PROLEGOMENON

TO AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE JATRA OF INDIA:

The travelling popular theatre of the State of West Bengal

By

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ABSTRACT

This thesis presents the first extended ethnographic account of a popular professional theatrical form and life-style—the *jatra* of West Bengal, India. The research material presented and analysed was collected from 1970-1972 in West Bengal and the immediately surrounding states of Assam, Orissa and Bihar. The cognitive universe of the jatra *jagat* (world), the cultural practice of the jatra business, and the interactional constraints operating among the various categories of people within the jatra profession, are described and interpreted. In addition, this thesis presents the first systematically and anthropologically annotated translation of a popularly performed jatra play, *Panch Paiser Prithibi (The World for Five Paisa)*.

The central point of the thesis revolves around an interpretation of the concerns of the professional jatra business—an aesthetic business, the business of cultural performance. The argument is that this performance form, from its asserted putative origin, has been a critical and self-reflective commentary on Bengali social and cultural life. The jatra is inextricably bound within the existential and cultural dilemmas of Bengali life, dilemmas and contradictions that traditionally were resolved at both metaphysical and practical levels. Now that the jatra is embedded within a capitalist business world, critical commentaries and revolutionary desires remain unresolved within the profession itself. In spite of this, the jatra remains critical of both itself and Bengali social and cultural life, embedded as it is in the current context of feared and despised Western cultural imperialism and internal domination.

The anthropological interpretation and analysis presented in the thesis is informed from a number of sources; the views expressed by people

within the jatra world, the work in anthropology that currently goes under the heading of 'symbolic anthropology', critical theory and literary criticism, and semiotics. With these points of view in mind, the thesis presents an analysis of the jatra advertising system, the jatra performance system, and a larger peripatetic performance system, as well as a statement about the interpretation of meaning in Bengali life.

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A NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION AND TRANSLATION OF BENGALI TERMS AND CONCEPTS

I am not alone in facing the problem of how to transliterate Bengali words into English. It has been a perennial problem for Bengali scholars. I, like so many other scholars, have devised a scheme that is a combination of using traditional Sanskrit transliteration rules and using sounds that come close to current spoken Bengali. Dimock has stated the dilemma as follows:

> One final technical point ought to be made, and that has to do with the perpetual problem of transcription or transliteration. Scholars of Bengali have very firm ideas on what transliteration system ought to be used for the language. On the one hand there are those who insist that Bengali should be transliterated according to the accepted system for Sanskrit. The trouble is that such monstrosities as Rāvindranātha, the first name of the poet Tagore, often result; where the poet signed himself in the English Rabindranath; should we not grant him his preference?
>
> On the other hand there are those who feel that the transliteration should approximate as closely as possible the pronunciation of the language; thus the name of the city might turn out to be Noboddip, totally incomprehensible to those Sanskritists and others who had seen the name Navadvip or Navadvipa on maps in other texts. And in between there is a whole range of opinion, including that which feels that the Bengali pronunciation system ought to be used in the text of English writings, and the Sanskritic system in quotations from Bengali texts and in footnotes. (Dimock 1967:4)

In this enterprise I clearly fall in the middle. I have tried to make my transliterations such that Sanskrit and Bengali scholars could at least make sense of the terms I am using.

Translation of terms and concepts is even a trickier problem, and also one where there is little agreement. I have conscientiously tried, sometimes more successfully than others, to choose a translation that fits most closely the context in Bengali, and at the same time is understandable to most people who share anthropological culture, or who are students of

Western theatre and literature. Occasionally I use a several word gloss for a single Bengali term, and a single word gloss for an entire Bengali concept—hopefully with enough clarity for most readers (see glossary).

A translation is always more than a 'mere translation'; it is an interpretation as well. It could not be otherwise, since no two known languages are the same, word-for-word. It has been my intention, however, to translate in a culturally meaningful way, in a double sense: it should be clear to both Bengali and Western readers. It is translation in another double sense as well; by interpreting the material I have intended to explicate, or make plain by demystifying foreign understandings and then reconstructing them in an anthropologically meaningful manner. I have tried to consciously follow through the hermeneutic process of 'coming to know' and 'communicating' that knowledge.

The success is to be judged by the readers and reinterpreters.

A NOTE ON THE ETHNOGRAPHIC PRESENT

The material presented in this thesis was gathered from August 1970 to July 1972 throughout the Eastern portion of India. The research was conducted mainly in West Bengal, with the focal point being the metropolitan area of Calcutta. The nature of the theatrical enterprise reported here, however, required that travel and research be done in Bihar, Assam, Orissa, Manipur, Tripura states in India, and in the Republic of Bangladesh after it was formed.

The *jatra* or the travelling operatic theatre discussed throughout this document is the 'professional jatra' as I learned about it during that two year period. The early 1970's in Bengal, as it had been since the mid-1960's, was still a time of tremendous social and cultural turmoil and change. During this time several United Front leftist governments were formed and dissolved within the State of West Bengal, political parties were vying for positions of supremacy, and the Indo-Pak War was waged culminating in the liberation of Bangladesh in 1972. It was a time of public demonstrations and processions staged against capitalist business enterprises, the rise of militant unions, social and cultural disruptions, calls for changes in the political economy, as well as floods and hurricanes ending in disastrous tidal waves. In short, it was a very passionate, intense, and vibrantly creative time for reassessing social and cultural life in Bengal.

It was a unique time: but then, Bengal has always had unique times. It has been the spawning grounds for many religious movements and changes, economic and industrial growth, and political rebellions and reformations. Being at the edge of the Mughul empire and domination, and in the centre of the area of British domination, Bengal and Bengali activities have always been of concern to outside rulers and models for inside movements. Bengalis

consistently have been leaders within the Indian context, albeit received somewhat ambivalently by other Indians. Bengal in the early 1970's was true to its past—it certainly retained a continuity or tradition with its past character—it was a complex nexus of aesthetic, political and industrial activities on the one hand, and peasant rice based activities on the other. This entire complex was shadowed by a critical and reflective umbrella. Such was the setting for the professional jatra.

The past in Bengal, is anything but a 'dead' one. The jatra is constantly referring to and interpreting Bengal's past. Even when the jatra did not have the character of the 'modern revolutionary and class-struggle jatra' that it has in the present, it was a way of re-enacting and re-presenting events and images of a continuous tradition.

While I have not chosen to present an historical account of the development of the jatra as a performance tradition in this thesis, the past is woven in and out of the ethnographic present in much the same way that the creators of the jatra performances themselves present it. The 'phenomenal meaning' of the jatra, as I develop it in the first section is centred in the jatra people's perception of their own origin. The themes presented in the jatra plays, as I discuss in sections four and six, are constant interpretations and presentations of the past.

The ethnographic present is woven from the past.

HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

The weaving that is this thesis is meant to expose the reader to a very intentionally created, rich and popular form of theatre, the *jatra* of West Bengal. In so far as it is possible to do so, I have tried to write the document in the spirit of the phenomenon being explored through it; this should be kept in mind while reading it. The jatra of West Bengal is at the same time an open-air theatrical performance and a journey, pilgrimage or procession. The jatra is performed by itinerant actors/ actresses, musicians and dancers: the jatra is the dramatic re-presentation of a journey, in a 'fixed' acting arena for a 'fixed' period of time for a 'fixed' audience. The jatra provides boundaries for open-ended experiences; it bears and explores the tensions between 'being in this world', travelling through this world, and the constraints on living in this world by momentarily stopping the literal journey of people (performers and spectators alike) and taking them, instead, on a 'figurative journey'. This 'figurative' journey allows those participating in it to reflect on life's journey while at the same time participating in an important part of Bengali cultural life—the jatra performance itself.

