 and the
formation of the Communist Party of India (Marxist). The ostensible cause was, of course,
the Sino-Indian war and CPI's unqualified support of the Congress on this issue. However,
what was implicated in substance was nothing less than radically different assessments of the
nationalist movement and the alleged ‘compromises’/ political dishonesty involved in the
transfer of power. The Congress history of national independence and the communist
version of it had, of course, always been at odds with each other. Against a Gandhian
narrative of nonviolent struggle of the masses the communists sought to underscore
episodes of armed rebellion, popular militancy, in short, the ancestry of revolutionary
violence. It is this that Utpal Dutt concerns himself with as a playwright in his plays from
this period, especially Kallol. In his book *Towards A Revolutionary Theatre*, he writes:

It should be our task to expose the mendacious theories of peace as a trick of the
ruling classes – to dope the masses with opium; on the contrary, we must tell the
masses that the Indian working people have been, throughout history, particularly
quick to take up arms. [...] It is urgently necessary for the ruling classes to destroy
the history of armed struggle, and to tell the Indian masses utterly fictitious stories of
the peace-loving, fatalistic, forgiving Indian peasant, of the naked fakir and his goat's
milk and spinning-wheel. The bourgeois wants the masses prostrate in the dust. It is,
therefore, our task to re-affirm the violent history of India, to re-affirm the martial traditions of its
people, to recount again and again the heroic tales of armed rebels and martyrs. It is also our duty
to expose the colossal hoax of ‘non-violent resistance’ as a consistent collaboration

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423 Discussed in Chapter One.
with British imperialists – whether it be the scuttling of mass resistance by calling it off after Chauri Chaura or sitting down to sign a pact with Irwin – when the revolutionary masses were facing British machine guns.424

Kalool was first performed at the Minerva Theatre425 in Calcutta on the 29th of March 1965. The play was based on the incident of a well-known naval mutiny against the British by the sailors of the ship Khyber which had caused much popular uproar in the 1940s. In the play, the revolutionary protagonist Shardul Singh and his rival-in-love Subhash Desai have a prolonged discussion on the nature of love and conjugal relationships in the middle of the mutiny. I quote from the passage:

Shardul: What do you want to say?
Subhash: Lakshmi has told me to tell you that she is waiting for you.
Shardul: It is best not to talk about all this in the battlefield.
Subhash: We might never have the chance to talk of all this again.
Shardul: Then go back and tell Lakshmi that you cannot win Shardul with such inanities.
Subhash: You don’t understand Lakshmi, that’s why you are being so merciless.
Shardul: I thought you were just a messenger. I had not realized you would comment on the message too.
Subhash: I apologise.
Shardul: As a soldier, I respect you. But in my personal life, I will make no compromises with you. I can understand that Lakshmi has done right. Why would she not choose a man of steel like you over me? But in spite of that, I do not have the power, the education or the decency to turn noble and forgive everything. [A moment’s silence.]
Tell Lakshmi one more thing. Let her remember what I told her before I left, there is no other way to come back to me.
Subhash: (laughs) She has to murder me and send you my blood. I will tell her. But know this, that Lakshmi can do even that. She can do anything for you. But there is no doubt that you are an extremely regressive man in your private life.
Shardul: Regressive?
Subhash: Feudal. One who knows that his only rights over his wife are that of love, can never make such medieval statements. You think your wife is your property. It hurts me to believe that the leader of such a great struggle is such a backward man in this respect.
Shardul: Don’t talk too much. Don’t go too far. My pistol is with me.

424 Utpal Dutt, Towards a Revolutionary Theatre, 66-67. [Emphasis mine.]
425 The Minerva had been leased by the Little Theatre Group (this was what Dutt’s group was called in this period) on the 3rd of July, 1959. It had been felt by both the director and the actors that a space of regular rehearsals and performances was necessary for the group to be able to function professionally. Since the owner was unwilling to give out the theatre hall on lease to LTG (which was still a lesser known theatre group), the lease was drawn on Utpal Dutt’s name. Sova Sen, Nabanno Theke Lal Durgo, 42-45.
Subhash: It would be fortunate to die on the deck of Khyber. [Silence.]
Shardul: Come comrade, come rest a bit. I hope you are not cold?
Subhash: Not at all. Have you had a change of heart?
Shardul: Are you mad? But for now, you are a guest on this ship. [Shardul embraces Subhash and exits.]

This single exchange marks out a complex modality of relationships between two men who are comrades in the same revolutionary war. Their political and personal roles vis-à-vis each other are clearly at odds, but this is not the only thing noteworthy about the dialogue in the above passage. It is my contention that Utpal Dutt marks out, in the process of mapping this conflict, two different notions of masculinity: both heroic and revolutionary in their own way. The primary and declared objective of the play Kallol, if one were to put it very simply, was the construction of an alternative history of India’s struggle for independence and the systematic exposure of what Dutt clearly saw as the widespread and insidious fabrication that formed the basis of the Indian National Congress’s ‘bourgeois’ version of the narrative of nationalism. The point was counter-propaganda, to uphold the ‘communist’ version of that same history. In his book Towards A Revolutionary Theatre, Dutt writes of the time when the play was staged:

The play Kallol, about the naval Mutiny in Bombay in 1946, opened in March 1965, and the press campaign whipped up against it concentrated mainly on the role of the Congress in the Mutiny. We relied mainly on eyewitness reports in banned pamphlets published immediately after the Mutiny (for example, an exciting Bengali booklet by the heroic rating Shahadat Ali), to show how the top Congress leaders of the time were openly in league with British imperialism and directly participated in a conspiracy to crush the armed rebellion, the leadership of which was passing into the hands of the Communists. […] The Ananda Bazar Patrika, a particularly repulsive specimen of hack-writing, wove the review of the play around one question: why has the play not been forbidden immediately? […] But since the crowds at the box-office grew larger and larger, the Ananda Bazar Patrika lost its sangfroid and wrote an editorial, calling for social boycott of the actors and technicians connected with the play. […] Inevitably, when all else fail, the bourgeois take recourse to violence. […] Then another war started – this time against Pakistan – and inevitably, the Indian bourgeois sought to crush the Left movement inside the country. I was arrested on the day of the ceasefire at my house and detained without trial in Presidency Jail, and attacks on my play Kallol mounted to awesome proportions. One day, all newspapers, excluding The Statesman, refused to print our advertisements. That they were acting in

concert and under instructions from the Congress and police chiefs was obvious to all. But that did not stop the play. The theatre printed posters in hundreds and thousands and trade unions\(^\text{427}\) and peasant associations volunteered to plaster the cities and villages of Bengal with them. If anything, *Kallol*’s popularity increased and the courage of my colleagues, who played on with plainclothes policemen following them round and constantly watching the theatre, made my life in prison bearable.\(^\text{428}\)

The battle lines were clearly drawn and it was all out war, it seems, both inside the theatre and outside. Dutt’s hope was perhaps that the play would, by exposing what he considered the insidious myth of a non-violent war of independence, provoke some reaction from the Congress governments at the centre and the state (which it did, in the shape of severely repressive measures against the Little Theatre Group and Dutt’s own imprisonment) and ideally move the people who constituted the audience a little closer to revolutionary action against the party of ‘bourgeois traitors’ which was still ruling the nation. However, it seems to me that along with this historical-epistemological project runs a parallel concern: Dutt’s evident desire as a dramatist to create a full-bodied revolutionary hero, not a superhuman prototype of perfection and greatness that alienates the audience, but a personality rich in ‘internal’ conflicts and ambivalences. This particular anxiety about being able to create a psychologically complex and intentionally ‘imperfect’ proletarian hero for his epic propagandist theatre is reflected in several of Utpal Dutt’s theoretical essays about his own work, and political theatre in general. For example, in *Towards A Revolutionary Theatre* (1982), he writes:

> In myths, good and evil are simple and straightforward, because myths were created by people who produced for their immediate needs and lived in each of the objects they produced. In an alienated industrial society, production by human hand is obscured by complex processes, and good and evil are no longer sharply delineated forces. Epics cannot grow in these conditions. Good and bad are no longer absolutes, but relative; ends and means are no longer the simple propositions they were. […] We have watched plays by Communist groups where the Communist hero appears as a super-human Captain Marvel without a blemish on his character, advocating war or peace according to the current party-line, laughing in the face of danger and generally being as big a bore as a guru. And one comes to the conclusion: this man is not even subject to sexual desires, or a cough or cold.\(^\text{429}\)

\(^{427}\) CPIM trade unions.
\(^{428}\) Dutt, *Towards A Revolutionary Theatre*, 52.
\(^{429}\) Ibid, 21.
This concern with the creation of deliberate ‘faultiness’ in the revolutionary hero animates many of Dutt’s plays written and performed in the sixties and seventies, and resonates strongly with his trenchant critique of ‘asceticism’ within the Communist party.\footnote{Ibid, 83-85.}

In *Kallol*, Shardul Singh, an Indian sailor in British employment, arrives home in 1946 (after two years of having been away in the war without news) to find his wife living with another man, Subhash Desai. He reacts predictably, with anger and outrage, rejecting the advances and pleas of his wife Lakshmibai who seems to be still emotionally devoted to him. Shardul seems to be the epitome of the virile and valiant masculine leader of the sailors on Khyber, a good soldier and fighter, whose ego is deeply hurt by what he sees as his wife’s shameless infidelity. Desai, by contrast and on the surface of it, is a far more imperfect man; once an accomplished sailor and a rating, he is now physically a cripple and incapable of fighting, having lost one of his arms to the German enemy in the Second World War. Before Shardul arrives on the scene, we realize from the conversation of Krishnabai (Shardul’s mother), Lakshmibai and Subhash Desai, that even though the war has stopped five months ago, there has been no news of Shardul. The family has begun to presume him dead. Subhash now lives with Krishnabai and Lakshmi in their house, and Krishna seems to be fond of him, but his relationship with Lakshmi is fraught with guilt and anxiety on her part. But even in the midst of all this, Dutt takes care to establish the fact that as comrades in a class war, Shardul and Desai are allies rather than enemies, as becomes clear in Desai’s praise of Shardul in his absence to his mother Krishnabai. Shardul has been accumulating weapons in the native settlement of sailors in Bombay for a future direct armed conflict with colonial rulers. Only Krishnabai seems to know where these weapons are hidden:

Subhash: How many weapons have you collected?
Subhash: Amazing! When I think of Shardul’s daring and patience...what can I say, my hair stands on end with respect.\footnote{Utpal Dutt, ‘Kallol’, *Natak Samagra Ditiyo Khondo*, 248. [Translation mine.]}  

Even though it has been made clear before this that the cause of Desai’s domestic and conjugal unhappiness continues to be the memory of Shardul Singh’s greatness and...
Lakshmi’s devotion to her far more obviously heroic husband, Desai betrays no resentment or jealousy of Shardul’s qualities and seems to be full of admiration for him as a daring revolutionary leader. In the scene on the deck of the Khyber, with which we began this section, where the two men directly confront each other, Shardul too, seems to be able to overcome his all-consuming sexual jealousy long enough to appreciate the fact that Desai is a ‘man of steel’ in matters of the heart, which he himself has never managed to be. Dutt seems clearly concerned here (as well as in other plays like *Teer*, which we will go on to discuss later in the chapter) to stress the fact that revolutionary conditions necessitate a different order of personal relationships, where a redefinition of the word ‘personal’ becomes necessary. Our aim is to examine the implications (both liberating and constraining on separate occasions) of this process of redefinition for the organisation of gender relations and women’s agentic roles within the revolutionary framework mapped out by Dutt. It is crucial to point out here that this proposed redefinition affects not only conventional conjugal relationships and sexual rivalries, but also intimate familial relations such as that between mother and child, even those between violator and victim, neighbour and neighbour and crucially, comrade and comrade – the last being a relationship which stands in a strangely complex space between the traditionally personal and the traditionally public, as both somewhat of an affective bond and a professional contract. In fact, it is this relationship of comrade to comrade that stands as an overriding standard and measure, rather something of a touchstone, for the ethical success of all other relationships. As Dutt attempts to establish repeatedly within the ethical framework of his plays, it is those personal and private relationships that manage to pass the test of good and productive comradeship that are worth having at all. Self-fulfillment is set against petty selfishness, and while Dutt’s critique of ‘revolutionary failures’ (like Lakshmibai’s, and even Shardul’s, in one sense) is never scathing, he makes it clear that it is only a genuine commitment to revolution that can transport personal relationships towards true fulfillment, ethical worth and meaning. Though Shardul establishes his worth beyond question in battle and as a revolutionary leader, he remains petty and feudal as a conjugal partner to Lakshmi and as a comrade to Desai. Lakshmibai is led by her selfish love for her husband and her desire for his bodily presence (if not his love) into betraying the revolution. This is both an ethical and strategic failure: the settlement loses its stock of weapons, comrades are punished severely by the colonial authorities and Lakshmi is still unable to save Shardul’s life. This is also typical of Dutt: an
insistent bringing together of revolutionary ethic and political strategy. It would have been both ethical and strategic for Lakshmi not to have betrayed her comrades for the sake of her personal desires, because by betraying the revolution she betrays Shardul and also manages, by a tragic twist of the plot, to lose him anyway, as the colonial authorities and the comprador bourgeois (as traitors, both) predictably do not keep their word. But it is Shardul’s failure to extend his revolutionary ideals to his personal life that is highlighted by Dutt. Not only Desai, but also Shardul’s own mother Krishnabai criticises his judgement of Lakshmi according to conventional notions of ‘chastity’ and wifely devotion, seeing such values as essentially ‘feudal’. Both Krishna and Desai make the same point that Dutt reiterates in several of his plays – for the proletarian woman, ideas such as ‘chastity’ and ‘honour’ cannot come before the needs of physical survival. The revolutionary’s first duty is to stay alive. In the midst of a quarrel between Lakshmi and Shardul, Krishnabai comes out of the house:

Krishna: Shardul! (Shardul stops.) Go and show your valour on your ship, not here.
Shardul: Lakshmi can play with my life, but I can say nothing?
Krishna: You never came to Bombay in 1944-45. How would you know how savage and uncivilized American sailors can be? Their station was at Apollo Port and this settlement was their hunting ground. Women had to clutch their honour in their fists. Who saved Lakshmi? This crippled boy. One day he stopped three American sailors at the same time. He got hit so bad that he fell down unconscious, but first he allowed Lakshmi the time to escape.
Shardul: Why should she forget me just because of that?
Krishna: Were you here to save her honour? Joglekar’s wife fell into the hands of American sailors. She is a prostitute these days. Would it have been better for Lakshmi to be a prostitute than become Subhash’s wife? Have you fed us? Do you know that they didn’t even send us your salary? Who looked after us then? This Subhash.
Shardul: You are all against me. Why didn’t Lakshmi commit suicide to save herself?
Krishna: Why aren’t you committing suicide now?
Shardul: All that doesn’t suit me.
Krishna: But it must suit Lakshmi! What justice!
Shardul: Why are these people in our house? She is not your daughter-in-law anymore, why do you let her stay?
Krishna: My wish. This is my house. She is my daughter, I can’t throw her out.
Shardul: In that case, I can’t come to this house anymore.
Krishna: (stunned, but serious) Alright then, Shardul Singh. But Lakshmi stays here\footnote{Ibid, 254. [Translation mine.]}
One is reminded here of the brilliant analysis by Malini Bhattacharya of Manik Bandyopadhyay’s 1945 story “Chhiniye Khaini Keno?” in her essay “The Class Character of Sexuality: Peasant Women in Manik Bandyopadhyay”. Before she embarks on her discussion of Bandyopadhyay’s short stories and his incisive highlighting of the economic and class basis of sexual relations in the plot of “Chhiniye Khaini Keno?”, Bhattacharya elaborates on how, in one of his essays, Bandyopadhyay:

[…] makes a reference to a specific crisis in the life of the peasant, which the naturalist writer makes extensive use of. The peasant woman sells off her body to a willing customer. Circumstances, which I will discuss later more specifically, had made this a relatively common phenomenon in Bengal in the 1940s. But the naturalist writer, with his deep but restricted acquaintance with the moral and emotional ambiguity of petty bourgeois life, transforms this problem into a purely moral and emotional one, while suppressing unwittingly the total interaction of social relations which forces the peasant woman towards such an exigency. Thus we have an expurgated version of peasant life where pathos is created exclusively out of 'the rape of moral values'. 'The tragedy of land relations' being enacted in the 1940s in rural Bengal, the general pattern of economic and political oppression, embodied in the phenomenon of the peasant woman selling her body, is expunged from this reductive, abstracted presentation of peasant life.433

Dutt seems to align himself with this same tradition of critique (that Manik represents) of petit bourgeois and/or semi-feudal values of sexuality (which, according to them, unjustly govern women’s lives in peasant and proletarian communities) and their superficial moral representation in literature in the name of realism and/or naturalism. Dutt was, at the beginning of his career as a dramatist in the late 1940s and early 1950s, closely associated with the workings of the IPTA for a brief but intense period of time. The IPTA bore, in the field of theatre and the performing arts, the direct legacy of the literary and cultural experiments of the Progressive Writers’ movement434, with which Manik had been associated, albeit in complex ways. Hence, this kind of radical questioning of bourgeois values of sexuality and the concern with putting class firmly back into the equation (which formed a particular, if minor and easily lost, strand of the Marxist cultural movement in Bengal) is carried forward in Dutt’s plays in a deeply self-conscious way. The ghosts of Jogi

434 See Chapter One.
Dakat and his wife, as well as variations of the circumstances they find themselves in, in Manik’s story, seem to haunt several of Dutt’s plays at this time. Starting with *Kallol*, this theme carries on to plays such as *Ajeya Vietnam* (1966), *Teer* (1967) and *Shon Re Malik* (1969). Malini Bhattacharya writes:

The idea of 'a woman’s chastity' can be said to be historically linked with the phenomenon of the commoditization of women. The moral and emotional enormity associated with the loss of chastity has developed on this basis. It has come to be regarded as having universal, aprioristic implications, and this way of looking at such an incident conceals the dynamics of the commoditization of women. The naturalistic writer’s treatment of the incident may be rich in physical detail and yet be nurtured by this aprioristic attitude to the notion of the loss of chastity. This suppresses the historic specificity of the situation where the peasant woman of Bengal offers her own body as a commodity. She becomes but a disguised representation of the values of the dominant classes in a semi-feudal society. […] But Manik would make the same realistic details serve a different purpose.  