Coming to know and understand this journey is in itself a journey for both myself and the readers of this document. I have tried to take us on a journey of discovery; a discovery of and anthropological interpretation of the meaning of this form of theatrical performance and life-style. Just as the flow of Bengali life is temporarily stopped by a jatra performance, the interpretive description in this document is occasionally stopped by a performance of anthropological analysis. These interruptions should be seen as 'way stations' or 'side-excursions of contemplative reverie'. Just as the Bengali jatra performance explores the 'existential and cultural dilemmas of Bengali life', this account of the world of the professional

jatra explores the contradictions of an aesthetic business—a pre-capitalist traditional performance form embedded in a capitalist business world, expressing a critical (and even at times revolutionary) perspective.

This important dramatic cultural performance, while absolutely essential to an expression of Bengali life and prominently presented in both urban and rural Bengal, has not been given an extended systematic anthropological exposition in English. There are a number of Bengali academic sources dealing with the history of the jatra or a particular jatrawala, a number of short journalistic articles in Bengali dealing with one or more aspects of the jatra, a Bengali journal devoted to the open-air stage, and, of course, hundreds of published jatra plays. There are a few articles written by Bengalis in English, several books on Indian theatre with brief accounts of the jatra, and one translation of a jatra play. Most of these materials are either brief and/or unknown outside of Bengal or India (see bibliography). To my current knowledge, there are no accounts of 'how the professional jatra business runs, or how to write jatra plays' available in either Bengal or the English-speaking world. Consequently, the journey we are about to embark on is a new journey for those of us outside the *jatra jagat* (the world of the professional popular theatre).

Our reverie explores some basic themes in Bengali life; illusion and reality, being truly Bengali and the problems of Western influence, cultural freedom and domination, and conservative and revolutionary forces. The journey begins with a glimpse of illusion and reality and the nature of Bengali truths and meanings; goes on to explicate the realities of the professional jatra business; stops to explore the nature of the business and its structure; looks at the business and the Bengali people; stops to

explore the system of jatra advertising and reaching the people; moves on to an examination of the jatra performance; stops to explore the relationships of the jatra and other peripatetic performance forms and other entertainment forms; moves through an introduction to jatra playwrighting and playwrights; and stops with a translation and annotation of a jatra play that high-lights the themes that have been contemplated. Just as any re-collected and re-constructed journey is selective and at times somewhat unconnected, so too is this document. I have chosen to focus on the nexus of structures and activities associated with the business of cultural performances, and only to suggest other important aspects of the jatra performance and performers.

While I have tried to explore this phenomenon from a number of different anthropological perspectives, for the most part this document has been constructed with the help of a few critical and semiotic arguments and concerns and a number of Bengali jatra documents. The bibliography provided is thus divided into three sections; things actually cited in the text, additional Bengali items, and things read, mulled-over, and incorporated in a now unrecoverable synthesis somewhere inside me.

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The people of the jatra jagat in West Bengal deserve the most prominent mention, however, since it was they who spent endless hours teaching me what I should know or want to know about them. I tried to be a willing student, but I know that it was as frustrating for them as it was for me at times. I would like to thank particularly Shri Shoilen Mahanto and Shri Santi Gopal Pal for teaching me about the business of the jatra; Shri Surendranath Mukherjee, a veteran actor, fatherly friend, and acting teacher; Shri Mohendra Dutta and Shri Prosanto Bhattacharya for teaching me about the jatra music; Shri Brojendranath De and Shri Bhairob Ganguly for teaching me about jatra play writing; and Shrimati Jyotsna Dutta for being a helpful and understanding friend. Other people from the jatra jagat—artists, owners, managers, etc.—took time to write their autobiographies for me and tell me the details of their lives— I thank them all for their time and tolerance.

Dr. L.P.Vidyarthi served as my advisor in India while this research was being conducted and among other helpful services, he provided me with a competent, helpful and encouraging research assistant Dilip Chakraborty. Tridip Ghosh did most of the initial translations of documents and plays—he also taught me a great deal about the Bengali language and Vaisnava imagery. Rabindranath Das did some photography for me and helped me to collect enough historical photographs to make the jatra record fairly complete. If I have left any people or agencies out, it is not by conscious intention. So many people have been responsible for what I have learned.

A very special thanks goes to my family—my mother and sisters, who provided me with supportive refuges and TLC when necessary, and my nieces, who are enjoyable human beings with whom to re-experience the

the world. I would also like to thank Carole Farber, without whose long internal dialogues, perserverance, and willingness to improve her typing skills on such a long document, this piece of work and thought would never have been finished.

PROLOGUE

"What's past is prologue."

"We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep."

...yesterday seems like a dream to me now...

(Simon and Garfunkel: in the late 60's, I think)

Doing fieldwork and writing ethnography, two of the primary anthropological pastimes and frustrations, necessarily place the neophyte anthropologist in an awkward, disconcerting, insecure and advantageous position. The disadvantages and the advantages of the experience and enterprise are clearly at a stand-off. In one ear the neophyte hears the resonating voice of Western traditions and anthropological canons, in the other ear there is the voice of the 'other tradition' and other rules—somewhere they meet, battle it out, and emerge as thinkings and feelings about the traditions, and their important similarities and differences—their internal integrity as expressed in a constructed document. The nature of such constructed documents, whether they are called histories, ethnographies, stories or comparative analyses, etc., is that they are re-constructions, re-collections, and re-presentations of experiences—direct or indirect—inevitably different from the experiences themselves.

This posture is becoming increasingly prevalent in the stances of sensitive anthropologists:

> No matter how closely the ethnographer's theory follows upon native representations (and for certain purposes one can argue the closer the better), it is not isomorphic with them; it is not native reality. ...the ethnographer must step back, turn analyst, and, using concepts and principles alien to the culture he is studying, perform an act of interpretation. In so doing, he translates a collection of native representations from one system of meaning (theirs) into another (his own) and thereby transforming them into a new and wholly distinct representation, this representation—the ethnographer's theory—is inevitably a second-order representation, it is a representation of representations.
>
> (Basso and Selby 1976:4)

While there are styles of producing ethnographies and anthropological documents, if they are written with the intention of being a translation of one culture to another or as an interpretation of the meaning of one culture to another, the representations constructed will be, without doubt, unique. They are, none-the-more, as 'real' and as 'dream-like'. Even though experience, and the interpretation and reinterpretation of it, is open-ended, documents created to interpret this phenomenon are expected to be packaged, tied up neatly with pretty strings, securely fastened. Therein lies the 'fiction'. Therein lies 'creative advantage'. Therein lies the 'truth'. Frank Kermode attributes the power of such fictions to their conscious and intentional 'falsity':

> They (fictions) find out about our changing world on our behalf; they arrange our complementarities. They do this for some of us perhaps better than history, perhaps better than theology, largely because they are consciously false.
> (Kermode 1967:64)

Cultural truths and cultural falsities are part of the same phenomenon; they are each other, but differently so depending on the culture being examined.

As the delightfully profound ethnographer Alice discovered in her sojourn Through the Looking-Glass[1], the looking-glass culture is indeed a 'curious and curiouser' manifestation of reality, at first sight and second glance. Initially, when contemplating, reading about, and imagining the looking-glass culture in front of the warmth of a fire, from the coffee-stained, smoke-fumiated easy-chair of the study, or the oak desk chair of the university office, things seem quite comprehensible, quite expectable and predictable, quite within the range of human universals, and quite possibly approachable. Once inside the looking-glass culture things become quite opaque, quite unpredictable, extraordinarily unique and truly alive,

teeming within the sensual apperceptions and perceptions of an alien, strange people. Somewhere between these two distant, nearly oppositional vantage points which vanish inside the anthropologist's perspective, there are glimpses of human existential dilemmas and specific cultural creations. The con-structuring of these glimpses is expected to be/is made comprehensive and comprehensible. Within the looking-glass culture the natural world speaks culturally, the animal world teases, people ditto each other in a most unbelievable way that gradually becomes performable and meaningful (at least until the words come 'round for their payment on a Saturday night); then the other culture intrudes with its own inventions, and to become queen the anthropologist/ethnographer must move through both fictions.

> "What *am* I to do?" exclaimed Alice, looking about in a great perplexity, as first one round head, and then the other, rolled down from her shoulder, and they lay like a heavy lump in her lap. "I don't think it *ever* happened before, that anyone had to take care of two Queens asleep at once! No, not in all the History of England— it couldn't, you know, because there never was more than one Queen at a time. Do wake up, you heavy things!" she went on in an impatient tone; but there was no answer but a gentle snoring.

The ethnographer does have to deal with at least two heavy cultures, asleep at the moment of documentary writing, as well as non-communicative at the moments of experience.

When the two Queens (the one culture Red Queen and the other culture White Queen) woke up, and after a 'feast' but before the dessert they demanded:

> "Make a remark," said the Red Queen: "it's ridiculous to leave all the conversation to the pudding!"
>
> "Do you know, I've had such a quantity of poetry repeated to me to-day," Alice began, a little frightened at finding that, the moment she opened her lips, there was dead silence,

> and all eyes were fixed upon her; "and it's a very curious thing, I think—every poem was about fishes in some way. Do you know why they're so fond of fishes, all about here?"

Rather than simply answering her 'straight-forward' question, the Red Queen tells Alice that the White Queen knows a riddle—all in poetry—all about fishes. They agree that there may be something to Alice's remark about the importance of fishes—but is it fishes, or the discovery of their importance and meaning that is the more interesting? The poem repeated by the White Queen ends like this:

> "For it holds it like glue—
> Holds the lid to the dish, while it lies in the middle:
>
> Which is easiest to do—
> Un-dish-cover the fish, or dishcover the riddle?"

The anthropological enterprise is inextricably bound up and inside the undiscovery and discovery of cultural resemblances and meaning—often seemingly unrelated—conundrums. Cultural conundrums are often the expression of cultural truths. That these truths are poetic expressions with elliptical and tangled messages, makes the anthropologist's task even more like the poet's or at least like the literary critic's. As Gaston Bachelard reminds:

> "It is polyphonic because it is polysemantic. If meanings become too profuse, it can fall into *word play*. If it restricts itself to a single meaning it can fall into didacticism. The true poet avoids both dangers. He plays and he teaches. In him, the word reflects and reflows; in him time begins to wait. The true poem awakened an unconquerable desire to be reread.
>
> (Bachelard 1971:28)

A good anthropological work should be rich enough to suggest many and different meanings with each new reader as it is encountered.

The 'other culture' that the anthropologist encounters is a fish

net. It has a flexible order of nodes and knots; a structure that is innervated by cultural conundrums, that moves with the water and the fish. The making of that cultural fish net is its meaning; its particular social relations of production and reproduction are significant parts of the meaning of cultural practice—and the cultural practice of making meaning. The fish net, then, is elaborated beyond pure function into a unique fish net; with unique conundrums. Bengal, the 'other culture' I encountered is not only this metaphoric fish net, it is a culture in which the flowing and overflowing rivers are important constraints.

One such cultural conundrum was presented to me on a very hot August afternoon, temperature about 40°C and heat lines rising from the broken pavement of Rabindra Sarani, North Calcutta, West Bengal, when I went to the office of one of the professional *jatra* parties, the Satyamber Opera, to discuss *jatra* music with one of the composers for the *jatra*. We ended up discussing Beethoven's biography, the possibility of composing music minus one or more senses, and Western classical music in general. He wanted to continue discussing Western music; I wanted to discuss *jatra* music. Normally, I want to discuss Western classical music. Anyway, the discussion very rapidly shifted to matters of the philosophy of sound and the meaning of music—there and here. Nothing we discussed made any *sense* at all; the sounds had colours, the notes were people relating to one another, the *ragas* and *raginis* were divine, and 'life was as a song'. He repeated the oft-quoted Bengali aphorism

"Without Krishna there is no Song".

My head was in a swirl, and sensing this he did what the jatra people frequently did to me—he tossed me a pithy Bengali conundrum—he shook, again, the foundations of my sense of understanding Bengal. The saying he gave me, with an all too delighted smirk, plagued me for a long time. It

still plagues me, even though, from time to time I get deep glimpses of its meanings. The saying to keep in mind is:

> If you tell the truth for seven days
> on the eighth day you die.

I asked him what *that* meant—he shook his head, smiled mysteriously, and remained quiet. I dreamt and dream about what this means; I thought and think about what this means; and I have attempted and will attempt to unriddle what this, and other such confusing aspects of Bengali culture mean within the course of the document being constructed here. Among the many things that it means, it definitely is about the relationship of truth and falsity, life and death, and process and structure. Death is in structure, even numbers, and is apparent (spaces are structured for ritual and living—they are usually four-squared) and inevitable. Life is in process, odd numbers and inevitably illusory. It, of course, means many other things as well. Truth is momentary—meanings are momentary as are their interpretations.

The moment of the mutual dream of the ethnographer and her culture/anthropological culture/looking-glass culture is the reality from which even temporary meaning is created. While this metaphor, based on the fanciful amusement created for children, may seem either cute or trite, I maintain that the looking-glass world, and what Alice found there in her curious childhood journey—her quest for the undiscovery and discovery of 'reality' in a mirrored world—is one cultural expression of the anthropologist's experience and goal. Every anthropologist from the West who seeks an understanding of a real or metaphoric looking-glass culture, begins the enterprise as a 'cultural child' whose world has not yet become too small—where things are soft, pliable and malleable. The quest is to undiscover nonsense and discover sense in the boundaries, middles and

meanings of the world she encounters.

This requires, in so far as it is possible, constructing a view of the looking-glass culture from inside it—in this case a *jatracentric* view as placed within the social and cultural world of West Bengal. What follows throughout this exposition is just such an attempt, however tempered with our own notions of what culture and cultural resemblances are. A good example of what lies behind most anthropological notions of culture is expressed by Jose Ortega y Gasset in his Meditations on Quixote:

> Culture for the dark-eyes men who meditate, argue, sing, preach and dream in Ionia, Attica, Sicily, and Magna Graecia, means what is firm as opposed to what is unstable, what is fixed as opposed to what is fleeting, what is clear as opposed to what is obscure. Culture is not the whole of life, but only the moment of security of certainty, of clarity. And the Greeks invent a concept as an instrument, not for replacing the spontaneity of life, but for making it secure.
>
> (Ortega y Gasset 1961:96)

For the anthropologist the question, "What is culture?", requires much meditation, much writing and much debate. Perhaps it is one of the most interesting and alive debates we engage in. Raymond Williams says "culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language" (Williams 1976:76). Whether we situate the locus of culture in the "systems of significance and interpretations" or in the "actions and activities that produce recognisable forms through social practices" questions of 'culture' become questions of 'meaning'. Geertz (1973:5) stands on the one side making culture a semiotic concept, one where the concern is an interpretation of meanings. Williams (1977:11-20, 136-144) stands on the other side making culture a creative historical process where the concern is a demystification of meanings. The notions presented here, are an unstable blend, because no matter which definition you use

one thing clearly emerges; culture is the paramount anthropological concern. The anthropologist, through self-reflection, and conscious construction creates the culture from the experiences and conversations, watching, doing and living among the people different from herself. The result is one of assertion, reflection and creativity; based on the perceptions and apperceptions of daily life and intentionally symbolic life.

> "I can't believe *that*" said Alice.
> "Can't you?" the Queen said in a pitying tone. "Try again: draw a long breath and shut your eyes."
> Alice laughed. "There's no use trying," she said: "one *can't* believe impossible things."
> "I daresay you haven't had much practice." said the Queen. "When I was your age, I always did it for half-an-hour a day. Why sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast..."

The impossible world I was plunged into was a very special, self-conscious, self-critical, intentionally constructed one; the world of the popular travelling operatic theatre of West Bengal—the *jatra*. What I attempt to create in what follows, is an interpretation of this theatrical world (hereafter referred to as the *jatra jagat*), how it is populated, viewed and experienced on the inside, how it is viewed and experienced by Bengalis outside the jatra jagat, how it is viewed and was experienced by the anthropological outsider, and how this phenomenon means.