In Manik Bandyopadhyay’s short story ‘Chhiniye Khaini Keno?’, Jogi Dakat, a low caste peasant, has turned to being a bandit in order to help his fellow famine victims and has been in jail for two years as a punishment for his actions (i.e. looting a government consignment of rice). The famine has just ended and Jogi has settled back at home with his wife. He tells the urban intellectual political worker who has come to see him, that his wife had been lost in the famine and that he found her after long searching in the city. He introduces her to him:

“My wife”, Jogi said, “She was lost. I came out of prison and looked for her for one, one and a half months. Then I found her in the district town.”

I realized what this signaled at and kept silent. It had grown darker outside. The day was coming to a close and the whole moon shone with clear light.

The urban visitor realizes the implications of Jogi’s statement and also that the child that Jogi’s wife is carrying (she is at an advanced state of pregnancy) could not possibly be his own. He observes the apparent nonchalance and calm with which the couple accepts this turn of events, continuing in their domestic companionship as if nothing had happened.

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There is a measure of normalcy and calm in their exchanges with each other that the city-bred political worker observes with muted surprise:

The wife Jogi rescued from those sordid slums in town, comes in blowing on the chillum of tobacco to cool it down for us. Her blunt, long face reddens at moments in the light of that fire and I cannot see any sign of those places of ill-repute, only a calm and relaxed assurance.\[^{437}\]

On the way back on foot from Jogi’s village to the station four miles away, the visitor encounters in his own mind, the implications of his middle-class moral fumbling:

Walking in the moonlight on the country road towards the station four miles away, I wonder whether Jogi is really so stupid as to not know the simple truth about how long it takes for a female to birth a child?

I find I cannot match Jogi’s pace on my country’s soil. I stumble on the fields, am hurt by the pointed ends of the harvested grain, fall into ditches while trying to get on the dirt road. Jogi watches over me, drags me along with him. [...] He is going to be a father to his wife’s child, a son or a daughter – whatever it may be. People are not willing to let these absurd thoughts – these thoughts that only suit those, are fashionable for those, who can kill millions of fathers mothers sons daughters by taking away even their instinct to stay alive by grabbing for their own food – to pointlessly make them unhappy.

*Is it not true that his wife was lost? Had she not saved herself by eating in any which way she could? What more was there to say?*\[^{438}\]

In a sense, it is Shardul’s failure to be Jogi Dakat (we might say, while taking some liberty with stepping across literary genres) that is critiqued by both Krishna and Desai in separate instances in the text of *Kallol*. His question to Krishnabai about Lakshmi: “Why didn’t Lakshmi commit suicide to save herself?” (from being raped, instead of taking Desai’s help) reveals his inclination to put his ideas of feminine ‘chastity’ and ‘honour’ ahead of her right to live. This, according to both Manik and Dutt, is not just inhuman but a distinctly petit-bourgeois, reactionary organisation of value, completely unsuitable for revolutionary conditions. Krishna’s reply to Shardul: “Why aren’t you committing suicide now?” (that his conjugal life is in shambles) exposes the gender discrimination inherent in his judgement of Lakshmi. It establishes physical survival as the primary value for the proletarian woman in a revolutionary war, in comparison to which traditional notions of chastity and monogamy pale into insignificance. Life may only be lost to the revolutionary cause (as Shardul’s is, at

\[^{437}\] Ibid, 109. [Translation mine.]

\[^{438}\] Ibid, 112. [Translation and emphasis mine.]
the end of the play) and must be preserved at any cost until that final exigency. Feminine honor and chastity are not dismissed as values per se, but are simply rendered irrelevant in this context, where survival is at stake: “Is it not true that his wife was lost? Had she not saved herself by eating in any which way she could? What more was there to say?” A direct line from Manik to Dutt in this respect is not difficult to trace and this could be read as the legacy of the concerns that animated the ‘communist’ line of the ‘progressive’ movement of the forties, which called for a materialist analysis of all social issues. Sex as pleasure and choice, and a woman’s agency in that respect, of course, did not figure with any prominence within this framework – as was quite directly in evidence in the gender equations that ruled the actual functioning of the cultural front, as we have discussed at length in the first chapter of this thesis (vis-à-vis the case of IPTA’s first female President Anil de Silva). The materialist analysis of sexuality that Manik engaged with in his literary works and the radical re-prescriptions concerning ‘revolutionary’ sexual ethics that Dutt was led towards, could be read as part of the same strand of communist thought that was in circulation in the 1940s in Bengal. In delineating the relationship of the terms ‘progressive’ and ‘communist’ as they emerged in the forties, Rajarshi Dasgupta writes in his essay “Manik Bandyopadhyay: The Word and Work of Bengali Marxism”:

This [the ‘progressive movement’] and the more wide-ranging cultural activities of the Indian People’s Theatre Association in the following decade played a crucial role in projecting Marxist politics as an alternative agenda to large sections of indigenous people. Such engagements created a host of indirect, imaginative mediums of ideological dissemination, which functioned as discursive counterpart to communist activism in other fronts, informing and reinforcing each other. Thus, for instance, the famine of 1942 and the subsequent ‘Tebhaga’ movement could be seen giving rise to ‘progressive’ fictions and popular plays on peasant radicalism in Bengal, drawing in turn a growing spectrum of the bhadralok middle class towards a culturally inscribed agenda of left politics. […] For communists, every debate was an occasion to persuade and politicize the movement further, to push the meaning of terms like ‘progress’ and ‘progressive’, which they came to interpret as commitment to a materialist view of history and, by extension, politics.439

A more or less similar move from a ‘progressive’ to a more specifically ‘communist’ revolutionary agenda can be traced in Utpal Dutt’s own work as a dramatist, especially if we

look at the change in his position from *Angar* (1959) to *Kallol* (1965). Dutt himself makes this distinction in an analysis of *Angar* and its failures. In an interview with A.J. Gunawardana in 1970 (published in *The Drama Review*), he clearly marks out what he sees as the differences between ‘anti-establishment’/’progressive’ and ‘revolutionary’ theatre:

TDR: You have been critical of your earlier play, *Angar* (Coal).
Dutt: It wasn’t a revolutionary play; it was a play of exposure. We exposed cruelty and exploitation in the coal mines by showing that many coal miners are killed when the owners flood the mines to save coal which is on fire. *But it did not call for the armed overthrow of the system. Angar can at best be called a progressive play, and I consider the term "progressive" damaging, derogatory, almost abusive. Progressives never talk revolution; they will only sympathize with the revolutionary from a distance. They will say: "Naturally guerrillas will arise; these boys will throw bombs, because they haven't got jobs and are frustrated. Jobs cannot be distributed or increased because of the nature of our semicolonial economy." But, apart from that, even if it were possible to give our youths jobs-in other words, to bribe them-it does not mean that they would abandon the revolutionary path.*

TDR: By progressives you mean middle-class intellectuals?
Dutt: Exactly. For example, there is a Bengali play which portrays the "sufferings" of a group of young revolutionaries who accidently blow up a passenger train when their real target was a troop train. The author is really trying to criticize our boys and point to the dangers of such extremism, adventurism, Trotskyism (they have all kinds of terms). Actually, the attempt is to dissuade our youth from taking to the road of revolutionary struggle.\(^4^{40}\)

As Dutt’s two landmark plays, and the ones most successful between 1959 and 1965, the difference between *Angar* and *Kallol* could indeed be seen as the difference between the progressive and the revolutionary. Dutt himself based the distinction on the endings of the two plays. He found the ending of *Angar* to be too dark and hopeless, and the workers to be too submissive for it to be counted as revolutionary. It was, to him, at best a progressive critique of the exploitation and violence of the capitalist system, but it did not lay down a programme of action or suggest a way forward. If we manage to trace the line from *Angar* through *Kallol* to *Teer* (1967), it seems to me that hereafter we shall see Dutt becoming more and more concerned with not just a revolutionary, spirited ending to the action but with revolutionary education. By this I mean that by the time we come to *Ajeya Vietnam* and *Teer* (even though the latter has always been seen as a break and an anomaly in Dutt’s career, a deviation from his more or less consistent support for the CPIM’s programme of ‘people’s

\(^{40}\) Gunawardana, 226. [Emphasis mine.]
democratic revolution’, in my view, there are clear elements of commonality of technique and dramatic intent with earlier plays, including *Kallol*, Dutt’s intention seems to be quite directly pedagogic. He seems concerned with training his audience in the *practice of revolution*, in the actual methods of revolutionary organisation and in the case of the last two plays, even specifically in the techniques of guerilla warfare. There are long passages in *Teer* which cannot be explained other than by Dutt’s intent to make theatre into some sort of direct pedagogic exercise in the service of the revolution. It is perhaps Dutt’s brilliance as a playwright and dramaturge that he is, while including these passages, still able to keep the action moving and the plot engrossing; a balance between the pedagogic and the spectacular/entertaining is effectively achieved. However, before we come to a discussion of the revolutionary pedagogy in *Teer*, let us discuss the differences in revolutionary content and intent between *Angar* and *Kallol*, and the first instances of the emergence of the pedagogic function in the latter. About *Angar*, Dutt writes in *Towards A Revolutionary Theatre*:

> The revolutionary theatre must, by definition, preach revolution, a radical overthrow of the political power of the bourgeois-feudal forces, a thorough destruction of their state machine. We have seen plays which begin with a fierce attack on the ruling class and end in a whimper of a complaint for better treatment, as if the ruling classes are basically kind and will listen to this plea. […] We are treated constantly to plays that are ‘anti-establishment’ but not revolutionary. All this seems so hypocritical that one is forced to the conclusion that the authors have not yet made their choice, or, having made it, are quaking with terror at the possible consequences. I particularly dislike my play *Angar* for its ignominious end – an appeal by the drowning miners that they should not have been treated so mercilessly.

By contrast, Dutt valiantly defends the ending of *Kallol* against its bourgeois detractors and justifies what was called its distortion of historical truth:

> I do not for a moment believe in the fiction of absolute truth, which is above classes, metaphysical and eternal. The revolutionary theatre has no time for an impartial study of ‘both sides’ of the question. Of course, there are at least two sides to a question – in other words there are at least two truths involved in every issue. They are class truths. […] ‘Why was the mutinous cruiser *Khyber* in the play *Kallol* shown fighting to death, whereas in reality the mutineers had surrendered? To those who ask such silly questions, the bourgeois truth of the precise end of the mutiny is absolute. To us, the end of the RIN Mutiny is the beginning of a revolutionary process that drove the British to begin plotting with Congress and League leaders, a

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441 Dutt, *Towards A Revolutionary Theatre*, 74.
process that still threatens the Indian bourgeoisie with armed rebellion, a process that will only end with their overthrow. That is why, larger than the fact of surrender, is the truth of revolutionary transition, and that in theatrical language is symbolized by *Khyber’s* refusal to surrender. *Khyber* refuses to surrender for precisely the same reason that Eisenstein’s *Potemkin* does, though in factual history it did. Potemkin’s mutiny ended in victorious October 1917; therefore, the precise moment in history when the sailors of Potemkin raised their hands in surrender cannot be considered in isolation, as an absolute be-all and end-all in time.  

This shift away from the despair of *Angar* to revolutionary spirit of *Kallol*, of course, signals for Dutt a clear move in the direction of what he himself designates as a technique modeled consciously on the principles of socialist realism and in others, on Maxim Gorky’s theory of revolutionary romanticism. Indeed, at the end of *Kallol*, though the mutinous ratings are tricked into arrest by the British officers and by the gullibility of their Congress ally, they never for a moment give up their demands or consciously surrender to the enemy. As a leader, Shardul is unwilling till the end to concede to holding discussions with the British officers. He would rather go on fighting. He is compelled by the opinion of his fellow ratings and the forceful suggestions of the representative Congress leadership to agree to a meeting to discuss his demands with the colonial authorities. However, it is clearly not surrender as far as the sailors of the *Khyber* are concerned. In fact, the question on which Saxena, the single honest representative of the Congress, and Shardul seem to disagree is a question that pits the so-called ‘progressive’ against the truly revolutionary. This is also the question that the British officials ask the Congress leaders about the unrest on *Khyber*. Is the mutiny a strike (demanding only better working conditions for the ratings) or an all-out revolt, a war of complete independence from British economic and political domination? Shardul seems to clearly intend the latter, but the Congress leadership disagrees:

Shardul: I am sorry comrade, maybe we have lost track of things on the sea. We were under the impression that this is the war of independence. We thought there was only one demand – Quit India – unconditional and complete independence.

Saxena: Hmm. If you do not like our ways of fighting, you can criticise them at the Central Committee’s meeting. But as long as that does not happen, you must follow the Committee’s orders to a T. I hope you will do this for the sake of unity. […] Are

442 Ibid, 64.
you going to fight without the Congress’ leadership? Do you have that much power?  

Even though both plays end in defeat for the protagonists (both engendered by tricks played on the workers by their imperialist/capitalist antagonists), in Angar, neither the revolutionary question, nor the desire to take the means of production into their own hands is clearly articulated by the workers. Far more than in the endings, in my view, it is in the modes of revolutionary organisation and the ability of the workers to articulate their own crisis that Kallol manages to come a step ahead of Angar. It is in the self-conscious articulation of their own exploitation and the ability to recognise and define themselves as revolutionary that the sailors in Kallol stand apart from the mine labourers in Angar. In both cases, the different levels of self-articulation are made possible by the presence and organising influence of figures whom we could legitimately call, after Gramsci, ‘organic intellectuals’ of the working class. Sibaji Bandhupadhyay has read the figure of Jogi Dakat as an example of an organic intellectual in his work Bangla Uponyashe Ora. Deeply influenced by Gramsci, Dutt creates in his plays many more characters in the same tradition, often splitting up the functions of the organic intellectual into one or more characters, in ways that threads of similarities between which can be traced from one play to the next. A pattern, almost a formula, for the growth and organisation of a revolutionary community is created. This is not to say that the plays repeat themselves in any obvious way, but that there is a developing imaginative blueprint that increasingly guides the plot and characterization as Dutt’s programme of revolutionary theatre begins to take clearer shape. In Angar, for example, the figure who could be said to bear traces of the characteristics of a Gramscian organic intellectual dies fairly early on in the action. However, he passes on his mantle to a younger character, literally his disciple, who takes on not just his actual technical job in the mine, but his pedagogic function as well. He also takes up his predecessor’s organisational role within the mining community. What characterizes both these figures (Deenu and Binu, respectively) is their ability to recognise the nature of their own crisis and articulate it to their fellow workers (even if it is not to the extent that Shardul or Krishna is able to do in Kallol). Deenu and Binu are both aware at a nascent level of the class truth that defines their existence; they both hold their own technical knowledge in high regard and are eager to pass it on to others. They both

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444 Dutt, ‘Kallol’, Natak Samagra, Ditiyo Khondo, 264. [Translation mine.]
445 A connection made by Sibaji Bandhupadhyay in Bangla Uponyashe ‘Ora’ (Calcutta: Papyrus, 1996),
organise their coworkers into groups, articulating their own interests well enough to be able to serve as an example and a motivation for action. Before we go into an analysis of these characters, let us take a moment to look at how Gramsci defined the figure of the new organic intellectual, one who represents the interests of the emergent working class:

The problem of creating a new stratum of intellectuals consists therefore in the critical elaboration of the intellectual activity that exists in everyone at a certain degree of development, modifying its relationship with the muscular-nervous effort itself, in so far as it is an element of a general practical activity, which is perpetually innovating the physical and social world, becomes the foundation of a new and integral conception of the world. The traditional and vulgarized type of the intellectual is given by the man of letters, the philosopher, the artist. [...] In the modern world, technical education, closely bound to industrial labour even at the most primitive and unqualified level, must form the basis of the new type of intellectual. [...]The mode of being of the new intellectual can no longer consist in eloquence, which is an exterior and momentary mover of feelings and passions, but in active participation in practical life, as constructor, organizer, 'permanent persuader' and not just a simple orator …

Gramsci’s new organic intellectual is primarily an activist character, whose newness consists specifically in his participation and active organisation of the practical life of the class from which he arises (i.e. the working class). This formulation also follows from Gramsci’s unwillingness to allow an arbitrary and complete separation of intellectual and physical labour. Read as a prescription, Gramsci’s formulation works in two ways: the new intellectual must not simply think and orate, he must act, organise, labour, while all the time being defined by and defining his own ‘organicism’, consisting in an awareness the nature of his relationship to the world of production and his organic function in the fundamental

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447 Gramsci writes: “The most widespread error of method seems to me that of having looked for this criterion of distinction in the intrinsic nature of intellectual activities, rather than in the ensemble of the system of relations in which these activities (and therefore the intellectual groups who personify them) have their place within the general complex of social relations. Indeed the worker or proletarian, for example, is not specifically characterized by his manual or instrumental work, but by performing this work in specific conditions and in specific social relations (apart from the consideration that purely physical labour does not exist and that even Taylor's phrase of 'trained gorilla' is a metaphor to indicate a limit in a certain direction: in any physical work, even the most degraded and mechanical, there exists a minimum of technical qualification, that a minimum of creative intellectual activity). [...] All men are intellectuals, one could therefore say; but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals.” [*The Gramsci Reader*, 304.]
“...although one can speak of intellectuals, one cannot speak of non-intellectuals, because non-intellectuals do not exist. But even the relationship between efforts of intellectual-cerebral elaboration and muscular-nervous effort is not always the same, so that there are varying degrees of specific intellectual activity. There is no human activity from which every form of intellectual participation can be excluded: homo faber cannot be separated from homo sapiens.” [*The Gramsci Reader*, 321].
social group to which he belongs. It also prevents a dismissal of intellectual work as non-productive non-labour in any simple, uncomplicated way. It rather puts, at least for the new organic intellectual, considerations of intellectual labour, service and productivity very forcefully back into the equation. This takes us directly back to Manik Bandyopadhyay’s characterization of himself as ‘kolompesha majur’ (‘a labourer of the pen’ as Rajarshi Dasgupta translates it in his essay) in his short manifesto about his writing ‘Keno Likhi?’ (“Why Do I Write?”). But what precisely consists in the function of the ‘organic intellectual’? Besides being a ‘permanent persuader’, Gramsci’s organic intellectual gives to the social group from which he arises ‘homogeneity and an awareness of its own function’. He also bears a ‘certain directive [dirigente] and technical capacity’ and is ‘an organizer of masses of men’. For the new working class intellectual, all these tasks are aimed specifically towards furthering the best interests of his own class. In addition to this, the organic intellectual of the working class embodies a novel coming together of intellectual and physical labour, of the physical and social world, aimed at ‘a general practical activity’, which is ‘perpetually’ innovative, and aimed at ‘the foundation of a new and integral conception of the world’.

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448 “The relationship between the intellectuals and the world of production is not as direct as it is with the fundamental social groups but is, in varying ‘mediated’ by the whole fabric of society and by the complex of superstructures, of which the intellectuals are, precisely, the ‘functionaries’. It should be possible both to measure the degree of ‘organicism’ of the various intellectual strata and their degree of connection with a fundamental social group, and to establish a gradation of their functions and of the superstructures from the bottom to the top (from the structural base upwards).” [The Gramsci Reader, 306.]

449 Gramsci writes: “In the modern world the category of intellectuals, understood in this sense, has undergone an unprecedented expansion. The democratic-bureaucratic system has given rise to a great mass of functions which are not all justified by the social necessities of production, though they are justified by the political necessities of the dominant fundamental group. Hence Loria’s conception of the unproductive ‘worker’ (but unproductive in relation to whom and to what mode of production?), a conception which could in part be justified if one takes account of the fact that these masses exploit their position to take for themselves a large cut out of the national income.” [The Gramsci Reader, 308. Emphasis mine.]

450 Dasgupta, “Manik Bandyopadhyay: The Word and Work of Bengali Marxism”.

451 Gramsci writes: “Every social group, coming into existence on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields. The capitalist entrepreneur creates alongside himself the industrial technician, the specialist in political economy, the organizer of a new culture, of a new legal system, etc. It should be noted that the entrepreneur himself represents a higher level of social elaboration, already characterized by a certain directive [dirigente] and technical (i.e. intellectual) capacity: he must have a certain technical capacity, not only in the limited sphere of his activity and initiative but in other spheres as well, at least in those which are closest to economic production. He must be an organizer of masses of men; […] If not all entrepreneurs, at least an elite amongst them must have the capacity to be an organizer of society in general, including all its complex organism of services, right up to the state organism, because of the need to create the conditions most favourable to the expansion of their own class.” [The Gramsci Reader, 301. Emphasis mine.]

452 See Footnote 435.
Perhaps it is in the figure of the new organic intellectual that Gramsci envisioned a concrete embodiment of a solution to a central problem for his thought - an intimate and reflexive relationship between base and superstructure.

In *Angar*, Deenu is a shot-fire at the Sheldon Colliery. He is training a younger colleague, Binu, in the same job. Soon after the beginning of the play, it becomes clear that Deenu’s role in the colliery workers’ community is both pedagogic (Binu is his apprentice) and organisational. He has both a specialized technical knowledge of his own profession and a ‘directive’ capacity that helps him to motivate others. Most interestingly however, in Dutt’s plays, Deenu, and other characters like him, betray a strong, intimate and passionate engagement with their technical work. This loving engagement with and pride in technical labour defines their personalities to a large extent, giving them a shape and direction and crucially, an awareness of their own place within the political economy of the nation. In a particularly telling passage in *Angar*, when Binu’s mother expresses her doubts about the suitability of a shot-fire’s work and her fears about the physical dangers involved in this sort of labour, Binu proudly defends his profession with a passion that is striking not only in its intensity, but in the clarity of its awareness of the exact function and status of his labour in the running of the world at large. Dutt is careful to stress repeatedly the skill, physical exertion, stamina and steadiness of nerves required in the shot-fire’s work, given that a single wrong step on the part of the worker could cost many lives. It is clear that in this kind of work, it is ridiculous to try and separate the intellectual from the merely physical. Whatever Binu and his colleagues are, they are not ‘trained gorillas’ (which is exactly what the management of the colliery would like to treat them as):

Mother: But working in those tunnels, that’s terrible work.
Binu: That’s all rubbish. It’s not coal mother, those are black diamonds. I will pick one up and touch it to our house, and you will see all our dreams have come true.
Mother: But they say people die in there, and so many other things…
Binu: There’s one accident in ten years. Should people sit idle because of that? So many died trying to climb the Everest, did the rest give up? *That same coal lights the fire in your kitchen, the fireplaces in Europe, its running trains and ships, electric lights are lit because of it, enormous industries thrive on it. Our civilization is built on coal. You know mother, there are those who say that just as there was the Stone Age, this is the Age of Coal. We dig up that coal. Think how glorious this work is.*

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Mother: (a dream has touched her eyes) I don’t understand dear, I don’t understand everything you say. But … black diamonds, did you say?

Binu: Yes, mother. 454

But this is before Deenu’s death in an accident caused by the unhealthy conditions of the mines, which are full of the poisonous gas methane. The colliery company, however, is simply interested in maximizing profit. Workers’ lives are of negligible importance to it. The management’s complete and willful negligence of the minimum safeguards to ensure that the workers are protected from harm is directly responsible for this death, and all the workers are aware of this. The suppression of evidence against the company and the unjust verdict in its favour expose the unholy alliance between capital and the state’s legal system. This brings matters to a head, and the labourers strike work till the basic conditions of safety are met by the company. The strike continues for more than a month under conditions of severe economic hardship for the workers. It breaks down when the company makes an offer to hire a few of them at a good sum of money to demolish a particular wall in the mine which would release the accumulated gas and make better working conditions possible. The company would rather use the workers to ensure their own safety, than spend money in order to repair the fans and other technical facilities within the mines that the workers require. Around the same time, news arrives of Kudrat’s arrest by the police. Kudrat is the leader of the mine workers’ union. He had helped to organise the strike. He is a minor figure, but reminiscent once again of the ‘organic intellectual’ (In my view, Dutt has, at this point, begun to build this up as a character type in his plays). On hearing of Kudrat’s unjust arrest, Binu is unwilling to accept the company’s offer because he begins to see that it is a trick. However, he is unable to stick to his decision first, because of the growing pressures from his unwilling colleagues (I do not use the word ‘comrades’ deliberately, one would have to make the journey from Angar to Kallol in order to be able to use that word) and second, because of his own family. What distinguishes these miners as a social group from the sailors on the Khyber is a lack of a cohesive revolutionary organisation and a clear consciousness of the nature of their own oppression. Even though characters like Deenu, Kudrat and Binu try to bring the workers to an awareness of their own class condition, their self-articulation remains at best nascent and amorphous, shaping what could be called a temporary resistance.

454 Utpal Dutt, ‘Angar’, Natak Samagra Prothom Khondo, 77-78. [Translation and emphasis mine.]
but hardly ever enough to create a strong and collective revolutionary consciousness. Their demands are, in the first place, for better working conditions and the question of further radical action (whether of armed conflict or seizing the means of production) does not arise.

However, my primary concern is with the most significant change in the order of personal relationships that is in evidence between Angar and Kallol. In Angar, Binu’s inability to stick to his stand about continuing the strike is caused finally by his inability to communicate to his mother the *raison d’être* of his struggle. His self-articulation is stalled by her failure of comprehension. As mothers, Krishnabai and Binu’s mother belong to two different worlds; one has a name and a revolutionary role to play within the text, the other, quite simply, does not. The frustration and incomprehension that builds up inside Binu’s mother engender a certain harshness towards her son, which ultimately leads to Binu’s death inside the flooded mines. In this failure to be *anything more than personal*, she is closer to Lakshmi than to Krishna (and in Kallol, it is the latter rather than the former who is the heroine), although Lakshmi is driven by love alone and Binu’s mother primarily by economic anxiety for her family. She vehemently opposes Binu’s decision not to call off the strike:

Binu: You don’t understand Ma, you will understand one day that I have done right.
Ma: No, of course I won’t understand. Day after day, I do the work of a cook and a maid, in the hope that you will feed us one day. You will make us a home near the hills, a garden, I will light a lamp under the Tulsi tree, Sumi will sound the conch. You promised so much. And it all came to you, but you threw it away. Not once did you think -
[Her voice chokes with tears. Sumi enters dancing.]
[…]
Binu: Why are you speaking like this? What I have done I have done because it is my duty. I am bound to do this.
Ma: Your first duty is to your mother. Your own home is falling apart; you don’t need to go looking after others.
Binu: I thought at least you would understand.
Ma: No, I don’t understand. I don’t want to understand. For the last one and a half months, I have been eating once a day. I don’t remember the last time I went to bed with a full stomach. How can I understand anything in this condition?  

Krishnabai in Kallol stands in sharp contrast to this, not only rebuking Shardul for his unjust treatment of his wife, but also preferring to risk her son’s life and give up her own than let

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455 Ibid, 114-115. [Translation mine.]
the resistance be defeated. She hides the weapons Shardul has collected and waits for his command like a dutiful soldier in battle. Her relationship to her son as comrade clearly supersedes her affective role as a mother. Krishna is overtaken by shame and anger when she hears that Shardul has agreed to hold a meeting with the British authorities in order to save her life. She sees this as Shardul’s betrayal of the revolutionary war and is only pacified when she hears of his spirited resistance to the idea of compromise, and the treachery that led to his arrest. It is then that Shardul is redeemed in her eyes as a leader whom she can respect. She wishes rather that he prove to be a good leader than a better son, when these interests are set clearly at odds with each other:

Krishna: The ass! The idiot! That Shardul! Went and surrendered himself willingly? Why?
Nuruddin: What else could he do Krishnabai? The battle is over.
Krishna: Never. Listen Major, I know you are going to kill Shardul. But those guns are still here, we will avenge his death.
Lakshmi: You are saying they will kill him?
Krishna: Yes my dear, what else can they do? That is why I suddenly remembered that he is my son, not my leader. What a fool! Stepped right into the trap to be captured –
Nuruddin: What is the point of fighting anymore? And it was to save your life that he went to the meeting. Or they would have killed you.
Krishna: (screams) That’s precisely why I am so ashamed! I never imagined that Shardul could sink so low. This is not what I taught him. He has always been taught that the revolution, this fight for freedom, is far more important than all this child’s play with father, mother and wife.
Rebello: You are making a mistake Mataji. Shardul didn’t want to go to the meeting. The sailors made this decision after he was removed from leadership.
Krishna: Are you telling the truth?
Rebello: Yes, I know this for a fact.
Krishna: What a relief! I was dying of shame.

Shobha Sen, Utpal Dutt’s wife and the actress who played Krishnabai has written about the female characters in *Kallol* in her memoir, *Nabanno Theke Lal Durge*:

How can you find a comparison for such a character? These revolutionary women are not paradigms of conventional chastity, they have continued the fight for survival keeping their self-respect intact. The mother is at the same time inspired by the spirit of revolution and moved by her love for her son. Her revolutionary spirit helps her

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456 Utpal Dutt, ‘*Kallol*’, *Natak Samagra Ditiyo Khondo*, 307. [Translation mine.]
move forward in the right direction. She tried to make her son see reason, supports her daughter-in-law, loves her like her own daughter. I feel honoured to have played such a character.\textsuperscript{457}

Lakshmibai, however, in contrast, becomes the cause of the settlement’s final defeat when she tells the officers about the location of the hidden weapons. She does this in order to save Shardul’s life, but is unable to do so. The British officers still murder him in cold blood and the resistance is crushed. It is Lakshmi’s surrender to private emotion and her inability to identify herself fully with the revolutionary cause that sets her up as a clear contrast to Krishnabai, who is by far the exemplary female revolutionary. However, Dutt takes care not to posit Shardul as an ideal, measured against which Lakshmi fails. Shardul too, while a success as a revolutionary leader, is tainted by this inability to overcome the limitations of his personality enough to extend his rationality and empathy towards understanding his own wife. Samik Bandyopadhyay writes of the character in his introduction to a collection of Dutt’s plays:

In the midst of debates about the factuality of the details of the Naval Mutiny or overwhelmed by the astonishing glory of Shardul Singh’s uncompromisingly revolutionary character, the reader-audience often overlooks the fact that Utpalbabu has inextricably woven the question of women’s position with the revolutionary project. In the revolutionary character of Shardul, Utpalbabu finds such a terrible weakness that can corrode the revolutionary spirit from the inside. In Utpalbabu’s later life, Gramsci’s ideas of hegemony, the seizing of political power by force and the need to establish this at the level of culture and sensibility had become exceedingly important. He had looked at even feminist ideology through a Gramscian framework. Therefore, in Kallol, Shardul Singh’s revolutionary project continues to carry the unjust demands of feminine chastity and complete submission to the husband. Inspired by the Gramscian proposition that it is only in the coming together of the cultural and political that true revolution finds completion, Utpal Dutt makes Krishnabai stand against her son in support of Lakshmibai […]\textsuperscript{458}

Let us now go back briefly to the passage from Kallol that we began this section with:

Shardul: \textit{It is best not to talk about all this in the battlefield.}
Subhash: \textit{We might never have the chance to talk of all this again.}

\textsuperscript{457} Sova Sen, \textit{Smarane Bismarane}, 81. [Translation mine.]
\textsuperscript{458} Utpal Dutt, ‘Kallol’, \textit{Natak Samagra Pancham Khondo}, 6. [Translation mine.]
It seems to me that these two lines can be read as a clue towards both Dutt’s dramaturgy and his gender politics in *Kallol*. Dutt’s declared desire to create a political theatre that would tap the imagination of the ‘masses’ and his readiness to use for this purpose, without hesitation, all the popular devices of entertainment, formal surprise and grand spectacle (a position he had been supporting since his play *Angar* was attacked for its allegedly populist use of spectacle in 1959) are very much in evidence in *Kallol*. As is usual with Dutt, the action is fast-paced, with one dramatic event following another in rapid succession. Though its content is revolutionary, *Kallol* is the story of a spectacular battle at its most basic level: guns and cannons are fired on stage, people die, settlements are looted and the grand edifice of the ship Khyber looms over the action at all times, a magnificent and mesmerizing spectacle to say the least. Dutt, an experienced dramatist by this time, makes use of both the spectacular and the melodramatic to tell the story of a grand epic battle of direct armed conflict between communist revolutionaries and the enemy in the shape of the repressive colonial authority. Given Dutt’s strategical astuteness as a playwright and his orientation towards creating a fast-paced, engrossing, popular drama, it seems an unexpected dramaturgical decision for him to allow Shardul and Subhash to engage in this prolonged personal debate in the midst of a raging mutiny, and especially to include a criticism of Shardul as a husband that would be, too say the least, entirely unusual, shocking and perhaps unacceptable to most of his middle-class audience. If we go back at this juncture to the arguments of Sudhi Pradhan in his introduction to the first volume of *The Marxist Cultural Movement in India*, we will remember how rather effective processes of simultaneous invisibilisation and regulation of sexual matters operated within the cultural front (exemplified in the case of Anil de Silva) and how these are justified by Pradhan in various ingenious ways. To quote once again the two relevant sentences from his Preface to the second edition of the book:

> Precisely because of existing prejudices a standard of decency and morality is important here. *Everything must be above board in the personal lives of front-ranking cultural activists.*

If this was one (perhaps the dominant) strand of thought within the Marxist cultural movement in Bengal, Utpal Dutt represents a clearly different strand. Perhaps his own bitter

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459 See Chapter One.
personal experiences with people like Pradhan (whom he alludes to without naming in *Towards A Revolutionary Theatre*), during his short stint at the IPTA, added to his revulsion of the kind of political radicalism that refused to shake of its genteel ‘*bhadralok*’ moorings in quotidian life and its differential standards for men and women in sexual matters. He strongly critiques this strand of asceticism in Indian communist practice, saying that this is the revolutionaries’ unconscious surrender to Gandhism:

> Our writers often preach a kind of Franciscan self-denial. Our revolutionary heroes are often Gandhian ascetics; it is the villain who smokes, drinks and leads a rich sensuous life, condemning by his very act the idea of living a full life. If the revolutionary hero were shown too poor to buy himself a cigarette, that would be all right, but he proceeds to moralise and castigates bodily comfort as a bourgeois sin. It sounds apparently revolutionary but is its opposite; it is repetition, without thought, of the counter-revolutionary *rodomontade* of M.K. Gandhi. Marx once pointed out how the ‘*usurious ascetic miser*’ and ‘*the ascetic worker*’ are both bourgeois ideals [...] The bourgeois is essentially puritanic. He has begun his revolution everywhere with stirring calls for temperance and asceticism. [...] The pity is that, even after the Indian petty bourgeois has orally embraced Marxism-Leninism, he still holds fast to Gandhian bourgeois ideas and disseminates them in everything he writes. Unashamed derogatory remarks on the spectacle of a woman smoking or dressing in trousers reveal a medieval mind, festering in its own barrenness.