> "...and if I really am Queen," she said as she sat down again, "I shall be able to manage it quite well in time."

The document which follows is quite a long journey, a journey of 'coming to know' that hopefully will also be a journey of 'freedom'—freedom from having to live inside these Bengali contradictions for a while.

> "...What do you mean by 'If you really are a Queen?' What right have you to call yourself so? You can't be a Queen, you know, till you've passed the proper

> examination. And the sooner we begin it the better."
>
> "I only said 'if'!" poor Alice pleaded in a piteous tone.
>
> The two Queens looked at each other, and the Red Queen remarked, with a little shudder, "She *says* she only said 'if'---"
>
> "But she said a great deal more than that!" the White Queen moaned, wringing her hands, "Oh, ever so much more than that."
>
> "So you did, you know," The Red Queen said to Alice. "Always speak the truth—think before you speak—and write it down afterwards."
>
> ...But she couldn't help thinking to herself, "What dreadful nonsense we *are* talking!"

Anytime I think about Bengal and the experience I had learning the boundaries, middles and meanings of living, making meaning and making a living in Bengal, and the experience I have had writing down these understandings afterwards for the purpose of demonstrating that I know the rules well enough so that I can make a living in Canada—the importance of being caught in a web of *maya* (attachments, illusions and sentiments) is brought home to me. It is clear that I place my task within the anthropological world and the *jatra* people's task within the Bengali world in much the same position. The anthrópologist must be clear in her intentions and self-critical of her production and the realisation of those intentions —the explication of meanings embedded in social and cultural life. With the exception of the fact that anthropological practice is more alienating, the anthropologist and the jatra personnel share a perspective and task—an exploration of 'culture' and an educative explication of its meaning.

I place the jatra personnel—owners, managers, menials, artists, writers, composers and directors—and the Bengali spectators at the centre of Bengali cultural manifestations. This is not totally my anthropological bias, many Bengalis outside the jatra jagat also place it there. Life in the Bengal countryside is punctuated by jatra performances and performances

of the other peripatetic performance forms. Any novel about rural Bengali life has at least one jatra performance in it; Tarashankar Banerjee even wrote a popular novel (later made into a Bengali cinema) *Manjari Opera* which focussed on the running of a jatra party. Satyajit Ray's famous film trilogy *The Apu Trilogy* features a jatra performance quite prominently in the first film. Theatrical plays have been written focussing on the life of a jatra party. The jatra performance is clearly an important 'cultural performance'.

People within the jatra jagat (the world or universe of the popular theatrical tradition in Bengal) also consciously place themselves at the centre of Bengali culture. They think about culture (*sanskriti*), what creates and sustains it; they also contemplate and converse about the importance of making a living by expressing and demystifying the essential nature of Bengali culture and cultural dilemmas. Culture is as important a concept and practice to jatra people as it is to anthropologists. Culture only exists in so far as people's energy (*prakriti*) has a certain form—one of the central forms in which this energy moves is language and speech. Dance forms and social forms are the two other centrally important containers for Bengali energy. Singing (intensified speech), dancing (intensified movement) and performing the play (intensified social attachedness)—the essential elements of a jatra performance—are the most significant ways of expressing a direct link with cosmic energies in Bengal. In these actions and cultural practices Bengalis both stipulate and demonstrate their direct transcendental links and at the same time affirm the social nature of their lives—transitory and illusory though it may be.

Although the jatra has been primarily associated with the Vaisnava emphasis in Hinduism (Krishna being the Life Sustainer; Singer, Dancer and Player *par excellance*—the Human Communication Symbol) it has

become also bound up in Shakta practices as well (Kali being the Creator and Destroyer *par excellance*—the Human Regeneration and Reproduction Symbol). Krishna and Kali, the two most important deities in Bengal, are both personifications of action and passion. For Bengalis, acting (*abhinoy*) and actions (*karja*), the process of doing (the verb *kora* is the single most used word in the Bengali language; it means to do or to make), is primary. The word *kora* is related to the word *karan*; a means, cause, root, motive or purpose—itself an unusually worked word. While as an outsider I was convinced that Kali and Krishna were very different beings —for Bengalis they are the same, they fuse into a contradictory unity. At a fair sideshow in a Bengali section of Jamshedpur, Bihar, I saw an image half Kali and half Krishna (called Shyam/Shyama - epithets for Krishna and Kali respectively), when I asked about it I was told that they were the same. They are both images of human necessities—actively pursued. Songs, dances and social actions define a Bengali cultural universe, they define Being and Becoming in Bengali terms. The jatra artists carry these images into cultural practice.

Sib Bhattacharji (the comic character with the Tarun Opera and the president of the *Jatra Shilpi Sangha* - the Jatra Artists Association), in his additions to a Bengali version of Phoni Bhushan Bidyabinod's (who himself was Boro Phoni the great jatra artist) *Adhunik Abhinoy Shiksha* (Learning Modern Jatra Acting) outlines the form of culture and the creative energies that innervate it quite well. Most jatra personnel agree with this interpretation, and I would venture to say, most Bengalis would.

> Culture originates from the practical needs
> of life, from our attempts at maintaining
> life with its innumerable and varied demands
> from our efforts to make it rich and flourishing.
> To make his life more secure, man has been
> trying to acquire more and newer power and has

> been more and more successful in this. Through this process his intellect has acquired new dimensions, his thought, ideas, and imaginations have acquired more power, and by all these his creative power or faculty could become more and more fruitful, and his fruitfulness of his creativity led to the creation of culture in its varied manifestations, in literature and arts, as well as social life. As soon as this cultural world began, it functioned in creating more and more culture by building up a heritage, inspiring more and newer creations. The cultural life of Bengal also followed this same course and from the root of his primitive songs sprang up that kind of acting through singing (*gitiabhinoy* - operatic drama) popularly known as '*jatragana*'.
>
> With the evolution of the Bengali people as a cultured people this jatragana became a significant part of the religious and social ceremonies and festivities of Bengal.
>
> (Bhattacharji n.d.:162-3)

Jatra artists like Sibbabu, who are steeped in and attached to the jatra tradition, relish thinking and talking about their work (*kaj* - doings, *chakri* - jobs, and *pesha* - profession) and their 'mission' of expressing the nature of and educating people about 'true' Bengali life, existence, spirit, and meaning. Through the theatrical performances they create, jatra performers present and re-present the jatra writer's, owner's and their own view of the essentials. Those inside the jatra jagat hold a theory of culture, language and practice in which the origin, growth, identity and interpretation of the jatra occupies the central pivotal point—the jatra jagat is at one and the same time the macrocosm and the microcosm of a holistic universe.

It was through the jatra performances and the education I received from talking with, watching and travelling with performers during the time I was in Bengal, and struggling with the interpretation of performances and performers here in the university setting, that I caught a glimpse of Bengali life and the jatra's presence in it. It is the

intention of this thesis to present a beginning, an introduction as it were, for understanding the meaning and significance of the jatra in Bengal. I will try to translate and communicate the glimpses and understandings I grasped, in an anthropologically meaningful way that does not stray too far from the intentions and meanings of the people in the jatra jagat, whose lives are bound to the professional jatra.

> "Now, Kitty, let's consider who it was that dreamed it all. This is a serious question my dear, ...You see, Kitty, it *must* have been either me or the Red King. He was part of my dream, of course—but then I was part of his dream too!"

Alice realized with astonishment!!

An Incident

(All jatra plays begin with one)

Near the end of my research sojourn among the people of the jatra jagat an incident in our mutual dream taught me more about the jatra. The owner of the Satyamber Opera asked me to accompany him to a conference on the people's cultural forms. He thought that I should attend this conference and participate in it—it was, in his mind, an important event and a place to 'show-me-off'. With little warning (about 1 day) I had to prepare a speech, in Bengali, about who I was, what I had been doing there, and what I thought about the theatrical tradition I had been living in. After the initial anxiety wore off a bit, I thought that the event afforded me the opportunity to assess what it was I thought that I had been doing and learning, as well as to experience a conference of the 'people' rather than another conference of 'scholars'.

The importance of this event was underscored by the fact that Shoilen had rented a car to drive us to the village where the conference was to take place. The riders in the car were Shoilen, Bijon Bhattacharya

(a Bengali theatrical playwright and officer in the cultural association sponsoring the event), Dr. GouriShankar Bhattacharya (a professor at the Rabindra Bharati University and a jatra scholar), Bhairob Ganguly (a jatra playwright or *palakar*) and myself. During this ride I was informed of the ultimate purpose of the conference, the format of the conference, and the history of the sponsoring organisation the IPCA (The Indian People's Cultural Association).

It seemed that the conference was being held in order to re-awaken interest in the discussion and appreciation of the people's arts, particularly with these few specialists going to the people to spur it on. The conference was to open with a statement by Gouri Shankar Bhattacharya, follow with a statement from the *bideshi mee* (foreign girl—me), and then have some local music performers (a local *kabi* party—a poetic duel, and some local *rabindra sangeet*—Tagore songs—singers), and close with a statement from Bijonbabu about the IPCA.

As this incident happened and enfolded, I realised that I was in the middle of a cultural performance (Singer 1972); not only in the middle of it, I was performing in it as well. Although it was a short conference, only about 2 hours or so, it was a kind of 'time capsule' of jatra.

What Shoilenbabu, the jatra owner, wanted me to participate in was a legitimising event—a statement about the place, status and importance of popular cultural forms, especially the jatra form. Everybody participating was carefully chosen to represent the importance of jatra in Bengali life, and its importance in the analysis of Bengali culture. This was realised by surrounding the speeches and participants with songs—the necessary presence of Krishna.

With the opening speech of Gouri Shankar, I learned not only the style of Bengali opening speeches (they include a statement of cause or

origin and development encased in a series of etymologies) but also the most common jatra origin story. In providing the context for the conference Gouri Shankarbabu talked about the importance of songs, dances and dramas of the Bengali people and their links to anti-order Bengali social and religious movements—particularly their original links with the Vaisnava religious tradition. The longest part of his speech dwelt on the Bengali Vaisnava reformer, Chaitanya; on the origin of the jatra in the ecstatic possession trances of Chaitanya in which he performed *Krishna lila* (the divine sports and play of the avatar of Visnu, Krishna). Then he traced the formation of Krishna jatras by Chaitanya and his followers and their change through different periods of Bengal's history. It was a short and rapid sketch. Ending his speech with the importance of keeping the spirit of Bengali people alive through these popular cultural forms (he included here more than just the jatra; he included the poetic duels - *kabigan, kabi lorai and torja*, the storytellers - *panchali and kathakata*, the boat songs - *nodir sangeet or gan*, etc.), he turned the conference over to Shoilen.

Shoilen gave the origin of and brief history of the Satyamber Opera (the jatra party he owned and had inherited from his wife's father), and he introduced me. He told them about what I was doing, and apologised for my Bengali by saying "you know she is not Bengali, but she is becoming practically Bengali". He did, however, establish me as a sympathetic outsider.

My speech was not in the proper style nor necessarily with the proper content. My statement of identity was not in Bengali terms, and my statement about what I was doing *nritytatto gobeshna* (research into peoples lives and customs) was not comprehensible. What I had to say about the importance of the jatra and how much I genuinely enjoyed learning about

it was, however, understandable (in fact, it would go without saying to most people in the audience) and appreciated by the audience. The fact that it was encased in *bideshi* terms and in a strange enterprise made my statements all the more mystifying and powerful. I was told that I did my job well, even though I had not spoken Bengali as well as they had hoped that I would. My foreign status did lend some weight and forgive me some of my trespasses, however.

With an interlude of the essential Bengali element—intensified speech surrounded by music (songs)—the conference concluded with the origin and history of the IPCA (*lok sanskriti sangha*) the cultural branch of the Communist Party of India. Bijon Bhattacharya was the appropriate spokesperson for this group, since the play he had written and staged all over Bengal in 1944, *Nabanna* (the famine of 1943 which devastated large portions of the rice harvest of the rural Bengali population) was one of the most important enterprises of the Indian Peoples' Theatre Association (IPTA as the IPCA was called at that time), the organisation from which the IPCA grew. He talked about the link with peoples' cultural forms and proper social and political awareness—critical stances and commentary.

Things that I had been feeling were importantly linked—current political awareness and theatrical themes, the jatra and the social religious Vaisnava movements (however infused with Tantric and Shakta religious ideas) were all placed together in one staged cultural performance. The importance of foreign elements in the interpretation of these links and histories was also apparent. It became clear to me that interpretation of the jatra, as I experienced it and as the people in the jatra jagat experienced and experience it, would have to include enough information and ravelling to make these links, so important in the looking-glass culture,

intelligible to an anthropological audience not steeped in Bengali culture and tradition.

NOTES

The references to Shakespeare throughout are all from:

Parrot, Thomas Marc
1953 Shakespeare: Twenty-three Plays and the Sonnets. Revised Edition. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.

The first quote is from the Tempest, Act II, Scene I, line 261; and the second quote is from The Tempest, Act IV, Scene I, lines 156-159.

While the main reason I chose quotations from Shakespeare is not because they have particular Bengali significance, these quotes are not out of line in a piece of writing about the popular travelling theatre in Bengal. Shakespeare and Shakespearean plays have had and continue to have quite an effect on the theatrical world in India, and specifically in Bengal. There was a travelling theatrical party in the 30's and 40's (and perhaps earlier, although the records are not clear on this point) known as Shakespearewallah, that performed various Shakespearean plays in Bengali, throughout the Bengal countryside. A film, made by Merchant and Ivory, was made about this travelling theatrical group, a very interesting and sensitive film. The *jatra* itself certainly did not escape the influence of foreign elements and in particular the influence of Shakespearean themes and styles. Phoni Bhushan Bidyabinod, a famous Bengali actor and playwright in the *jatra jagat* who has written the book *Adhunik Abhinoy Shiksha* parts of which are translated and included as appendices in this dissertation, has devoted a chapter of his book to the influence of Shakespeare on acting. *Jatra palaguli* were written, and are written, using Shakespearean themes as well, albeit translated into popular Bengali idioms and symbols. While I was doing this research there was a popular play, *Bhule Niya Priya,* that was a translation of the Romeo and Juliet theme into Bengali images and life situations. When asking about this particular play I was informed of other such plays and themes that have been borrowed and Bengalicised. Frequently Bengali actors and playwrights would refer to something that Shakespeare had written.

The main reason that I chose these quotations has to do with a profound change in the stage as world/world as stage metaphor that was prominent in Elizabethan dramatic world view. This notion of the world as stage certainly is present in the language of social sciences as well. With The Tempest the relations between audience and actors has come full circle—the separation afforded by the play metaphor seems to break down, and the audience again experiences the world as the actors do. The Tempest plays with time, place and identity in quite a different way—a way that makes a lot of sense in the Indian context. When the contact first begins and the British make a stronghold in Bengal this end-phase of Elizabethan world view is even more firmly implanted in the mind of colonials. Mercantilism and the play-acting world were at odds as dominant ideologies, but for entertainment purposes the cultural identity of Shakespeare was important. Righter reminds us that,

> From the beginning of the Elizabethan age itself the actor had been associated with dreams and

> shadows, had been a symbol of that which is illusory and insubstantial. Here, in The Tempest, the condition of the actor and the man who watches his performance in the theatre have become identical, and the relationship of the audience with the play made strangely disturbing.
> Always before in Shakespeare, the play metaphor had served as a bridge between the audience and the domain of the stage. It guided that relationship of actors and audience upon which the Elizabethan drama relied, reminding the latter that life contains elements of illusion, that the two worlds are not as separate as might be supposed. Now, the barriers had been swept away altogether; the play metaphor, like the distinction upon which it is based no longer exists... the audience in the theatre seems to lose its identity. Life has been engulfed by illusion. The spectators in the playhouse are no different in quality from Ferdinand and Miranda; they are actors for the moment silent, who watch the play within the play.
>
> (Righter 1967:182)

It is this aspect of Shakespeare, the problem of illusion and reality or appearance and reality, that for Bengalis feels most consonant with what they know to be true. For elite Bengalis, trying hard to find points of collaboration with their colonial masters, the adoption of Shakespeare and Shakespearean themes was more than an act of emulation, rather it was a statement of similar identities. They understood well that the world is not 'as a play', rather the world 'is play' - whichever puppetmaster is pulling the strings.