Prescriptions from the likes of Pradhan added up not simply to the view that discussions on the problems of gender and sexuality could always come later, after more pressing, *properly political*, needs had been addressed; it also implied that while problems relating to sex were irrelevant, unintelligible and difficult to articulate within the movement’s ideological framework (especially for women), they were also regulated, defined and policed continually, so that things could remain consistently morally ‘above-board’. To put it simply, political radicalism had to be paid for by sexual conservatism. This would, of course, also fit into the general tone of a much wider debate between traditional Marxists and feminists, about when, if at all, it was a good time to raise the ‘women’s question’ – must it wait till the revolution was over or was it a revolutionary question in itself? If we look at the lines spoken by Shardul and Desai, we see that Shardul’s point is precisely that there are more crucial things than love

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460 Dutt writes: “In a recent book, the ‘chief’ still persistently vilifies Niranjan Sen and Hemango Biswas. Also, in a moment of sadistic ecstasy, he goes on to slander the first general secretary of the IPTA as a whore and implies that the top leadership of the Communist Party had had a rollicking time with her.” [Utpal Dutt, *Towards A Revolutionary Theatre*, 41]

at stake on the ship, so these discussions can wait. Desai’s answer, as Lakshmi’s messenger
and the bearer of her crisis, perhaps closely represents Dutt’s: the discussion on the nature
of communist ‘love’, on the ordering of personal relationships within a revolution and on the
fate of women tied to the old morality must be had now, in the midst of the revolution, and not
later. It cannot wait: “We might never have the chance to talk of all this again.” It is, both
dramaturgically and politically, a revolutionary answer: Dutt, as playwright, will put on hold a
sensational battle scene to discuss a woman’s romantic fate; Dutt, as political radical, will
engage with the gender question urgently in every revolutionary play. It is also a Gramscian
answer: base and superstructure are tied together in a dialectical and mutually transformative
relationship; simply seizing control of the Khyber has not produced in Shardul a
revolutionary transformation that allows him to extend his radical generosity to his wife as
comrade, and without which the resistance may indeed be a failure in the end (as we may say
it is: it is Lakshmi’s desperate and frustrated love for Shardul, and their utter failure to
communicate with each other that leads to the final revolutionary blunder). David Forgacs
writes of the development of Gramsci’s thought in his introduction to Gramsci’s Prison
Notebooks:

It is the basis of such an analysis and strategy that Gramsci sought to develop in the
prison notebooks. […] The Marxist tradition in which he had matured as a political
militant was strong on general predictions about the course of capitalist development
and about connections between economic crises and political transformation. But it
was weak on detailed analyses of the forms of political power, the concrete relations
between social classes and political representation and the cultural and ideological forms in
which social antagonisms are fought out or regulated and dissipated. There was no adequate
Marxist theory of the state or of what Gramsci called the ‘sphere of the complex
superstructures’: political, legal, cultural. In order to conduct his analysis, therefore,
Gramsci needed to make a theoretical critique of mechanistic forms of historical
materialism, most notably ‘economism’.462

If we were to take Manik Bandyopadhyay’s Jogi Dakat as a prototype for the working-class
organic intellectual in Bengali literature, I would like to argue that in Kallol, the figure is split
into two – in the persons of Subhash Desai and Shardul Singh. If Shardul exemplifies the
‘permanent persuader’ in his organisational and directive abilities, Desai embodies a radical
cultural transformation that is just as crucial for the revolutionary class. But it is the figure of
Krishnabai, the exemplary female revolutionary, that stands out in her ability to truly

462 David Forgacs ed., The Gramsci Reader, 189.
represent a complete metamorphosis in the sphere of the personal for the sake of the collective in keeping with the new ‘communist morality’, perhaps reminiscent of the way in which early Marxist theorists like Alexandra Kollontai had defined it:

Communist morality encourages the development of many and varied bonds of love and friendship among people. The old ideal was “all for the loved ones”; communist morality demands all for the collective.\(^{463}\)

Interestingly, when the mantle of the organic intellectual is carried forward in Dutt’s later play *Teer*, it is a revolutionary woman (clearly in the tradition of Krishnabai) who fits the bill. Debari in *Teer* stands out as an unusual and striking figure – a woman whose organisational and directive capabilities allow her to take on the revolutionary pedagogic function not just in relation to her community, but perhaps more radically in relationship to her husband Jonaku, whom she educates. (There are similar female figures in plays like *Suryashikar* [1971] and *Shon Re Malik* [1968], but none which so tellingly combines the pedagogic and activist functions of the organic intellectual):

Jonaku: I will take a job in the railways. All this damned agricultural labour is not for me. You’ve read all these books?
Debari: Yes.
Jonaku: Where did you learn?
Debari: From my uncle. Haven’t you heard of my uncle? Maghu Rai?
Jonaku: [with great respect] Martyr Maghu Rai!
Debari: [proudly] Yes. […] He was kicking the inspector [pauses] no one knows who shot him then, he was hurt in the head.
Jonaku: He taught you to read…so…so much?
Debari: Yes.
Jonaku: [opens a book] Whose picture is this?
Debari: Lenin. [Jonaku stares steadily at the picture for some time.] Read. Take the book, see for yourself – it’s made so easy…
Jonaku: I…I can’t read. [Debari looks up from her work; then washes her hands and comes and sits beside her husband.]
Debari: It’s very easy to read. Come, see, do you know what this is? [Jonaku shakes his head.] This is A.
Jonaku: A.

Debari: This is B. [Jonaku doesn’t reply, he bends his head.] What happened? There is nothing to be ashamed of. No one has taught you, how can it be your fault? Come, look at me – [Jonaku stands up as soon as she touches him.]
Jonaku: I am going to Hattighisa to find a job in the railways. A farmer can’t sit around reading if he wants to eat.464

The pedagogic hierarchy of the bourgeois companionate marriage we had discussed at length in Chapter Two is hereby reversed with difficult results. Debari is faced with consistent emotional and physical violence from her husband (perhaps as a punishment for the very education she imparts to him). However, she soon emerges irrevocably as one of the leaders of the Naxalite revolution within the tribal community to an extent that Jonaku finds it impossible to deny her influence for very long. But this is preceded by various tribulations. One of the most intensely-etched scenes of violence in what is indeed an extremely violent play (perhaps second only in the Dutt oeuvre to *Ajeya Vietnam*), Debari’s husband tears up her books, while also beating her up severely. To Debari it is the violence done to her books rather than the physical violence inflicted upon her that remains an unhealable wound and the cause of an almost permanent rift in the marriage. Her critique of the superstitions and regressive practices within her affinal family (that, in fact, threaten her mother-in-law’s life) is part of her role as ‘permanent persuader’. But it evokes reactions of the most aggressive kind from those that she attempts to persuade:

Jonaku: Where are you going?
Debari: To beg for milk for mother. If she is left to your mercy, she will die.
Jonaku: You don’t have to go, let me.
Debari: You? Why don’t you try to calculate which ghost has taken possession of her instead? [Attempts to leave.]
Jonaku: Don’t go. [Debari stops. Jonaku comes up to her.] See, when I say something, you have to listen. [In a calm voice, but his manner is threatening.] You must listen, immediately. Do – do you believe in black magic or not?
Debari: I don’t. I detest all this.
Jonaku: Careful. You are bringing misfortune on this family, on mother, on me. Just because you’ve read two pages you have forgotten your religion…
Debari: I feel ashamed and revolted by your actions. You know very well which ghost it is that is starving everyone to death. You know everything, but you still do this mumbo-jumbo. And there’s a human being dying over there.
Jonaku: Because of you, you witch. You’ve eaten all the rice. A big stomach we have in this house.
Debari: There’s no heroism in repeating what your father said.

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464 Utpal Dutt, “Teer”, in *Natak Samagra Tritiyo Khondo*, 245. [Translation mine.]
Jonaku: No, there’s only heroism in reading English. […]
Jonaku: Where are you going?
Debari: Didn’t I say – to fetch milk?
Jonaku: Didn’t I say you are not going? [When she still tries to go, Jonaku drags her back by force to the middle of the yard. Debari struggles. When she is slapped she doesn’t cry, but screams in rage.] 465

Right after this, Jonaku tears up Debari’s books into bits, telling her that a peasant’s wife should live like a peasant, and not try to rise above her station. Dutt’s commitment to creating pictures of revolutionary communities split apart by internal strife and conflicts is an aspect of his desire to consistently highlight the urgent need for cultural transformation, if revolutionary organisation is to take a truly cohesive shape. Failing to communicate within her marriage, Debari turns utterly silent inside the familial space. However, as the community slowly begins to prepare itself for guerilla warfare, Debari’s voice emerges with the strongest revolutionary clarity. Of the other voices that surround her in the preparation for armed conflict, the most articulate are those of women. In a section of the play entitled ‘Mao Zedong-er Chinta’ (‘The Ideas of Mao Zedong’), we find scenes of revolutionary training enacted on stage. Here, we see that simultaneous classes in martial and theoretical education are in progress. While Sanjho ‘Orain’ (a title reserved for women), Gabriel, Monglu and Upasu practice archery under the culvert, several others, including Gangi, Jonaku and Debari attend a class on Mao Zedong’s principles for the ‘People’s War’ held by the leader Debidas in the jungle. Dutt creates a panoramic landscape on stage, where once again, like in Kallol, several scenes can be enacted simultaneously and the whole community rather than an individual protagonist is in focus. The division of the play into scenes that have separate titles – especially ones like ‘The Ideas of Mao Zedong’ – once again emphasizes for us the pedagogic intent of the play. The class on Mao’s thoughts on guerilla technique and methods is meant not just for the tribals on stage; Dutt seems to mean to turn the theatre into a classroom for revolution. The episodic nature of the text is directly related to its pedagogic intent and is also, of course, reminiscent of Brecht (especially his ‘didactic’ or ‘learning’ plays) whom Dutt was deeply influenced by and often followed closely as a dramatist. Just as Walter Benjamin puts it in his book Understanding Brecht of the play The Flight of the Lindberghs, it could also be said of Teer that: “A monastic rigour is applied to the learning of a modern technique – in the one case that of flying, in the other that of the class

465 Ibid, 254. [Translation and emphasis mine.]
struggle (in *Mother Courage*).”\textsuperscript{466} The scene is not one that only simulates a class on revolutionary warfare; *it is a class on the methods of the People’s War*. Brecht’s *Lehrstücke* or ‘learning plays’ follow similar principles of teaching through acting – where actors and spectators may inhabit their roles interchangeably. It is likely that Dutt modeled some particular episodes of *Teer* on these principles, as *practically effective* pedagogic exercises. Perhaps he also had in mind the possibility of performances outside the urban proscenium space, in the actual conditions of revolutionary struggle in rural communities and in close contact with CPIM (L) (the ultra-Left Maoist faction of communists that emerged following a split in CPI(M) in 1967) and peasant activists. Dutt not only enumerates techniques of warfare but also presents dialectical arguments (amongst the students) for and against the revolution, on issues of revolutionary violence and strategy. Roswitha Mueller in her essay on Brecht’s learning plays ‘Learning for a New Society: the *Lehrstücke*’, refers to Reiner Steinweg’s brilliant analysis of the subject in his book *Das Lehrstücke*.

Steinweg’s analysis of the extant texts leads him to the conclusion that the *Lehre* is to be understood not as “recipes for political action”, but the teaching of dialectics as a method of thinking. Steinweg goes on to characterize the *Lehrstücke* as an attempt to furnish a model for the ‘dialectical simultaneity, the mutual dependence, and the reciprocal positing and counterposing of theory and practice of theoretical thought and practical behaviour (Steinweg, *Das Lehrstücke*, p. 118).\textsuperscript{467}

In my view, Dutt uses the learning scene in *Teer* for both these purposes – for delineating ‘recipes for political action’ and for presenting dialectical arguments to engage the audience/actor in the exercise of thinking. The class proceeds through catechisms, questions and answers facilitated by Debidas. Students take turns to answer and engage in debates on doubts raised during the process of training. Interestingly, when objections are raised by men like Jonaku on issues like the legitimacy of violence and the wisdom of fighting the far greater strength of the enemy, they are answered by women like Gangi and Debari. All the ten principles of operation enumerated by the Little Red Book are listed verbatim on stage by Debari, including the one directing the people to educate themselves in times of rest between subsequent battles (presumably the play itself is meant to be a part of and an

instrument to be used in that period of education in rest). Almost every detail and implication of these principles (and their rationale) is discussed and argued, either by Debidas or by Debari. Many of Debidas’ words to his students consciously counter the then popular arguments of the institutional Left against revolution; he insists that it is a spurious argument that India was not ready for revolution because large parts of it are backward. He says that this is the contention of those who are primarily opposed to revolution and that the revolutionary time is in the *here and now*. Dutt turns the text of his play into a ‘permanent persuasion’ in the interest of revolution. There is a sense of immediacy in this pedagogic exercise that differentiates it from earlier plays like *Kallol*. This can perhaps be understood better when we consider the fact that Dutt was at this time working closely with the activists of the Naxalite movement and many of them attended rehearsals of *Teer*. The play was to him, therefore, perhaps the cultural mouthpiece of a revolution *in progress*, rather than a revolution *to come* – and this made all the difference. Debidas takes his students through the techniques of people’s war and the tribal women explain these methods with the help of traditional lore. The principles of the operation of the People’s War from the *Little Red Book* that Dutt makes Debidas paraphrase or quote almost verbatim are:

1. Attack dispersed isolated enemy forces first; attack concentrated strong enemy forces later.
2. Take small and medium cities and extensive rural areas first; take big cities later.
3. Concerning attacking cities, resolutely seize all enemy fortified points and cities that are weakly defended. At opportune moments, seize all enemy fortified points and cities defended with moderate strength, provided circumstances permit. As for all strongly defended enemy fortified points and cities, wait until conditions are ripe and then take them.\(^{468}\)

Having explained the methods of operation in attacking cities, Debidas turns to Gangi and asks her to explain why these principles have been formulated as such. Gangi explains that just as a clever Oraon hunter kills a big elephant by first hitting at his legs from behind to weaken it, similarly the People’s War must make its first attacks from a distance in the villages hitting at the weakest points in the cities. Next it is Debari’s turn:

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\(^{468}\) Mao Zedong, “People’s War”, *The Little Red Book*, Chapter Eight.  
Debidas: So then what are the ten principles of operation of the People’s War? Tell us, Debari. Where is your book?
Debari: That man sitting over there, ask him. [Jonaku cringes with shame.]

Debari then rattles off the ten principles one after the other and is thereafter appointed to teach the class in the methods of war. Jonaku raises several objections, each of which Debari answers adroitly:

Jonaku: (suddenly getting up) Comrade. I – I don’t understand –
Debidas: What don’t you understand?
Jonaku: How can we fight without weapons? You need weapons even to seize other people’s weapons. They have so many guns – cannons, airplanes – what do we fight with?
Debi: Debari, answer him.
Debari: I-I…Let me go, brother.
Debi: Tell him.
Debari: (looking straight at Debidas) The enemy is a paper tiger. Weapons do not decide a war: it’s the human being who wields the weapon, who decides victory or defeat. We are many, our spirits are strong. We are fighting for our lives, for our country, for freedom. Their hired soldiers won’t suffice. That is why human beings are bigger than weapons.

Dutt’s deliberate attempt to highlight the female revolutionary’s agency and expertise is clear, as Debari emerges during the course of this speech in her full-blown directive and persuasive capacity as the organic intellectual of the revolutionary community. But even as Debari proceeds in her teaching and arguments, another scene of persuasion is enacted simultaneously across the stage. The text skillfully juxtaposes these two scenes – one definitely Lehre, the other not undisguisedly so. Gangi, Gojua’s wife and one of the women who explains the techniques of revolutionary warfare in this teaching-scene, has been raped a few days earlier by a man called Sanicharoa. Sanicharoa has managed to save himself from Gojua’s wrath by taking shelter in Gangi’s brother’s house by invoking the ancient tribal custom of asking refuge in the name of “Mahakal” (Eternity). At present, Gojua, Sanicharoa and Gangi are all part of the revolutionary army under the leadership of Debidas. Even as she has participated in her training, Gangi has appeared melancholy and distracted through

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469 Utpal Dutt, “Teer”, Natak Samagra Tritiyo Khondo, 265. [Translation mine.]
470 Ibid. [Translation mine.]
most of the teaching-scene. In the middle of the class, having handed over the duty of teaching to Debari, Debidas calls aside Gojua and his wife Gangi. This is the scene that ensues:

Debidas: Gojua, listen. Gangi! [Gangi comes up and stands with a faraway melancholy look in her eyes.] Gangi, this is a war. This is revolution. Should we fight so pettily amongst ourselves in the midst of this? [Gangi does not move, so Debidas goes to her.] Forgive Sania. Look at it from his perspective. He is a child. He has made a mistake.

Gangi: [pointing to Gojua] Tell him.

Gojua: Debi-comrade, I say it every day. I have no more anger. I mean there is – but deep, deep inside. It will never come out. Because there is so much work, there is a war at hand. We need Sania. He draws maps, draws mountains and rivers. My – our small griefs and sadnesses – all this now [He stops.]

Debi: Say something, Gangi.
Gangi: Ask him to go, I will tell you. [Gojua leaves immediately.]

On Gojua’s departure, Gangi confesses to Debidas that she is actually in love with her rapist. The reason she has forbidden her comrades to bring him to the meetings is that if she sees him she may fall in love with him again and maybe this time she may not scream when he touches her. Debidas is dumbfounded at this answer and further persuasion proves unnecessary after such a revelation. It is my argument that while one Lehrstücke-like episode is in progress, Dutt simultaneously etches another one for us where the terms of debate are slightly different. Once again, revolutionary exigency rules over notions of chastity and honour, but this time, on the part of Debidas, to erase the fact of violence from the event of rape. It seems from Debidas’ stance and his attempt as erasure that all arguments can be subsumed by the overarching event of the revolution and the exceptional nature of the revolutionary time. The same exceptional time that liberated Krishnabai from ‘feudal’ notions of chastity and allowed her to articulate Lakshmi’s injustice, demands that Gangi refrain from defining her experience of rape as ‘violence’. Rape, like chastity, is remoulded in the time of revolution as a ‘childish mistake’ and the cause of unnecessary in-fighting among ‘friends’. One cannot but be reminded of Mallarika Sinha Roy’s work in Gender and Radical Politics in India and recognise how close this sort of erasure was to the reality of Naxalbari, where women’s experiences of violence within revolutionary organisations were continually

471 Ibid. 266. [Translation and emphasis mine.]
472 Sinha Roy, Gender and Radical Politics in India.
written over by events that seemed larger than themselves. To quote Sinha Roy: ‘In the magic moments of Naxalbari, women’s memories of ‘moments of nightmare’ – experiences of violence and repression – are intertwined with visions of emancipation.’