1 The references to Alice throughout are all to:

Gardner, Martin (Introduction and Notes)
1960 The Annotated Alice: Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass, by Lewis Carroll. Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., New York.

That this work, about the sense and nonsense of cultural rules and games and their parody, should have been interesting and influential to Indians as well as British and other Westerners, should not be at all surprising. The reasons for popularity, and the meanings assigned to the work of course vary in the Indian context. As early as 1917 there was a Gujerati translation of Alice, entitled *Alakano adbhut pravas*, translated by Jayshukray Purusottamray Josipura and published by the Laksmivilas Press in Baroda. Also, the Bengali playwright Manmatha Ray, in 1947, wrote a play that metaphorically used the Alice theme as well: *Alakananda*. The message of Alice does make sense in the Indian view of the phenomenal world as necessary and necessarily illusion.

It should not be misunderstood, however; these are not anywhere near the major reasons I have chosen this metaphor. The nature of ethnographic reconstruction, spun out of sensible fancies and fantasies as well as experiences and conversations with people, is necessarily creative. As Nietzche (who was aware of and influenced by Indian notions of *maya* - necessary attachments and their duping quality) asserts in the *Birth of Tragedy:*

> The beautiful illusion of the dream worlds, in the creation of which every man is truly an artist, is the prerequisite of all plastic art, and as we shall see, of an important part of poetry also. In our dreams we delight in the immediate understanding of figures; all forms speak to us; there is nothing unimportant or superfluous. But even when this dream reality is most intense, we still have, glimmering through it, the sensation that it is *mere appearance*: ...Philosophical men have a presentiment that the reality in which we live and have our being is also mere appearance, and that another, quite different reality lies beneath it. Thus the aesthetically sensitive man stands in the same relation to the reality of dreams as the philosopher does to the reality of existence; he is a close and willing observer, for these images afford him an interpretation of life, and by reflecting on these processes he trains himself for life.
>
> (Kaufman Translation 1966:34)

Alice's journey through the looking glass, beset with strangeness and problems, is completed, nonetheless. She emerges from her dream by having run the maze originally plotted for her—a course and task she very much wishes to pursue even though it is filled with frustrations and distractions, false starts and premature ends. These frustrations and false starts are 'natural' as she matures throughout her journey. For the most part, Alice keeps her wits about her, even when and though the reality seems peculiar and backwards; thereby she 'earns' the right and status to continue. (This seems not unlike the journey through Plato's caves.)

A character like Alice is certainly not alien to anthropologists in general. Most, I would say—at least those who keep a sensitive ear to and eye on the looking-glass culture —have experienced this. Specifically, though, this character is not alien to Bengali *jatrawalas*. The word *jatra* itself means a journey, and much of the contemplative world in Bengal is entitled the 'dream world'; *swapno jagat*. For Bengalis (and for many other Indians as well) the Godhead as Krishna can fill one's consciousness with 'dream-like reverie'—*swapno bilasha*. This is seen as part of the origin of the form of popular theatre called jatra, and the significance of all this will become clearer as the nature of the *jatra jagat* and the *jatra pala* are explained in more detail.

PART ONE

THE JATRA JAGAT

THE *JATRA JAGAT:*

Its Form, Meaning and Significance in Bengali Cultural Practice

In the prologue I introduced, by way of extended metaphoric dalliance, the idea that a fundamental part of the manifestations of reality—social and cultural productions—is their 'illusory' and 'dream-like' qualities. The practice of creating, thinking about and using anthropological concepts is situated within a changing cultural tradition, just as are most of the practices of 'other cultures' that are explored anthropologically. To view manifestations of reality, particularly since most of them are re-presentations, re-collections, re-constructions, or re-productions, or to write about them while outside their immediate grasp can be nothing more or less than illusion. A cultural world, in this view, whether constructed by the anthropologist in an attempt at analysis and explication or by the 'native' as rules to live by, is a series of resemblances and representations; conundrumic, creative, powerful and necessarily fictitious. I drew on a number of Western philosophers, poets, satirists and anthropologists who contemplate and write about the nature of Western and alien realities. They all seem to be exploring and using words that are central to Bengali thinking; words like 'mere appearance', 'representation', 'journey', and 'illusory reality' to accomplish their task of interpreting and writing. In Bengali thinking, however, the paradoxical and contradictory essences of concepts like 'appearance and reality', 'attachment and freedom', 'falsity and truth' or 'life and death', 'process and structure', and 'active and passive', are givens—they are already resolved at a higher level than social and cultural practice. It is with this as the context that I would like to begin to undiscover a very special, intentional, creative, and phenomenal cultural journey expressed through a

conscious and elaborate alien symbol system—that engaged in by the participants (jatra parties and their spectators) in the travelling popular operatic theatre of West Bengal. What follows is intended to be an exercise in the practice of dialectical thinking in and explication of the world of the dramatic journey.

The tradition and world of the jatra is embedded in a larger, venerable cultural tradition. The Hindu Bengali cultural tradition, particularly in its rural manifestations, contains a conceptual world that is bounded by motions of the desire for freedom from the world (*moksha* - a concept that means release from rebirth into the phenomenal world, rescuing and blood-letting) and the knowledge of and necessity for attachments to the world (*maya* - a concept that means illusions, the material world, affection, sentiment, blood relationships and compassion). Freedom can only be attained by properly recognising and working through (*dharma* - a concept that means correct actions, 'religion' and acceptance of one's position in the material world) these interpersonal attachments and structural relationships.

One must be attached to get free.

Life (*pran or jibon*) is the material form of energy; it must continue and be re-created by people, even though death (*mritya*) intercedes.

One must have a son to get reborn.

These necessary attachments to the world, and their opposites form one of the Bengali cultural 'truths'. It is important, however, to understand that these necessary attachments to the world and the activities in the world are fleeting, changeable and necessarily illusions; at the same time most of Bengali cultural and social life is bounded by them. Within the material world of illusions (*mayaer jagat*) how one makes one's living is what gives 'meaning' (*artha or man*) and significance or importance (*guruta*). Doing and

being active in the world is a Bengal mandate. Kali (the supreme goddess in Bengal) in her various manifestations is the goddess who creates and is illusions, *Maha Mayadevi*, and also the goddess who creates and is power, *Maha Shaktidevi*. She is the goddess who creates and is regeneration and reproduction of life. The necessary illusions of everyday life are indeed powerful; they are, literally, 'what makes the world go 'round'. Krishna (the supreme god in Bengal) is the god who takes the energy of creation, procreation and recreation, and sustains life through consciousness of communication.

The understanding of the word *artha* is very important; it is political economy, money and meaning; it is at the same time social praxis and its meaning—the social relations of making a living and making meaning. Most Bengalis are paramountly 'in the world' (illusory as that may be), and are 'journeying through the world', throughout the unfolding of a single or many lifetimes. *Artha* is concerned with movement and progression (*gati* - a concept which means going, passage, and means) in a determined and fixed path. To attain freedom from this journey Bengali Hindus must recognise and attend to the meaning of their place in the social relations of making a living; of keeping the world in motion.

With this as the conceptual context it becomes apparent that some of the usual Western distinctions—between literal and metaphoric levels, static and dynamic states or elements, appearance and reality, mind and matter, and making a living and making intentionally symbolic meaning—take on a difference significance (if indeed they have any significance at all). Perhaps anthropologists have wisely left inquiry into the theatre alone, for the most part (Peacock 1968 excepted), since this cultural form is filled with these distinctions, whether it is found in Western or Eastern traditions. When immersed in a subject like the Bengali jatra, with its

intentional double senses and its raising and lowering of the mirrors of dissimulation, only the public, active, doing part of these distinctions make any sense. The performance of theatrical spectacles requires that all its participants—jatra parties and spectators alike (and now even you, the readers of this imposition) actively engage in the interpretation of it. There is no theatre of passivity, especially in the Bengali context.

These distinctions not only seem to disappear within the *jatra jagat*, they seem to have had no significance at all. The analytical ease with which we in the Western academic and anthropological traditions can separate levels and dimensions or properties and elements, is confounded, utterly, when trying to describe or ethnographise the meaning and significance of the jatra jagat and the jatra in its own or generalised Bengali terms. In Bengali terms the world is not categorised or cut up in the same way. I maintain, however, that the attempt is inescapable, and a necessary illusion. Intentionality, creativity, and their conjoining in an alien theatrical activity and tradition is a vexing focus for anthropological inquiry. What I will do in this section is attempt to create the verbal world of the jatra jagat and establish its 'thingness', to explicate it with reference to its stipulated origin, and to lead you, the readers, to a consideration of this special way of making meaning and making a living—the jatra performance.

In constructing the verbal world of the jatra jagat, I am making a distinction between meaning and significance in the interpretation of this world, partly for theoretical reasons and partly for reasons that are internal and external to the theatrical form and tradition itself. It is my intention in this thesis to relate to you what I came to know about and understand throughout my ethnographic journey within the jatra jagat, and to explicate and interpret it so that you can grasp the meaning and

significance of this cultural theatrical form, and perhaps aesthetic businesses in general. First, the theoretical reasons for a distinction. Interpretation, whether of exclusively written texts or exclusively enacted performances or a combination of the two, particularly when it is of an alien tradition, is a difficult task. The theoretical works that have been the most useful here are the ones in either the tradition called hermeneutics or the tradition called critical theory. These two theoretical proclivities share a central concern—how things are constituted and how they mean—and complement each other since one focuses on the phenomena and the other on their place in cultural practice. Hermeneutic analysis, as I have come to understand it, is built around a central ineluctable paradox; it goes something like this: you have to grasp a sense of the whole phenomenon before you can examine its constituent parts; you have to understand and explicate the parts before you can construct the whole. This places one squarely in a circular dilemma. Fortunately, by adding critical theory with its mandate that any phenomenon be understood in its own categories and historical process, one is not doomed or destined to swim in the whirlpool ceaselessly (or at least if one is, the procedures for keeping your head above water can be given). By making a distinction first between understanding and explication, part of the dilemma becomes less problematic. Although these two processes are fused in the nature of interpretation, they imply a necessary temporality, methodologically speaking. The more apparent side of the enterprise, the explication, is itself rather complex. In addition to the interpretation there is the element of its application, or its significance. Again there is a necessary temporality implied, one has to figure out what 'something means' before she can figure out how this something means to different people or in different contexts. When all is said and done, the result should be a deeper and more thorough

interpretation that is culturally constituted and meaningful. For my current purposes, meanings are to be viewed and understood as stable and determinant; 'things' in and of themselves. These things can be contained in written texts and words, texts-in-performance, actions, constructions and worlds; one can arrive at a sense of the 'inner' meaning of a form, event, or any phenomenal object in the world. Meanings seem to be concerned with their own original (or anachronistic) internal integrity: they defy space and time, even though they have a different appearance in different spaces and times. The discovery of meaning (both understanding and explication) is a kind of 'inner journey' into the phenomenon, concept, event, object, etc., under scrutiny. The clues to meanings, at one level anyway, are the symbols that contain them (c.f. Lee 1954:73-85), and at least on another level, the internal relationships one undiscovers. The discovery of significances, sequentially attempted (both the explication and their applications), on the other hand, is an 'outer journey' into contexts and shifting terms of reference. Significances are meanings-for-people; the relational resonances that are inextricably bounded to space and time. Significances are a matter of changing valuations and evaluations of the symbols that contain meanings. Making an interpretation (grasping the understanding, explicating it and valuating it) necessitates the dual and double processes of demystification and recollection (c.f. Ricoeur 1970:26-36); decomposing the whole and then recomposing it. This is one way to dispose of the problem of parts and wholes that seems to plague Western analytic thought. When it comes to the jatra as a whole this process reveals that what is 'real' is 'illusion'.

Second, the reasons internal and external to the jatra itself. The jatra, as I have come to know and understand it, seems to have a timeless quality; a form and essential message that obtain regardless of its

appropriations by different people for different ends. In fact, it is just this 'phenomenal' meaning that makes it appropriable. This quality marks Bengali identity and Bengali interpretations of the world—the jatra is an expression of *Bengali life*, in and of itself. However, at different times and in different places and localities the specific qualities of the jatra that are used and interpreted (*byakhyana*) are different. It is significant to different individuals and groups of people, in different contexts and different ways.

A more complete knowing and understanding of the jatra encompasses both aspects of interpretation, the meanings (Bengali conundrumic cultural truths) and the significances (Bengali creatively expressive illusions). In essence, by making the distinction between meaning and significance, I am building the substantiation for the hermeneutical inquiry that gets beyond 'mere appearances' and into knowledge and understanding of what is 'illusory' (the really real) in the Bengali cultural world and the world of the jatra.

The Jatra Jagat: its form

It is my intention here to take you on an influxional journey through the conceptual world of the jatra jagat, by examining the manifestations in words and visions, speakings, writings, and glimpses. The main points of reference for this journey within the jatra jagat are Bengali concepts in general as they are expressed in words, their speakings and writings, and the specific concepts and words used by the jatra personnel in conjunction with making their living and making the meaningful cultural performances they engage in.

At the outset it is important to understand that the *jatra jagat*

is not a place (*stan or jaega*). The jatra jagat is not objective—an object that can be described concretely with references to measureable dimensions, properties, tangibles or elements of a specific bounding nature. Its boundaries are the limits of Bengali creativity, imagination, and expression, and the limits of Bengali on-going and past life experiences. Primarily this world is a verbal artiface and artifact. To grasp, even for a moment, the meaning of the jatra jagat, it is necessary to lay aside all usual Western distinctions of material entities and 'concepts'—their separability and 'aspects'. The jatra jagat is a conceptual sphere, a kind of 'form', of shifting topology, and it is the totality of understandings associated with the meaning of 'motion' (*gati*) and a world in process. This world, the world of the travelling operatic popular theatre (*jatra or jatragana*), sometimes called the people's theatre, is the shifting universe of the journey through life while making a living, with its myriad conceptual and interactional manifestations. As a 'performance' it is the metaphoric, intensified, and bounded journey for performers and audiences alike; as a 'livelihood' for those who inhabit the jatra jagat, it is their world with its necessary and necessarily illusory quality. This world, the jatra jagat, while analytically separable, is inextricably bound to and up in the total Bengali cultural world. The form (*rupa*) of the jatra jagat and its meaning (*artha*) are, at the same time, both microcosmic and macrocosmic. For the most part, the jatra jagat and the Bengali cultural whole are the same in nature, even though the jatra jagat is more intensely so. By beginning to understand the jatra jagat, it should become easier to understand how Bengalis think about and act in their social and cultural world.