At a more subterranean level, however, what appears to me to be even more disturbing than the deliberate attempt by Debidas to silence the event of rape as a fact of the ‘revolutionary time’, is the inability of Gangi to articulate her ‘love’ within the revolutionary community and the grotesque transformation of a mutually ‘illegitimate’ desire into a pathology of violence. And for the first time in all these texts, Dutt, playwright and pedagogue, seems to frame a problem without knowing the solution. The terrible perversion of an unsanctioned love, which expresses itself as the forced violation of the same body it desires, remains the unresolved, even unencountered, problem of this ‘exceptional’ time. It seems to me that neither the text of class war nor the grammar of woman’s empowerment within revolution is able to justly tackle the problem of love, in spite of Dutt’s insistence on the discussion of it in the here and now. Right and wrong are no longer so easily articulated as on the deck of the Khyber; and Gangi’s admission of love can only be met with utter silence on the part of Debidas. Voluntary but illegitimate desire still remains the unwritten subtext of revolution. The question remains: how does one speak of ‘love’ within the unequal relations of power that continue to exist between man and woman, relations which make rape possible but love impossible? What sort of ‘revolutionary’ cultural transformation can address this erotic pathology? Gangi’s confession does not erase the fact of heteroerotic violence from the text of revolution; instead her articulation of love turns it more horrifying in effectively highlighting the inseparability of violence and desire, by bringing to the forefront the pathological face of frustrated love between man and woman. The man, being in power, violates; the woman, lacking a voice, is simply robbed of speech. One is made to wonder what the corollary of a ‘revolutionary war’ in this violent relationship between the sexes could possibly be, given that the mere utterance of the word ‘love’ succeeds in stopping all further discourse. Debidas’ silence reflects Dutt’s own; perhaps signaling at the fact that at least to this revolutionary question, Dutt had no ready answer. Hence, a final silence ends this scene of revolutionary education between man and woman. Perhaps the most insidious aspect of this conclusion is the fact that the instruments of liberation and

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473 Ibid, xi.
coercion here are not separately formed; the redefinition of the personal that was
necessitated by the revolution makes way for newer kinds of self-articulation as well as
novel modes of silencing for women. Dutt’s texts of revolutionary theatre, in my view,
therein manage to effectively embody both faces of the revolutionary Janus.

2. The Emergency: Leadership, Deification, Monstrosity

The period of the national Emergency (June 1975 to March 1977) was the most
concentrated and prolonged period of undisguised repressive state control of civil liberties
and freedom of expression of the citizens of India since Independence. Under Prime
Minister Indira Gandhi (who, according to many, was simply trying to protect her own
position and ensure the continuance of the Gandhi dynastic rule) the nation reeled under the
shock of the severest censorship of the press, draconian laws and mass imprisonment of all
political and civil rights activists, including, of course, various members of all the opposition
parties. In her essay ‘Gender, Leadership and Nation: The ‘Case’ of Indira Gandhi’, Rajeswari Sunder Rajan discusses the roles of female political leaders in South Asian
countries and the difficulties that feminist theory faces in analyzing effectively their political
contributions (especially vis-à-vis the complex popular representations of their ‘femininity’,
or lack thereof). She writes: “In the typical biographical representations of Indira Gandhi,
the problem of reconciling gender and authority is resolved through the familiar
dichotomizing of the subject into a private self and a public persona; and here it is the self
alone that is gendered female.” These questions come into sharper focus during the
Emergency when Indira Gandhi’s authority grows to unimaginable proportions and slogans
such as ‘Indira is India’ fill the air. According to journalist Kuldip Nayar, who was
imprisoned under censorship laws during the Emergency, a ‘cult of personality’ developed

474 Kuldip Nayar, TheJudgement: the Inside Story of the Emergency in India (New Delhi: Vikas
Publication House, 1977) and Primila Lewis, Reason Wounded: An Experience of India’s Emergency (New
475 See Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, Real and Imagined Women: Gender, Culture and Postcolonialism
477 Kuldip Nayar, 86.
around Mrs. Gandhi and visual spectacle formed a crucial part of this ‘cult’. Larger than life, and in some cases, enormous blow-ups of her figure, along with her new twenty-point economic programme appeared everywhere. It was widely agreed that Mrs. Gandhi looked rather sordid in most of these gargantuan visual representations and she later had some of them pulled down. But the upshot was that the urban and semi-urban spaces of the country were pervaded by ‘monstrous’ representations of the female leader of the nation, who had by then begun to be widely hated in several circles for her uncompromisingly authoritarian ways. On the other hand, according to journalists like Barun Sengupta\textsuperscript{478}, Indira Gandhi was often popularly referred to as the ‘only real man’ in the Congress (especially contra the previous Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri, who was seen as a really weak and ineffectual leader), signaling towards a continuance of the reading of effective political leadership in terms of masculinity and femininity within what was, in reality, an atmosphere of severely repressive governance. Emma Tarlo discusses the emergence of dominant and official narrative of the Emergency in Northern India in the mid 1970s in her book \textit{Unsettling Memories: Narratives of the Emergency in Delhi}:

The overriding message was that through hard work and mass coordination, India could enter a new and successful era of socialism.

\begin{quote}
THE ONLY MAGIC TO REMOVE POVERTY IS HARD WORK!
YOU TOO HAVE A ROLE IN THE EMERGENCY!
WORK HARD! PRODUCE MORE! MAINTAIN DISCIPLINE!
\end{quote}

While slogans, stickers and newspaper headlines codified the basic message into succinct and memorable phrases, government pamphlets with titles like \textit{Timely Steps} and \textit{Preserving Our Democratic Structure} spread the word. […] the Prime Minister’s words are echoed in the praise of successive chief ministers and important dignitaries who proclaim the Emergency ‘a necessary measure’, ‘a good opportunity for the poor’, ‘a wise and timely action’. Meanwhile Indira herself is admired for her dynamic leadership, her pursuit of truth and her dedication to the nation for which she will never be forgotten. The coming generation will feel extremely proud of the name of Indira Gandhi. \textit{They will worship her as the personification of Sita, Lakshmi and Durga}

\textsuperscript{478} Barun Sengupta, ‘Indira Ekadashi’ in \textit{Rachana Samagra} (Kolkata: Ananda, 2008), 526. Sengupta writes about Indira’s steady rise to power in the late 1960s: “Indira’s critics could see after this fight that she was inimitable even in the field of political strategy. The way in which she steadily fought against the party leadership and won her place made most ordinary people think that these leaders were novices in comparison to her. At this time, a lot of people started saying: amongst the Congress leaders only Indira was the real man, and the rest were women even if they appeared to be men!”
From the visual, historical and literary material emerging around the Emergency, it seems apparent that a strong undertone of religiosity and the sense of a mystical, yet terrifying, female power were one of the aspects that surrounded the popular perception of Indira Gandhi’s authoritarian rule. Sita, Lakshmi and Durga, of course, stood for the virtues of chastity, purity, service, prosperity and strength - qualities that were seen to be embodied in Indira’s person during the first years of her government. The influence of religious, especially Hindu religious, iconography had always been a strong determinant in the popular representations of national political leadership in India and had managed to survive from the days of the nationalist struggle into the 1970s. The element of ‘worship’ and reflections of godhead had continued to feature prominently in the political and electoral popularity of figures of Indira Gandhi’s stature from the time of Independence. These were not mere figments of imagination or wishful thinking that emerged from sections of her loyal coterie, but significantly coloured the visual and verbal rhetoric of the dominant political propaganda surrounding her greatness, shaping mass-produced images and popular calendar art, and ultimately putting the final seal on the process of her deification during the nineteen months of the Emergency, when Congress President D. K. Barooah famously claimed “India is Indira, Indira is India.’

In the propaganda that painted her leadership as motherly service to the nation, the vast populace of India appeared as her children and explicit connections of Indira’s role as the benevolent maternal leader of the nation with iconic images of Bharat Mata were not uncommon. The crucial point to remember here about the nationalist imagination of Bharat Mata is that she was both a deity and a familial figure, an abstract symbol of the suffering yet resilient ‘spirit’ of India as well as concretely embodied in and as Everywoman of the independent nation. The Bharat Mata was also the iconic embodiment of the twin feminine

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481 In fact the creation of Mother India as an icon helped in some ways to envision and performatively bring this imagined spirit into being in terms of popular political practice, as we have seen in earlier chapters.
and seemingly opposing virtues of service/nurture and power/Shakti. Indira herself appears to have been an active participant in the representation and dual configuration of her political role as goddess and intimate, often deliberately using her supposed familial and nurturing roles in relation to the nation in order to garner popular support during electoral campaigns. Rajeswari Sunder Rajan tells us in her essay in *Real and Imagined Women: Gender, Culture and Postcolonialism*:

Indira herself used every opportunity to flaunt her (actual) Nehru identity as daughter, as well as her symbolic maternal concern for the people of the nation; and the two were not unrelated. It was during the 1967 elections when Indira Gandhi was only fifty years old that she was first hailed as ‘Mother India’. In a speech she said to her village audience, “Your burdens are relatively light because your families are limited and viable. But my burden is manifold because crores of my family members are poverty-stricken and I have to look after them’. Thus gendered family identities – especially motherhood – are culturally capable of sustaining metaphoric expansion to embrace dimensions of leadership. *Mother India* (the film) became the most memorable record of the possibilities of such transformation.\(^{482}\)

But as the Emergency intensified its grip on India, it extended its repressive reach from arbitrary mass arrests of almost all active members of the opposition parties under the MISA\(^{483}\) and the ruthless censorship of the press, towards the forced or coercive sterilization of multitudes of poor people in Northern India. This was especially widespread in Haryana, where Bansi Lal, the Prime Minister’s right hand man held his sway. Sterilization was carried out for the announced purposes of population control, along with a programme of ruthless slum clearance for urban beautification in and around Delhi. Benevolent images of the nurturing priyadarshini\(^{484}\) gradually gave away to the emergent form of the terrible mother bent on the destruction of her own children, as the goddess began to turn into a demon of uncontrollable power and cruelty, an embodiment of all that was repugnant about femininity. In discussing the role and trajectory of Indira Gandhi’s political leadership, as it was reflected in cultural products during the time of her rise to power, Rajeswari Sunder Rajan begins her analysis with Mehboob Khan’s popular Hindi film *Mother India* made in

\(^{483}\) “Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) had been amended only a year earlier to authorize the government to detain or arrest individuals without producing charges before a court of law.”, Kuldip Nayar, 38.
\(^{484}\) A name given to her by Rabindranath Tagore in the year spent at Shantiniketan between 1934 and 1935 and subsequently popularised.
1957. She then goes on to discuss literary works that emerged on the subject after the experience of the Emergency, starting with a story by O. V. Vijayan called ‘The Foetus’ which is one of a group of stories that first appeared in 1978 and were according to the author, ‘allegories of power’ that emerged from the witnessing of the “power and terror, occasioned by India’s brief experience of Emergency.” The central figure of this story is ‘the Lady, Widowed Sovereign’ who never appears in the story but rules over a cursed village whose inhabitants are terrorized, hunted and killed by the Foetus who is her immaculately-conceived son. Only her portrait is seen in the text worshipped in ‘the carnal fullness of middle age, pregnant, naked’. Sunder Rajan argues that while the allegorical form was made necessary by concerns about censorship at the time, this story was one of the ‘more specifically political critiques of Indira Gandhi’s prime Ministership in the post Emergency period.’ Sunder Rajan writes: ‘Between Mother India, product of post-Independence nationalism and ‘Foetus’ and Midnight’s Children, born of the Emergency trauma, stretches the history of Indira Gandhi’s leadership.

It does indeed appear that the ‘look’ of Indira Gandhi, so to say, quite literally changed during these months as represented various genres of mass-produced popular art, especially in political cartoons that appeared sporadically in international journals and Indian news weeklies, some of which were later shut down. Even serious representations of her visage began to resemble grotesque caricatures, visions of a femininity gone horribly wrong. Strangest among these changes was the transformation in her own perception of the visual material manufactured by her own governmental machinery that had spectacularly filled up the urban public space during the Emergency - enormous images of herself that accompanied the pictorial representations of her notorious Twenty Point Programme, circulated aggressively in order to balance out the repressive measures against civil liberty through apparently benevolent steps towards social justice and a more equitable distribution of resources. Journalist Kuldip Nayar writes in his book The Judgement: The Inside Story of the Emergency in India published in 1977:

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486 Ibid.
488 For example, a cartoon of Indira Gandhi as ‘Mother Goddess’ and half-animal that was published in The Economist, 1984, which caused the magazine being confiscated at airports in India.
Mrs. Gandhi had always given an economic cover to her political manoeuvres. [...] This time she believed that the twenty-point programme would hide the move to sustain herself in power. And she looked like succeeding for the time being.

The twenty-point programme came to dominate the media and every official and non-official discussion. Hoardings and posters came up everywhere, listing the points and carrying large portraits of her. The bigger the hoarding, the better was the appreciation, until she herself ordered their dismantling because her close friends told her that she looked “hideous” in paintings on the hoardings.489

Whether the paintings themselves were ‘hideous’ or whether they were perceived as such as a result of her growing unpopularity among the people towards the later months of the Emergency is difficult to gauge. But visual spectacles that marked the public space with images of Indira’s supposed popularity, as well as her continual broadcasts over the All India Radio about the needs/benefits of the Emergency and the continuous valorization of her efforts in the newspapers that became the mouthpieces of her coterie (the ones which did not were shut down), formed a large part of the combined propaganda machinery that kept the Emergency juggernaut rolling. The attempt to use spectacle to mark popular support began early with the collection of massive crowds in front of Mrs. Gandhi’s residence in 1 Safdarjung Road 12 June 1975, right after the Allahabad High Court judgement pronounced her guilty of corrupt practices in the 1971 elections (which had brought her to the Lok Sabha as Prime Minister). This judgement was the most immediate trigger for the declaration of the Emergency on 25 June 1975. According to Kuldip Nayar, trucks and Delhi Transport Corporation buses were requisitioned to bring crowds from the villages to the capital free of charge and the Chief Ministers of neighbouring states were asked to organize rallies in support of Indira Gandhi’s continued Prime Ministership. The idea was to prove by a sheer show of numbers in the public space that the people’s overwhelming support overruled the verdict of the judiciary in the matter of Mrs. Gandhi’s continuing in office. In the days that led up to the declaration of internal Emergency further rallies were organized in Delhi to stand as evidence for the popular support for Indira’s leadership, the biggest being the one that took place on the 20th of June. Similar rallies were organized by the opposition under Jayprakash Narayan’s leadership, starting from March that year, in order to publicly mark the growing dissatisfaction with Indira’s government. Nayar writes:

With emergency rule a little more than two months old, a cult of personality began to develop around Mrs. Gandhi. Her pictures sprouted all over the country, her twenty-point programme began to be chanted like a mantra: “Indira-study circles” were organized by all major universities and the Indira brigade gathered more volunteers.

And the portrayal of Mrs. Gandhi as a goddess by Husain, a famous painter, was now being officially shown round the country. Mrs. Gandhi of the Emergency was the deity who rode a full-blooded roaring tiger, and not a lion as mythology depicted.\(^\text{490}\)

It was Bharat Mata, drawing on the religious iconography of the goddess Durga, who was often shown in popular art as riding a lion signifying her embodiment as Shakti.\(^\text{491}\) The intimate terror of the image of Indira Gandhi as Bharat-Mata-gone-wrong, the journey, as it were, from priyadarshini (the loved one who is pleasing to look at, if we consider the combined meanings of ’priya’ as both ‘well-loved’ and ‘pleasing’) to monster - can be grasped a little better if we look a deeper into the function of representative political iconography in modern India. In studying what he calls ‘history made by art’ or ‘how pictures were an integral element of history in the making’ in the book ‘Photos of the Gods: The Printed image and Political Struggle in India, Christopher Pinney writes:

Scholars such as Roy Wagner and Marilyn Strathern have investigated the manner in which certain cultural practices treat images as compressed performances. […] The relevant question then becomes not how images ‘look’, but what they can ‘do’.[…] A key concept here [in Hindu practice] is the notion of darshan, of ‘seeing and being seen’ by a deity, but which also connects to a whole range of ideas relating to ‘insight’, ‘knowledge’ and ‘philosophy’. […] Darshan’s mode of interaction mobilizes vision as part of a unified human sensorium, and visual interaction can be physically transformative.\(^\text{492}\)

Pinney then goes on to suggest that the interactions and imbrications between religious and political iconography in India have had a much longer and more complicated history of overlap than have been explored in recent studies on the subject. It is clear however from the memoirs and accounts that appear right after the end of the Emergency in 1977\(^\text{493}\), that the production of Indira Gandhi as an icon with patriotic-religious significance and the creation of multitudinous visual representations of the slogan ‘Indira is India’ was a

\(^{490}\) Nayar, 86.
\(^{491}\) Christopher Pinney, Photos of the Gods.
\(^{492}\) Ibid, pp. 9. [Emphasis mine.]
\(^{493}\) Books by Primila Lewis (social worker), Kuldip Nayar and Soli Sorabji (journalists), for example.
deliberate and wide-ranging process that traversed many areas of public life in India at the
time. And rather than a disavowal of her femininity or an underlining of its irrelevance to her
position of political authority, these images and verbal propaganda sought to highlight the
fact of her specifically female power (Shakti/Bharat Mata/Durga). Saba Mahmood writes on the
use of the word ‘icon’ in her essay “Religious Reason and Secular Affect: An
Incommensurable Divide?”

[…] it refers not simply to an image but to a cluster of meanings that might suggest a
persona, an authoritative presence, or even a shared imagination. In this view, the power
of an icon lies in its capacity to allow an individual (or a community) to find him - or
herself in a structure that has bearing on how one conducts oneself in this world. The
term icon in my discussion therefore pertains not just to images but to a form of
relationality that binds the subject to an object or an imaginary.494

In discussing the Danish cartoon controversy of 2005, where the Prophet Muhammad was
represented as a terrorist, and the prevalent reaction of the western world to it, Mahmood
critiques what she calls a ‘rather impoverished understanding of images, icons, and signs’
which ‘not only naturalizes a certain concept of a religious subject but fails to attend to the
affective and embodied practices through which a subject comes to relate to a particular sign
– a relation founded not only on representation but also on what I will call attachment and
cohabitation.’495 Trying to understand the affective potency of the images of Indira Gandhi
circulated during the Emergency, would lead us directly to an engagement with the historical
fact that these images were actually accompanied by clear directives on how to conduct one’s
life and bear oneself in day-to-day living as a good, as opposed to an unruly, citizen of India
during a time of crisis. The image of the authoritarian mother entered the quotidian with
clear disciplinary moves that decreed hard work, punctuality and a rigid governance of the
self and family as imperative for national interest. The double-speak of socialism on paper
and in propaganda was accompanied with a crackdown on democratic liberties and implicit
support of big business, as various historians and political theorists like Partha Chatterjee496,

495 Ibid, 842.
496 Partha Chatterjee, A Possible India, in The Partha Chatterjee Omnibus (New Delhi: Oxford University
Press, 1999), 51-66. Chatterjee writes: “In November 1975, major reforms were announced in licensing
policy: some fifteen export-oriented engineering industries were allowed automatic expansion of capacity –
virtually all of them were marked by low average capacity utilization; blanket exemptions from licensing
were granted to twenty-one industries in the medium sector, and unlimited expansion beyond the licensed
Sudipta Kaviraj and Andre Gunder Frank have shown in their work. But important for our purposes is taking into cognizance the fact that policies like the Family Planning Scheme in scaling up of the sterilization drive, especially under the enthusiastic leadership of Sanjay Gandhi, led to thousands of rural and urban males being sterilized i.e. having to go through nasbandi. These operations were carried out most often through coercive measures that were put into place by the entire bureaucratic machinery (also acting under intimidation and fearful of their own interests) through a system of pervasive rewards and punishments, as Emma Tarlo and Veena Das have shown in their work. This created an atmosphere of widespread fear and paranoia, especially among the urban and rural poor, that gave the regnant, looming figure of Indira Gandhi a directly (one could say almost literally) emasculating potential as an all-powerful woman in authority. As Veena Das writes:

In popular imagination, the emergency is known as the time of nasbandi (sterilization). This period shows with stark clarity how the politics of the body lies at the intersection between law and regulation. [...] The authoritarianism of Mrs. Gandhi’s rule in this period and the destruction of institutions made it imperative for the bureaucracy to implement the policies of the government, not in accordance with rules and regulations, but in accordance with their reading of the wishes of their superiors. The state was literally seen to be embodied in the person of Mrs. Gandhi and her younger son, Sanjay Gandhi, who became, as was widely acknowledged, the extra-constitutional center of power.

Monstrosity was, of course, the other side of deification. The massive electoral victory of 1971 that brought Indira to power for the term that ended in the Emergency came soon after the other high point of her political career - India’s victory in the war against Pakistan for Bangladesh’s liberation. This event had catapulted Indira to the height of popularity and personal confidence. The affective intensity and national pride that had coalesced around her person at this time saw an equal wave of hatred/disgust generated against her political capacity was allowed to foreign companies and large monopoly houses in thirty other important industries; the procedure for regularising unauthorized capacity installed by monopoly houses and foreign companies was liberalised.” [Chatterjee, 63].

499 Specifically, the sterilization of males.
authority within a period of six years. She was swept unanimously out of power by the gigantic electoral defeat that followed the Emergency in 1977. As Sudipto Kaviraj writes in his foundational essay ‘A Critique of the Passive Revolution’ published in the *Economic and Political Weekly* in 1988:

>A remarkable feature of the new politics was the quickening of the political cycle. Indira Gandhi carried her party to power on promises which were more radical and proportionately more unrealistic than earlier programmes. [...] Governments had to pay the price for such populism sooner than expected. Under Nehru, electoral majorities of the Congress had never been comparably large; yet none of those administrations had difficulty in seeing through their appointed constitutional terms. Remarkably, after Indira Gandhi’s victory in 1971, no government has actually lasted its term. By 1973, Indira Gandhi’s large parliamentary majority notwithstanding, she was in deep political crisis.\(^{501}\)

In fact, Indira Gandhi grew increasingly defensive and nervous of her own political control over the nation in the face of growing international censure and rising internal resentment during the later months of the year 1976. She went into the 1977 elections, much against the wishes of her son Sanjay Gandhi and her close advisors, perhaps partly in order to prove to the international community and her dissenters inside that she was still at the helm of things, enjoying as much popular and electoral support as she had done in the past. She was, of course, proven tragically wrong. Sunder Rajan writes, interestingly: ‘During the Emergency, for instance, we learn that she felt panic-stricken, as if riding a tiger and not being able to get off it.’\(^{502}\) The image of the *Bharat Mata* envisioned as an embodiment of *Shakti* or *Durga*, of course, returns once again to haunt the figure of this political heroine. But this time, of course, it is a *Bharat Mata* no longer so poised, but on the verge of losing control of what she rules, precariously balanced at the edge of political disaster. And once again, the contours, both repulsive and pleasing at extremes, of her ‘womanhood’, rather than being peripheral to our understanding of the nature of her political authority appear as intrinsic to the complexity we must untangle in order to adequately analyse the unraveling shape of her controversial political career as the leader of a postcolonial nation. In order to do so, it is essential to unpack the ambivalent relationship of popular perceptions of femininity and masculinity to political authority, as also to examine the outlines of the Janus-like anatomy of


the ‘woman-nation’ symbolic unit that has worked overtime in the service of patriotism. The study of cultural representations of women in authority that emerge from the Emergency, allows us an opportunity to examine the misogyny that moulds the other face of deification in the project of heroic nationalism.\footnote{Examples of other plays written in India at this time that contain references to Indira’s rule include Vijay Tendulkar’s \textit{Encounter in Umbugland}, which was a farce written in 1967. The character of Princess Vijaya here perhaps represents the young Indira.}

In Sambhu Mitra’s \textit{Chandhaniker Pala}\footnote{The play, written by Sambhu Mitra, was published in 1977, but has never been performed till date except as a \textit{shrutinatak} or an audio play.}, a play written and published in Calcutta in 1977, the goddess \textit{Manasha} appears as a monstrous and all-pervasive female figure. The play takes up a well-known Bengali folk legend in order to tell its own story, shifting focus from the female characters (\textit{Behula}\footnote{Behula, the archetypal brave wife, is Chand Saudagar’s daughter in law. She is traditionally revered for bringing back her dead husband to life by managing to appease the gods (especially \textit{Manasha}) with her sheer determination. Chand, who is a worshipper of Shiva, treats the female deity (\textit{Manasha} is traditionally believed to b Shiva’s daughter) with an almost vitriolic scorn. He is punished in the play for his faith in Shiva, who appears to be a rational (albeit distant) god - representative of light, knowledge and reason} and \textit{Manasha}\footnote{A powerful but dangerous female deity, she is a goddess who governs snakes and whose wrath is believed to unleash chaos and destruction on the offenders.}) to Chand Saudagar, the male hero, who fails repeatedly in his quest as a merchant-sailor. This narrative change also implies a significant \textit{generic shift}, in that Mitra moulds the traditional ‘\textit{mangalkarya}\footnote{Traditional eulogistic poems written in honour of popular gods and goddesses in Bengal.}’ narrative into the form of classical (specifically, Greek) tragedy, perhaps drawing on his own experiences of directing \textit{Raja Oedipus} (Sophocles’ \textit{Oedipus Rex}) in 1964. Shadows of Oedipus and Ulysses, both characters from classical Western literature, seem to mould the character of the protagonist. This transposition from ‘low’ to ‘high’ art, also signified the transformation of the story of a community’s worship of the female goddess \textit{Manasha} (a narrative which traditionally circles around women) into the archetypal tragedy of the individual aristocratic (in temperament, if not by birth) male hero in the quest for glory. Chand fails repeatedly through the machinations of the goddess \textit{Manasha}, whom he refuses to worship because she represents everything that he stands against – unreason, darkness, ignorance, unbridled sexuality. A gigantic monster-goddess, \textit{Manasha} is invisible but all-pervasive, humongous but hidden. She rules Champaknagari (representative of the nation) while Chand is increasingly driven to its edges. \textit{Manasha} works through snakes and through the women of Champaknagari – villainous, conniving, bad citizens - none more so than Chand’s wife Sanaka, who emerges as
his primary antagonist in the quest for extraordinary glory. The failed city is also an intensely misogynistic space, where the alleyways are infested with darkness and snakes, and the homes with women who worship darkness, fertility and unreason. The failure of heroic masculinity (that may have led to the formation and realisation of the ideal nation) is affixed directly with the ubiquitous presence (through symbols and representations) of the enormous, succubus-like figure of the goddess Manasha. Female treachery and women’s lack of ‘spiritual’ chastity are seen as definitely detrimental to the course of male heroic political action. Mitra’s play does not directly allude to Indira Gandhi, of course – but it does speak of an authoritarian and repressive nation-state ruled by the dark figure of a demon-goddess who is all-powerful, ever present and invisible. Manasha is, significantly, monstrous not just in terms of size but because she is a hybrid (if we allow ourselves to go back to the original OED definition of the word ‘monster’), half-human, half-snake, monstrous in the sense that Shakespeare’s Caliban was monstrous. References to long-standing mythical misogynist tropes could also be drawn from the text - to notions of the vagina dentata or the succubus, for example, both representing monstrous sexuality. Manasha is a man-eater, danger to young men; we might see parallels of this with Indira Gandhi’s image as an ‘emasculating’ leader (almost literally because of the ‘nasbandi’ campaign) during the Emergency. It will, however, be difficult to read the text as a straightforward critique of the Emergency, unlike some of Utpal Dutt’s plays, since it is hard to reconcile the textual implications of the play with Mitra’s own political position vis-a-vis in real life. So questions of intentionality and authorial ambivalence will remain to complicate our reading.

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508 The OED defines a ‘monster’ as: ‘Originally: a mythical creature which is part animal and part human, or combines elements of two or more animal forms, and is frequently of great size and ferocious appearance. Later, more generally: any imaginary creature that is large, ugly, and frightening.’

509 We will remember here our earlier description of the cartoon of Indira Gandhi in The Economist that represented her as just such an animal-human hybrid.

510 For example, it was widely rumoured that Sambhu Mitra was in favour of the Emergency and an admirer of Indira Gandhi. Perhaps this arose from the fact of his presence at the tea party given by Indira Gandhi at the Raj Bhavan in 1975 after the declaration of the Emergency. Various celebrated theatre persons from Calcutta had been invited and we find out, from Rudraprasad Sengupta’s own account, that he and Mitra had been present at the party. However, this account also states that Mitra had only made the visit to speak about his dream of a collective ‘national’ theatre to be built in Calcutta and to negotiate a piece of land, and had ended up being rather rude to the then Chief Minister (and Indira Gandhi’s well-known crony) Siddhartha Sankar Ray. Of course, no land was thenceforth sanctioned. This anecdote is quoted at length in Shaoli Mitra’s biography of her father. Shaoli Mitra, Sambhu Mitra: Bichitro Jibon Parikrama, 303.

Sambhu Mitra’s 1977 play Chandbaniker Pala appears in print around the same time as O. V. Vijayan’s short story ‘The Foetus’. Just as the village in Vijayan’s story appears as the microcosm of the nation, at the very beginning of Mitra’s play, Champaknagari is established as an allegory of the new nation state that must prove itself worthy of its own heroic past. Chand, the young protagonist, is an embodiment of the nation’s heroic youth and the ideal citizen – brave, righteous and impossibly masculine. A leader of men, who scorns ordinary domesticity and sexual pleasure, Chand seeks out greatness for Champaknagari. He (along with his band of men) becomes a voyager and a merchant-explorer on distant and uncertain seas. He believes that it is his sacred responsibility to bring back the city’s lost glory and in doing so establish himself (and his men) firmly in the line of a heroic patriliney. But as the years pass, it is Manasha who seems to rule Champaknagari more and more, and Chand is increasingly driven to its edges. No one wants or believes in his heroism. People in the city want safety, ordinary domesticity, pleasures. The two spaces – the increasingly corrupt, insidious and confining space of the city and the chaotic and dangerous expanse of the sea – are set against each other in the play. Champaknagari ages almost like a character through the course of the play, becoming more and more degenerate, more and more servile, more and more polluted. Chand ages along with his city, as if in choric collusion with it, losing his youthful vigour, his ascetic zeal – becoming at the end, a drunken beggar on the streets of his youth; streets that seem to have become narrower and darker through the course of the play. Brilliant dramaturgy makes it possible for the hero and his city to mirror each other’s course, and we may read in the fates of both, a tragic failure of heroic masculinity. The city fails the citizen just as the citizen fails the city, and the symbolic mapping of urban space on stage lays down for the audience a clear cartography of gender politics. The play begins with a multiplicity of young male voices speaking together in an open space on the riverside. This, the play announces, is the river Gangur, on the banks
of which Champaknagari was built by Chand Saudagar’s ancestors once, long ago. These are the stage directions:

[From inside the darkness, we hear the shouts of many joyous voices screaming together: “Haiyyan!” Lights flood the stage. This is Champaknagari on the banks of the Gangur River in ancient Bengal. All the people on stage are symbolic of Champaknagari’s youth. Loud, exuberant voices. One man springs up from the crowd and says:]

First man: Brothers, we are going to make our voyage on the sea …
[Everyone screams out in unison to express consent.]
Everyone: Yes, we will. We will make our voyage on the sea…
[Another man jumps up from the other end of the stage.]
Second Man: Brothers, our ancestors have floated their boats on the sea and traveled far far away to distant lands. We will win back again the glory of our forefathers…
[Everyone screams in consent.]
Third Man: Brothers, we are not cowards, nor are we crippled or old. We have strength inside us; we have strength in our bodies. We are young men! For us there is no cushion of comfortable jobs, nor the temptation to sit at home in the evenings smoking tobacco…
[Everyone laughs out loud.]

The open, expansively lit, noisy public place in which the play begins will become increasingly difficult to find as the play progresses. It is also a homosocial, clearly-defined masculine space. This homosociality is a result of multiple theatrical factors - simply visual (we begin with male voices and see only masculine bodies on stage), dramaturgical (the stage directions clearly state that these are the people who are representative of Champaknagari’s youth, yet there are no women on stage) and spoken in dialogue (the repeated use of the words ‘purbapurush’, ‘pitripurush’ (forefathers), ‘zuyan’ (young man) and the choric form of address ‘bhai-re!’ (‘O brothers!). Champaknagari appears to us, then, in its first avatar, as a predominantly masculine city. Chand Saudagar’s men set themselves up at the very beginning as a league of very extraordinary men, for whom the ordinary life of the common citizen is sheer anathema. They declare themselves to be heroes of a glorious quest and it is this performative utterance that brings into being the narrative of the play. Not long after this, in the same scene, Chand says to his followers:

511 Sambhu Mitra, Chandbaniker Pala (Calcutta: M. C. Sarkar and Sons Pvt. Ltd, 1977), 1. [This and all subsequent translations mine.]
Brothers, you must remember this. Night and day, keep the faith in your hearts. We are sure to win.

[Everyone cheers. Chand raises his hands and silences them.]512

Chand Saudagar's opening speech in the play sets domesticity clearly against the heroic life. It tells the audience that those who prefer their wives' company over adventure on the high seas, are essentially weak, base men not made of the heroic stuff of Champaknagari's dreams. Chand continues:

But there is another thing you must not forget. Our way is the difficult way; there will be many hurdles in it. Everyone in the society around you, even your near and dear ones at home, will always speak against you. This is because you worship Lord Shiva, because you speak what you know to be the truth fearlessly. This is our crime. They say the times are bad. Hence, they worship Shiva but at the same time they do not forget to pay obeisance to that one-eyed monster.513 Do you know what that means? They worship knowledge first and then turn away to worship ignorance in secret. This is the nature of their base intelligence. But brothers, was this Champaknagari created by our forefathers with this sort of cleverness? Was its glory a result of such petty calculations? When the skies were dark with clouds, these base clever men ran to their homes and hid under their wives clothes. But it is then that our fearless ancestors traveled steadfastly on to the unknown seas …”514

512 Ibid, 2. [Translation mine.]
513 Manasha. The term used here, in the original text, is 'Changmuri Kani'. Manasha was traditionally believed to be a one-eyed goddess, one of her eyes, according to legend, having been blinded by her step mother Chandi. Manasha was Shiva’s daughter – albeit somewhat illegitimate – born from the seed Shiva had split accidentally, during masturbation, on a lotus flower. Chandi, Shiva’s wife, believes Manasha to be Shiva’s mistress (in one of the versions of Manasha Mangal, Shiva does actually lust after Manasha when he sees his youthful daughter for the first time) and in a fit of jealousy blinds her with a poker. The term ‘Changmuri’ popularly meant ‘destroyer of young men’ attributed to Manasha, no doubt, for her particular fondness for killing young men through snake bites. In the legend as in this play, Manasha is responsible for the death of six of Chand Saudagar’s young sons besides Lakkhindar, around whose death the whole narrative of Manasha and Chand pivots. The origins of the word ‘Changmuri’ are contested. Some scholars like Professor Ashutosh Bhattacharya (author of Bangla Mangal Kavyer Itihas) suggest that the name Manasha itself comes from Kannada name Mane-Mancamma or Manaca amma, which is not the name of a god or a goddess, but that of an invisible snake. Bhattacharya also suggests that the origins of the name ‘Changmuri’ are also Dravidian: the Telegu name of the plant associated with serpent worship is ‘cengmur’. Professor Sukumar Sen, however, argues against this in his seminal book Bangla Sahityer Itihas. He suggests that the word originates from Indo-Aryan and means either or both ‘repulsive and dirty as a shroud’ or ‘destroyer of young men’. My information on the legend of Manasha derives almost entirely from Edward C. Dimock’s article ‘The Goddess of Snakes in Medieval Bengali Literature’ in History of Religions, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Winter, 1962) published by The University of Chicago Press (Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/1062059). It is interesting that the pejorative and the derogatory are almost always intrinsically connected with and simultaneously existing with the eulogistic in relation to Manasha in folklore. She is simultaneously an object of worship/fear and ridicule/hatred, not just in the play but evidently also in popular folk parlance.

514 Sambhu Mitra, Chandbaniker Pala (Kolkata: M. C. Sarkar and Sons Pvt. Ltd, 1977), 2. [Translation mine.]
The monstrosity of the goddess in power is clearly highlighted at the very outset. Chand’s rhetoric invokes something very close to the ‘seminal economy’ and asceticism required of dedicated men according to one of the ideological strands of nationalist thought in colonial times. Indira Chowdhury writes of this phenomenon in her book *Frail Hero and Virile History: Gender and the Politics of Culture in Colonial Bengal*:

What was crucial in this context was the need to find an alternative that would conserve the strength of youth. Celibacy as a way of life (as Vivekananda saw it) could be viewed as offering a timely and obvious guarantee against the debatable venture of marriage. [...] Spiritual freedom demanded strict discipline and austerity and was distinguished from freedom in the secular world which sanctioned indulgence and excess. By making renunciation a matter of active choice — the right to refrain from doing — Vivekananda affirmed its dynamic role in cultivating a superior strength. This strength manifested itself spiritually and physically through celibacy. [...] Thus Vivekananda spoke of the transmutation of sexual energy into cosmic energy. This could be achieved by the preservation of the vital fluid i.e. the semen. [...] Vivekananda valorized the heightened spirituality of the ascetic which emanated from his disciplining of the *dhatu* — the prime element or semen. [...] The loss of semen was perceived in Ayurveda as enervating or weakening. According to prevalent Hindu belief, *biryapat* or ejaculation actually weakened the male unless it impregnated the female and the containment of the *birya* or semen produced strength.

According to Chowdhury, the fashioning of this ‘alternative masculinity’ became a very important strand of late colonial nationalist thought. In my view, it is with this conception of Hindu nationalist heroism and masculinity that Mitra as playwright aligns his hero Chand Saudagar. The clear dichotomy set up between domesticity/sexuality and the meaningful life of the ascetic-hero appears once again in this act, when Chand is confronted with a seemingly strange request from one of his followers and fellow-voyagers, Banamali. This is one of the rare scenes of explicit comic intent in the play, one that nonetheless turns serious very soon. Banamali asks to be allowed the special permission to carry something extra with him on the voyage, in spite of the fact that Chand has given clear orders that baggage must be kept to a minimum. On being asked to elaborate, Banamali claims sheepishly that he has never slept apart from his wife for many years now. Chand laughs out loud and declares that

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that much baggage can certainly not be allowed. Banamali replies that he knows that his wife weighs a considerable amount, but it is not her that he wishes to carry:

Chand: What then? You want to take someone else with you?
Banamali: No, no dear Chand. I want to take this pillow as her representative. [...] If I could rub a little bit of her hair oil onto the pillow every night, I would sleep very well. 516

Chand laughs out loud; he keeps laughing for a while. No doubt the audience would have laughed too at this juncture; the scene written to evoke laughter. However, things begin to grow sombre very soon. Banamali is angered by Chand’s ridicule and accuses him of being a power-hungry fraud. In front of all the other sailors, Banamali alleges that it is rumoured that Chand worships the goddess Manasha secretly inside his own home, even as he denounces her in his speeches in public. The others in the group protest at this; in particular, Shibadas, the most loyal sailor of the lot, runs to Chand’s aid. Banamali leaves the group. Chand pretends to be alright, but is deeply shaken. By this time, Chand and his followers are already officially outlawed in Champaknagari. They are no longer just rebels in the tenor of their thoughts; they have been denied the right to sail by the city administration which is now dominated by one Beninandan, who hates Chand and his followers for the ridicule they have thrown at him in the past. Beninandan claims they have also ridiculed the son of the head administrator of Champaknagari, making up insulting rhymes about his person and jeering at him.

It is interesting to note the content of the alleged rhymes; it is these, along with Beninandan’s vindictiveness, that seal Chand’s fate as an outlaw ultimately. In both cases, it seems, the ridicule centred on the less than ideal male body of the victims: their lack of masculine strength and virility. Beninandan was too thin and the administrator’s son Bhaskar, on the other hand, was too fat. He was so fat, in fact, that according to the rhyme, he had turned quite impotent and his wife was now forced to sleep with her personal guard in order to have a son. Whether or not Chand’s sailors had made up this rhyme seems inconclusive; but it does not seem unlikely given their treatment of Banamali. Virility is a constant concern with Chand’s men, even as they struggle to put away ordinary domesticity

516 Sambhu Mitra, Chandbaniker Pala, 17. [Translation mine.]
and the company of their wives in order to embrace the heroic life of the sailor. Those who do not fit into this mould are seen as base men, deserving of severe ridicule due to their lack of masculinity.

At this juncture, Chand imagines his own future as a direct line leading from the initial moments of heroic utterance through the seas to distant lands and back again – a journey that requires only relentless hard work and unflinching courage to succeed. He clearly believes in a linear narrative of spiritual and material progress, as a straight road which he can follow, not just for himself but also for his fellow citizens. It is a quest that, he believes, given enough honesty and courage, will fill his ships with enough wealth and spiritual glory to last Champaknagar for generations to come. Even as they are pushed to the margins and denied even the sailing permit by the city administration, Chand insistently declares that it is he and his band of sailors who represent the true spirit of Champaknagar – the spirit of heroism, adventure and courage. He claims that the city will, one day, recognise them for what they are (brave heroes) and welcome them back with open arms. Till then, they must cut the chords that tie the ships to their anchors with their own hands and set sail as outlaws. Hereafter, Champaknagar is left behind while Chand’s men sail forth into the open seas:

Sailor: What kind of country is this that has forgotten us? Why should we give our lives, our youth, to it?
Chand: Brothers, our country is now taken over by the worshippers of Manasha. The true spirit of the country lives only inside our hearts. We must go back victorious.

To us, as readers, Chand’s optimism and the initial mood of euphoria in the play begins to seem reminiscent of the dominant mood of the first decade of India’s independence, when Sambhu Mitra himself began his work with Bahurupi. As in the above passage, so throughout the play, ‘desh’ (nation) and Champaknagar are interchangeable terms. In many of Chand’s utterances, Mitra, the playwright, seems to mimic/mock his own voice from the articles he wrote during the early days as the director of Bahurupi. For example, in an essay called ‘Andolaner Prayoje’ ['For the Needs of the Struggle'] written in 1957, he had written:

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517 The term used for Champaknagar here is ‘desh’.
518 Sambhu Mitra, Chandhaniker Pala, 32. [Translation mine.]
[...] if there is any theatre that has given the country glory in recent times, it is that which was created by the groups that have emerged from the Nabanatya Andolan. They are outside the common (‘sadbaron’) theatre of the day. So we must understand that this is why all the responsibility has come to us and this is why we must save this movement, make it grow and become fruitful.⁵¹⁹

At this time, through the 1950s and early 1960s, Mitra clearly saw his theatre work as intrinsically connected with the spiritual task of nation-building. When he ventriloquises Chand’s voice in writing Chandbaniker Pala in 1977, it seems almost a cruel mimicry of his own youthful voice:

If there is someone today who is unable to participate in the Nabanatya Andolan, because he has to take up a job or get into the Bombay commercial film industry, in order to make a living (if he had just got his means of subsistence from theatre this would not have been necessary), the responsibility for this will rest on the nation’s shoulders [...] ⁵²⁰

Later in the book, he goes on to say:

Nabanatya Andolan has the other grave duty of proving itself to be the essential struggle for national art form, and if we do not manage to establish it, a lot of futures, for a long time to come, will be surely destroyed. Therefore, we need such people here who find art an intrinsic and undeniable part of their selves, whose practice of art is deeply connected with the uprightness of their character; in short, people in whose lives art means something serious.⁵²¹

The cruelly tragic autobiographical edge of Mitra’s narrative of Chand Saudagar becomes increasingly clear as Mitra begins to construct his play as the tragedy of a hubris-ridden hero, almost entirely in Greek tragic style. The play abounds in numerous examples of tragic irony, where almost every heroic speech that Chand utters comes back to mock him at the end. Chand emerges, Oedipus-like, more and more clearly as the tragic hero fated for destruction. The mockery turns not simply on the character of Chand Saudagar, his older and younger selves, but also crucially on the pivot of a stinging self-mockery on the part of the playwright. It seems ironic that the only way towards this glorious city leads straight out of it

⁵¹⁹ Sambhu Mitra, Sanmarga Saparja (Kolkata: M. C. Sarkar and Sons Pvt. Ltd, 1990), 26. [Translation mine.]
⁵²⁰ Sambhu Mitra, in “Samashyar Ek Dik” (One Facet of the Problem), in Sanmarga Saparja, 24. [Translation mine.]
⁵²¹ Ibid, 35. [Translation mine.]
into the unknown oceans outside its limits. Chand never questions the validity and potential efficacy of his quest. He is sure of himself and his beliefs – almost too sure, as one could say of all great tragic heroes. His faith in the power of an upright spirit and the blessings of Shiva remains unshaken through most of the first half of the First Act.

Chandbaniker Pala deliberately creates a fragmented interface between the subjectivity of the protagonist and the city/nation he inhabits. Chand and Champaknagari are both constitutive of and contradictory to each other. But we begin to realise gradually that there is another Champaknagari that lurks just behind (or sometimes within) the first heroic city we encounter. This is the feminine city, the city of interiors and claustrophobic spaces, of hidden altars and closed, water-filled vessels. There are no flowing waters or expansive riverbeds or open lights in this city – the feminine city is full of shadows, blind instincts and deceit. And this is the city that Chand’s wife Sanaka seems to inhabit. These two contesting cities are two different places that fight for the same physical space – both within the narrative and in the imagined theatrical stage. Almost immediately after the scene on the riverside, where Chand instructs his men to cut the chords that hold the boats to anchor, he comes home to find his wife worshipping Manasha. Sanaka makes an attempt to hide the earthen vessel that represents the deity, but Chand discovers it and accuses her of infidelity. Sanaka pleads with him to give her permission to worship Manasha for the sake of the safety of her children. She promises she will take away Manasha’s vessel to some dark corner of their home where it will be far away from his eyes. Her language here is telling:

Sanaka: Saudagar, calm down. Understand the mother’s heart. If you do not wish to worship the goddess, fine. But give me permission to do this. I will take Manasha’s pot away immediately to some room in a dark and dusty corner of this house, to some dark secret chamber, where you will no longer be able to see it. There, in that darkness, unknown to the world, I will set up her altar. There, I will secretly worship her all by myself. I will do this alone for the entire household. Saudagar, give me this permission, I plead with you.

522 It is not clear whether she refers here to Ma Manasha or to her own heart as the mother of six young sons.
523 The word used here is ‘sansar’, which may mean alternatively - ‘family’/ ‘household’ or ‘the whole world’.
524 Sambhu Mitra, Chandbaniker Pala, 21. [Translation mine.]
Sanaka knows she has very little claim in Saudagar’s household, yet it is her duty to ensure its safety. She is willing to worship Manasha as an outcast in her own home. She lays claim to a place that is so hidden, so secret, as almost not exist at all. This is the space she wishes to occupy along with Manasha – a place outside the range of Chand’s all-seeing eye – and she begs for permission to go away, to effectively exile herself within her own household. It seems as if there is a further interior within the city’s interior, known only to Sanaka (and perhaps other women) – a place which neither the hero nor his audience can see. But Chand is unbending. He says:

Tell me, Sanaka, how long have you deceived me? You have dressed up for my sake, put kajal in your eyes, tambul on your lips, and the fragrance of chandan all over your body, and at the base of your stomach the three deep lines of womanhood. I have been enthralled by your beauty then. And all the time, inside you, you have worshipped her? […] Tell me, wife, what good is left in a household where the wife deceives her husband like a prostitute would deceive a client?525

Chand then invokes Sanaka’s duties as ‘sahadharmini’ ( sharer of her husband’s religion and asks: ‘Is it not your duty to act religiously by my side, along with me? Is it not your duty to be trustworthy to your husband?’526 In discussing the pre-independence Hindu nationalist notion of ‘sahadharmini’, Indira Chowdhury suggests that it was deemed necessary for the good Hindu wife to inculcate some of the qualities of the good prostitute, in order to keep her husband away from the ‘impure’ quarters, which would debilitate him of his strength and resources:

The recommended alteration that was sought from the bhadramabila placed her at a point where her claims intersected with the interests of the prostitutes. This, despite the fact that the cult of domesticity demanded that women be classified into ‘chaste’ and ‘unchaste’. The presence of the prostitute was generally perceived as contaminating the ‘pure’ social body of the Hindu community; if the bhadramabila was expected to imitate some of the prostitute’s skills she had to necessarily refine and domesticate them. Thus the beshyā’s artfulness had to be replaced by sincerity and an allegiance to the norms of domesticity.527

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525 Ibid, 23. [Translation mine.]
526 Ibid, 21. [Translation mine.]
527 Indira Chowdhury, Frail Hero and Virile History: Gender and the Politics of Culture in Colonial Bengal, 78.
Chowdhury goes on to say towards the conclusion of her chapter ‘Chastity as Heroism’:

The *sahadharmini* then, had to have the potential for traditional heroic chastity as also the ability to ‘desirable’ western values in order to be the counterpart of the citizen of the future nation. The fashioning of the *sahadharmini*, however, remained a male privilege; in moulding her he not only regained control over his besieged domestic space but also saw reflected in the product of his refashioning a commanding self-image.\(^{528}\)

In my view, Chand’s rebuke of Sanaka and her alleged faithlessness borrows its rhetoric from and hinges on the trope of the modern Hindu notion of *sahadharmini*, the ideal counterpart to the heroic citizen of the imagined nation. It is also interesting to note that the accusation is one of spiritual, not sexual, infidelity. The notion of *sahadharmini* then, traditionally lays claim not just to the woman’s physical chastity as a wife, but also her spiritual chastity as the husband’s companion. She must be faithful *in her heart* to her husband’s religion, whatever it was. Sanaka, therefore, has no right to have religious inclinations that are different from her husband’s. Hence when Chand smashes *Manasha*’s vessel to pieces, he exercises his inalienable right as a husband. Sanaka cries out in fear and simultaneously a lament is heard from off stage. We learn that all of Sanaka’s six sons have died of snakebites. From this moment on, Sanaka and Chand Saudagar are set up clearly as antagonists. Sanaka declares:

Sanaka: No, they are no one else’s. The children are just mine. You are nobody. You are my enemy. From this day on, I am without a husband. Let people say what they like. Let them call me a prostitute, a loose woman, whatever they please. I do not care. I am without a protector. I know only *Manasha*. Mother, protect me mother, protect my helpless sons.\(^{529}\)

Sanaka and Chand, as declared antagonists, now begin to openly represent two different cities, both fighting for control of the same physical location. The play captures the effect/affect of these two militating cities clearly - both in terms of visuals/stage directions and through recurrent linguistic/symbolic tropes in the spoken text of the play. The play is particularly rich in stage directions, which often work as a sort of shifting cartography of the ever-changing Champaknagari. As a text written for performance (although it was never

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528 Ibid, 80.
529 Sambhu Mitra, *Chandbaniker Pala*, 25. [Translation mine.]
performed by Bahurupi on stage), *Chandbaniker Pala* captures this elasticity of space particularly effectively. Place (‘space’ invested with meaning), too, is capable of changing every minute of the performance – the same physical ‘space’ becoming different ‘places’; the same ‘place’ lighted differently becoming a different affective ‘space’. In *Chandbaniker Pala*, Champaknagari is a city that cannot be mapped, it insistently resists (especially in the second half) Chand’s attempts to delimit, contain and explain it. The audience is confounded (along with its hero) by this lack of spatial certitude and Champaknagari becomes an increasingly elusive city.

The stage that is envisioned for *Chandbaniker Pala* appears to be a stage without any obvious physical markers, mapped only by changes of light and moving bodies. The stage directions indicate the presence of minimal sets – only a raised platform at the back and a short flight of steps upstage. This is perhaps to allow for maximum elasticity in the theatrical space. It helps to create a sense of fluidity both in terms of physical and affective content, in terms of the denotative and the connotative meanings of the written text. How theatre manages to achieve this is further elucidated by Keir Elam in his book *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama* in 1980:

> Analysis of performance systems and codes might well turn first, therefore, to the organization of architectural, scenic and interpersonal space – those factors which the American anthropologist Edward T. Hall has termed proxemic relations. [...] Much modern theatre has tended – from Strindberg’s ‘intimate theatre’ onwards – to transform architectural fixity into dynamic proxemic informality. [...] This movement towards the opening up and loosening of proxemic relations in performance, in order to escape from the tyranny of architectonic grandeur and its aesthetic and ideological implications, looks back to earlier and non-institutional forms of performance, where fixed-feature space was either non-existent [...] or secondary to semi-fixed and informal space…

*Chandbaniker Pala* brings about this ‘loosening of proxemic relations’: within the space of the First Act, the locale changes at least seven times - from the riverside in Champaknagari, to the interiors of Chand’s home, to the open seas and back into the streets of Champaknagari. Every time the audience returns to Champaknagari, with or without Chand, they find it has

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changed, shifted place a little and become a little more complex. In the Second Act, when Chand returns after many years to his city as a beggar, having failed utterly in his heroic voyage, the few servants left in his home think him to be a thief. On recognizing him finally, they are overjoyed and celebrate his long awaited return. Chand is overwhelmed and touched. He says:

Chand (raising his hands): Please … quiet, quiet all of you! (They stop) Are you really so happy that I have returned? Do you truly feel this happy inside?
[Some emotion builds up in his chest, he says -]
Call, call them then. Let me embrace again all the people in this house, all the neighbours in their homes. Ah, my Champaknagari has not forgotten me! (Laughs to himself) This is my home. I have returned to my home. (Anxiously) Call! Call all of them!
[He becomes silent. He notices that everyone has stopped smiling, they sit with their faces turned downwards.]
Nyara: (raising his face) There is no one else in the house, merchant.
Chand: No one else?
Nyara (shaking his head): It’s just the three of us now.
Chand (after a short silence): Why did they go?
Lahana: We have become poorer day by day, master.
Nyara: So perhaps we have not entertained guests as well as we used to.
Chand: Yet one day this house of merchants was at the heart of the city.
Sanaka (his wife): But today, merchant, we are no longer at the centre of the city.
Today our new city has grown away from us. In the opposite direction.531

Chand has returned home, but his home is not in the same place anymore. The house itself has not moved, but the city has moved away from it, growing rapidly in the opposite direction. The merchants’ house that was once the heart of the city is now at its margins. Chand Saudagar’s home – while still occupying the same physical space – is no longer in the same place. This being left outside, on the margins of the ever-growing city, without having moved a step in any direction is symbolic of Chand’s own spiritual and affective state in the new city. He had once believed he represented Champaknagari’s spirit, courage and heroism – and now, years later, he finds himself left behind because the city no longer needs him. In many ways, Chand is stationery as a character in the play (in his stance of unbending idealism) and it is Champaknagari as a locale that seems to be eternally mobile – shifting place continually and throwing up new layers of its own identity that Chand finds unfamiliar, frightening and increasingly difficult to accept. As Chand grows older and more cynical of

531 Sambhu Mitra, Chandbaniker Pala, 46-47. [Translation mine.]
his erstwhile idealistic aspirations, he looks back on his youth and sees a different person. “I am no longer that Chand, that Chand is dead”, he says continually. Just as there are two Chand (one an degenerate version of the other), there are two Champaknagari-s, which seem, however, to have existed in parallel from the beginning of the play. It is as if the same physical space housed two different cities – one, bright and familiar and the other unfamiliar and chaotic. It seems to Chand (and the audience) that the ‘real’ city – the one that is degenerate, chaotic and dark, without reason or light – has always hidden underneath the light, laughter, and optimism of the youthful Champaknagari. In his youth, Chand imagines Champaknagari as the bright, glorious city of his forefathers and sees his own future as tied up with this heroic brightness. The stage is always lit up expansively with lights; it is an open space full of songs and dances. As he grows older, Chand grows more and more mistrustful of his city, and the performance space grows darker and more sinister in tandem. Elam writes:

Any representation, if it is successfully to evoke a fictional dramatic scene, will also create what Suzanne Langer defines as virtual space – that is, an illusionistic ‘intangible image’ resulting from the formal relationships established within a given defined area […]. Conventionally, the stage depicts or otherwise suggests a domain which does not coincide with its actual physical limits, a mental construct on the part of the spectator from the visual clues he receives.532

The dramaturgy of Chandbaniker Pala takes us through this process of gradual but continual spatial shifts in two or three different ways. The first is the increasing use of darkness and chiaroscuro in the second half of the play. Towards the end, in the Third Act, Chand has lost his only living son Lakkhindar, his daughter-in-law Behula has sailed out on a raft in order to bring back her husband and Sanaka has given in, finally, to madness. We will remember that the play had begun with a loud burst of noise and the stage was flooded with light at the very outside signifying the open riverside at daytime. In sharp contrast to this, the locale has now shifted to the blind and twisting alleyways near Chand’s house. Here he seems to stumble about, trying to find his way on stage as a half-mad vagrant in the dead of the night. Mitra suggests that this is Chand trying to make sense of the city he once knew so well. He is now chased around by what the text calls ‘creatures of darkness’ who beckon him towards madness. This is what the stage directions say at this juncture:

532 Ibid, 67.
Light and dark mingle to form a sort of net on the stage. A bluish light indicating the lateness of the hour floods everything. And in the midst of this, there is a figure like a ghost floating about. This figure has a staff in his hand. When little patches of light fall on his body, we can see bits of a tousled, unkempt beard. His clothes seem shabby, old; perhaps the man is old. He wanders around and mutters to himself. You suspect he is repeating to himself: “krato smara, kritam smara”

Did he leave the stage in his wanderings? The stage is so dark that you cannot tell. The net made of light and dark downstage begins to fade away and then disappears. And slowly through the darkness, a thin film of light foods the cyclorama. Like a shadow, the old man ascends a raised heap. He places his hands over eyes and tries to see something – far away. It seems he fails to mark what he was looking for. And then, like a wild beast, he begins to scream.

Shouts begin off stage. They are coming towards him. The old man gets off the heap and begins to run. From the other side, the crowd enters. They are carrying sticks and other weapons in their hand. One of them spots the old man running away and they begin to chase him. The lights go off.

What is it that the old Chand was looking for, perched on that heap on stage? We do not know. But we find out soon enough that he now habitually haunts the streets of Champaknagari at night, wandering like a tramp from street to street and occasionally screaming out like a wild animal. He gets himself lost, is thereafter chased and hunted by the people of the city. One of the shadows that gather around Chand when he is alone on stage says to him:

Why do you delude yourself Saudagar? That is not where the pain is, not in your body, not in that wound. The people of Champaknagari now throw sticks at you. You are tiny. You have to run away to save yourself. And the shadow of your own youthful self in this city chases you down the streets of Champaknagari.

Mitra seems to suggest that Chand, in his nightly wanderings, chases the city of his past, just as the shadow of his old self seems to hunt him down. The old man appears to be trying to


534 Sambhu Mitra, Chandbaniker Pala, 128. [Translation mine.]
535 Ibid, 132. [Translation mine.]
place the familiar grids of his memory on this new city but nothing matches what he remembers anymore. *The map has changed; yet he has not moved an inch.* This is the germ of Chand’s Saudagar’s incipient madness in the play. Chand the voyager, ever dependent on objective cartography, tries to place his old maps on the city in the dead of the night and cannot find a single familiar marker to navigate by. Chand the expert sailor can no longer chart his course; his maps have finally all failed him, Mitra seems to suggest. Chand asks himself repeatedly at this time: ‘Where does man intend to go? And where does he finally reach?’ This is a variation on the Sanskrit “krato smara, kritam smara” we have encountered earlier: “think of what you intended to do, think of what you have ended up doing”. The city is now as good as an open ocean to him - unknown, scary, infinitely dangerous. It is at the failure of his cartography and his faith in man’s ability to reason his way through unfamiliar landscape that Chand cries out like a wild beast. The temptation now is to let go of objectivity once and for all, to declare the ultimate failure of objective rationality; in short, *go mad*. But this, Chand Saudagar insistently refuses to do till the very end. In the introduction to *Writing Women and Space: Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies*, Alison Blunt and Gillian Rose discuss the ‘various ways in which feminists have seen space as central to both masculine power and feminist resistance.’ In doing this, they raise an interesting point about transparent and opaque spaces:

Transparent space assumes that the world can be seen as it really is and there can be unmediated access to the truth of objects it sees; it is a space of mimetic representation. Trinh Min-ha argues that “vision as knowledge is the ideology … which postulates the existence of a central unshakable certitude.” That certitude is what Donna Haraway terms the self-confidence of the “master-subject” […] Yet such confidence entails costs. The claim of the master-subject to be “an autonomous subject who observes social conflicts from a privileged and unconflicted space … can be converted from fantasy into reality only by denying the relational character of subjectivity and by relegateing other viewpoints – different subjectivities – to invisible, subordinate, or competing positions.” Lefebvre too suggests that transparent space tends towards homogeneity, toward a denial of difference.

I would like to suggest that it is the failure of the ‘transparent space’ of Chand’s imagination and the final collapse of his role as a ‘master-subject’ that we witness in *Chandbaniker Pala*.

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537 Ibid, 5-6.
The text brings into effect the progressive defamiliarisation of a familiar urban landscape – its sights, sounds and smells. Perhaps more rightly, it seems to Chand that the city that has always been there (without his knowledge) now emerges – chaotic and unbridled – from underneath the familiar objects and streets. The play builds up a growing sense of claustrophobia in its dialogue. The language moves closely in tune with the visual the spectacle of suffocating gloom. We first sense this claustrophobia when Chand’s six sons die in the First Act. The city administration refuses to cremate them because they have died as a punishment of their father’s sins (his refusal to worship *Manasha*). If Chand still refuses to pay obeisance to the goddess, the issued order states, the bodies of his sons are to be floated out on rafts on the Gangur River outside the borders of the city. Chand exclaims: ‘This country has really shrunk in size, hasn’t it? It has become difficult to breathe here.’

This is the first failure of Chand’s belief in objective physical space in the play and there is a growing sense of this in the next two Acts. On the night of Lakkhindar’s marriage, the stage splits up into three separate places – the first is Lakkhindar and Behula’s iron wedding chamber on a hill. It has been built by Chand especially to keep out *Manasha’s* snakes, since it has been foretold that Lakkhindar will die of snakebite on his wedding night. The second space is the city street outside Chand’s house, where the old couple sits, lamenting their wasted lives and drinking liquor from the same earthen pot. The third space is where the young men of the city have gathered after the wedding to look for women and alcohol to satiate themselves. Chand says: “The older you get the more you begin to see how many mistakes you have made, how many sins you have committed, simply by being alive. It is easy to ignore these thoughts in your youth, but now…? All these thoughts emerge in old age, as if from within dark holes in the consciousness. They twist and turn till they reach the top of your head and then strike.”

Ironically, Behula exclaims soon after this, in her wedding chamber: “The air in this city is so taut, just like the stretched string of a bow poised to strike. It seems everyone who lives here is tormented.” Immediately afterwards, Lakkhindar is killed by a snake that emerges from the very vessel (dedicated to *Manasha*) that Sanaka had placed in the wedding chamber for his protection. On realizing that she has brought about her son’s death by the very act of trying to protect his life, Sanaka finally goes

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539 Ibid, .118. [Translation mine.]
540 Ibid, 120. [Translation mine.]
mad. This element in the play’s narrative, which places the responsibility for Lakkhindar’s death on Sanaka, is a digression from the folklore version of the story where the snake ‘kalnagini’ (death-snake) enters the iron chamber through a pin-like hole in the wall. Once again, the generic shift involved in the rewriting of the mangalkavya in the Western tragic model through the deliberate application of dramatic irony is worth noting.

It seems to the reader as if the narrative is bent on confounding every linear plan, every straight and clear line towards aspiration that the protagonists wish to draw. In this sense, the form and the content of the play’s narrative seem to mirror each other closely. With the failure of the realist narrative of progress (that Chand had envisioned at the beginning) a new cyclical pattern begins to emerge. This is the pattern of myth and legend, where the end is as it has always been foretold. There is no escape from the oracular nature of this narrative – every attempted escape from its vicious cyclicality leads back to itself and the same ultimate result. To pay the price for Lakkhindar’s life, Chand is forced to worship Manasha at the end, but unlike in the legend, Lakkhindar is not saved. He decides to take his life along with Behula’s. Chand remains alone on stage at the end in an unreal and imaginary city, neither dead nor alive. Shadowy figures begin to emerge around him from within the darkness and he begins to call out to them. These, we realise, are the ghosts of his erstwhile mates – dead sailors who rise from the sea, masses of seaweed tangled at their feet. The city of Champaknagari disappears, leaving behind only this ghostly ocean of Chand’s imagination. The hero vows to make a voyage, echoing once again the first lines of the play. We are returned to the beginning of the action, but to a different city. The move is from the ‘real’ physical space of Champaknagari into the psychic space of Chand Saudagar’s unhinged mind. There is not an iota of actual or objective ‘placeness’ left on the stage anymore; the ‘real’ Champaknagari has shifted so far away from us that it has entirely disappeared for the audience. But one wonders whether it is really Champaknagari that has moved away from us or is it we who have (as readers of this play) stepped over the limits of objective space and reality to enter a different, ‘unreal’ city? Deborah L. Parsons writes in Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, the City, and Modernity of:

[…] the two extremes of the ‘concept’ city, the radiant utopia and the degenerate wasteland. […] corresponding to these structures, are the different types of flâneur; the authoritative architect with his panoramic blueprint and the marginal rag-picker
with his city rubbish. The aim of the former is to ignore, silence, and erase the latter. The tension between the valorization of the ordered planned and mapped, and the marginal, forgotten and past, runs throughout urban representations in this study …

In the course of Chandbaniker Pala, Chand Saudagar moves from one extreme of the ‘concept’ city to another, travelling from the person of the ‘authoritative architect’/confident cartographer into the deranged psyche of a rambling tramp, eternally lost in a degenerate (internal) dystopia. Behula returns at the end of the Third Act to relate to him what Manasha’s minion has told her: ‘Look at the world around you, Behula, she said. Do you see a single straight line? Look at the trees, the rivers and the mountains. All the lines are curved, twisted like snakes. Your body has the same curves. Use them. Use them in front of the gods, enthral them, and you will get what you want.’ Chand listens in silence and finally hisses out: “I will worship her. I will.” The tragedy of Chandbaniker Pala ends when Chand Saudagar, voyager, adventurer, cartographer, finally concedes that there is not a single straight line to be mapped in the world.

Conclusion

But how does this analysis relate to the broader themes we had begun this chapter with? If we were able to accept the allegorical function of Champaknagari as a city space that stands for the idea of the ‘nation’, we could then conclude the following: Chand Saudagar, as the protagonist, begins his journey as a voyager-citizen invested in the ‘idea’ of an imagined community governed by reason, knowledge and order. His tragedy rests on the fact of the failure of this imagined community. This is also, for him, the failure of his god Shiva who represents Reason (with a capital ‘R’) and all the values that govern the ‘good nation’,

542 Sambhu Mitra, Chandbaniker Pala, 141. [Translation mine.]
543 Ibid, 142. [Translation mine.]
544 Shaoli Mitra has felt that the story of repeated voyaging was actually the story of Sambhu Mitra’s own repeated and failed efforts to build a ‘national’ theatre auditorium in Calcutta. (Shaoli Mitra, Sambhu Mitra: Bichitra Jibon Parikrama, 365-366.)
deriving largely from, if we were to agree with Partha Chatterjee, the discourse of European Enlightenment (which could also partly explain the literally and generic shift we have discussed earlier in the chapter). The disorder that breaks up this elite discourse of Reason is the disorder of monstrous/irrational subaltern gods and women’s unreason. ‘Capital’ for Chand is both literal and metaphoric; the wealth won from his voyages is also spiritual glory, which is precisely the object that is lost in the worship of Manasha, a goddess who can bring only ignorance, regression and cyclical disorder. For the author Sambhu Mitra, in the possible autobiographical subtext, we could conjecture that the ‘wealth’ Chand seeks signifies the wealth of knowledge, and that the capital sought is the cultural capital of a truly worthy ‘national’ culture. In his concluding chapter to the book Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse, Partha Chatterjee writes:

[…] nationalist thought has not emerged as the antagonist of universal Reason in the arena of world history. […] ever since the Age of Enlightenment, Reason in its universalizing mission has been parasitic upon a much less lofty, much more mundane, palpably material and singularly invidious force, namely the universalist urge of capital. To the extent that nationalism opposed colonial rule, it administered a check on a specific political form of metropolitan capitalist dominance. […] But this was achieved in the very name of Reason. Nowhere in the world has nationalism-qua-nationalism challenged the marriage of Reason and capital.546

The imperatives of ‘progress’ and ‘development’ that hold pivotal positions in the dominant imagination of national histories, of course, hinge on this critical marriage between Reason and capital. The holding in permanent suspension of the crisis of the ‘people-nation’ (which Partha Chatterjee speaks about, following Gramsci) also allows for certain illusions to persist: for example, the idea that ‘development for all’ can be achieved by democratic means as long as the constitution of the right sort of ‘vanguard’ (cultural/economic/social/political) is made possible. In a strangely paradoxical way, the Emergency, then, is both the collapse of this ‘democratic’ illusion of ‘progress for all’, as well as a forceful reiteration of the power of Reason and order, which lies at the beginning of the narrative of nation. The governmental impulse of the state, without which no notion of ‘planning’ can operate, and which makes charting the course of development possible, comes nakedly to the fore during a political situation such as the Emergency. The rule of law runs things like clockwork, but also twists itself into strange shapes to

546 Chatterjee, Nationalist Thought, 168.
emasculate, imprison and raze to the ground. Just like the ‘revolution’, then, the Emergency is an *exceptional* time. It is both order and disorder, joined at base. Trains run on time; but thousands of guiltless people fester in jails for years. If Utpal Dutt’s texts represent the subjugated history of the ‘lie of freedom’ (‘yeh azaadi jhootha hai’) and highlight the dishonesty of the state masquerading as ‘people-nation’, Sambhu Mitra’s text maps the collapse of the dominant narrative of ‘state-representing-nation’, i.e. Progress. Chand’s failure is the failure of the ‘cunning of reason’, the ultimate crumbling into insanity of the dominant discourse. I have attempted, in this chapter, to map the course of both the dominant and the marginal narratives of ‘nation’, with a specific focus on the problematic of women and power, but also, crucially, on men and power.