Form (*rupa*) and its various combinations and derivations is a word with an absolutely vexatious semantic load. By itself it means

everything from a concept, symbol, manner, fashion, body, shape, appearance, to a type, kind, or sort. A *rupak* is an allegory, symbolic story, or a fairy-tale; a *rupak artha* is a figurative meaning; *rupatatto* is the science of aesthetics; *rupakar* is an artist or someone who designs costumes for the theatre; and *rupa kora* or *rupastar kora* is either a conjugation or declension and a translation. Within the concept 'form' one can move fairly rapidly from appearance to 'able to appear as', or from body and shape to 'disguise'. What seems to be the most important understanding of this concept for the jatra, is that form is a kind of distancing shell; something that can be altered or 'played with', and something that can be appreciated. Once the 'shell' is grasped by humans, it becomes as all forms of 'matter' and 'material'; for a Bengali, it can be used, altered, transformed; with human energy put to it, it becomes powerful. Words are forms, people are forms, and together they create new forms.

In order to begin to construct the verbal boundaries of this conceptual and interactional world, the jatra jagat, there must be a consideration of the semantic 'shells' or words (*katha*). Words, in Bengali social praxis—their speaking (*bola*) and their writing (*lekha*) are a demonstration; a manifestation of power, strength, and abilities. One constructs a conceptual and interactional world or universe by asserting verbally certain statements about the way it is 'shaped', the way it is carried out or the way it works, and the way in which it means. To speak or write the life's journey one is travelling gives it new form, meaning, and a special kind of power (*sakti*). Speaking and writing, in Bengali terms, demonstrates the power of human communication and the link with cosmic energy or 'power'. In the jatra jagat, then, to speak or write the journey, and to also enact or perform it, gives the people who inhabit it powerful assertions and abilities.

The inhabitants considered in the jatra jagat, the human referents, are the jatra performers (*shilpi—abhineta, abhinetri,* actors and actresses, *gayiak,* singer, *nrityak,* dancers, and *sangeet bisharad,* musicians), the jatra composers and directors (*surkar* and *parichalak*), and jatra playwrights (*palakar*). Squarely inside the jatra jagat, in the modern context, is the jatra business (*byabsha*). Bengalis, who are outside this world, enter it from time to time, revel there, and return to the world outside. All the inhabitants of the jatra world demonstrate to the outsiders that they are 'powerful' and 'dangerous' in several ways; they demonstrate their divine or cosmic links through their abilities to speak and sing clearly and well, to compose music and direct human action well, or to write a jatra play well—these are manifestations of their parcel of cosmic energy and their knowledge of the 'cosmic' joke of illusion. They all demonstrate their human links as well, by creating a performance that binds together, however briefly, a large group of Bengalis in a stationary metaphoric and intensified journey.

Inside the jatra jagat there are a number of places, either fixed or free-moving. The fixed places are the business offices and the travelling buses, the free places are the various performance venues. Each of these types of spaces have activities associated with them that are the 'stuff' of the jatra jagat; *gadis* or offices are where the professional business aspects are contained, and *asaras* are where the professional aesthetic aspects are performed. For outsiders these places are 'exciting' and different, for insiders they are 'normal everyday life'. For a person acting as a sponsor for a jatra performance, the jatra neighbourhood (*para*) and the jatra office (*gadi*) are as novel as is the jatra green room (*saj ghar*) and jatra performance area (*asara,* or *mancho* - stage).

The Jatra: its meaning

The word *jatra* or *jatragana*, as it is sometimes called, means a journey, a procession, travelling, and a theatrical form. It is placed in the centre of a concept of 'motion', and in the centre of the Bengali concept of 'life' (*jibon*). When this word is combined with other words we get further glimpses into the meaning and attachment of the jatra to Bengali everyday life; a jatra can be any journey you undertake, a pilgrimage or a tour, a jibon jatra is your biography or the way you make your living, your livelihood, an agusta jatra is your death. This obsession with Bengali life is why jatra actors say that they do not use masks in jatra performances—masks are static, fixed expressions, and the jatra is life in process. The jatra performance, while taking place in a fixed spot, carries the audience through an 'intentional and intensified' journey. The jatra is clearly in the centre of the jatra jagat, and for the Bengali jatrawalas it is the centre of the Bengali cultural world.

The movement from a pilgrimage to a dramatic performance or theatrical form is an interesting one; it is bound up in the original identification and performance of the jatra. Like most theatrical forms in the world, the jatra had its birth through a religious context; in this instance through a religious reformation movement bent on changing the relationship between humans and the divine, and humans and humans by giving all people equal ecstatic devotional access to divine consciousness. This is the most often recounted origin story for the jatra. While some Bengali scholars, outside the jatra jagat place the origin of jatra further back in history, jatrawalas see their origin in the Chaitanya *bhatki* or devotional religious revival of the late 15th early 16th centuries; the medieval period in Bengal, just when the Bengali language was truly its own.

I will take you back in time, to Chaitanya's time, to try to see why this would be the most common origin story for the present professional jatrawalas. Why do they see this as their 'myth' or their *raison d'être*? Chaitanya's attempt to be filled with Krishna's powers and Krishna consciousness, and his success in demonstrating this fulfillment made him perhaps the most 'powerful' and 'dangerous' religious reformer to grow out of Bengal. Krishna is the Supreme Singer, Dancer, and Player, the Supreme Lover, and the Supreme Human Communicator, as he is understood in Bengal. Krishna's activities are always referred to as sports, play, dalliance or reverie—*lila*. Chaitanya, in the course of his ecstatic religious devotion, frequently manifested in what we can call 'possession trances', in order to get closer to and realise Krishna's divine essence, would perform Krishna lilas—in fact Chaitanya's lilas were the performance of Krishna's. Chaitanya and his followers would frequently go on pilgrimages to important places of Krishna worship, but since they could not be constantly travelling when they returned to Chaitanya's home, Navadvip, they began re-enacting the journey there, in a fixed place for more people to participate. Let's look at an account of Chaitanya's lila—the performance of Krishna episodes.

In at least three of the main sources for studying the biography (*the jibon jatra*) of Chaitanya there are accounts of his performances, which came to be known as jatra. These sources, the *Chaitanya Bhagabata* by Brindaban Das, the *Chaitanya Mangal* by Lochandas, and the *Chaitanya Charitamrita* by Krishnadas Kaviraj, all differ in a few details, since they were composed by different followers and at different times. It is not my purpose here, however, to try to sort out the differences, since the current professional jatrawalas are truly unconcerned with them, rather it is to show the main points of the lila, and to suggest how from the

ecstatic possession trances of Chaitanya and his followers, the seeds of the later jatra were sown.

Following is a very 'loose' translation of a section of the Madhya Khanda of the Chaitanya Bhagabata by Brindaban Das. Until I am better able to handle medieval Bengali, this will suffice to give the main points.

The performance, referred to as jatra, was to take place at the house of Chandra Sekhar, a follower of Chaitanya.

> "...this is the good fortune of Chandra Sekar, it is a right conferred on him, that in his house the Lord (Chaitanya) expressed his glory. Those worshipping sat with other Vaisnava devotees. All were ordered to take on dresses and have make-up according to the part. Beseechingly again and again, the Vaisnava Aditya said, "Order me, Lord, What part am I to play and have dresses for and make-up accordingly?" The Lord said, "All parts are fit for you, make a choice and take the part you like." Aditya was under a deep trance, forgetful of circumstances that there was no question of his resorting to any external make-up. And so the spiritual leader of Santipore only used his eyebrows. He danced expressing all the Bhavas (moods) almost like a great jester, and really he was floating on a sea of Ananda (bliss). A great uproar arose in praise of Krishna, chanting his name, and all the Vaisnava devotees became ecstatic with Ananda... Haridas entered, with a great moustache decorating his face. He had a big turban on his head, with a loin cloth on, and bracelets on his upper arms and bangles and anklets on his feet. He said, "Oh brothers be careful the darling of the world (Chaitanya) will dance dressed up as the goddess Laxmi". He began to move, gesticulating with his hands, and seeing this mood of exquisite delight getting expressed through his whole body, remembering Krishna, everybody was spiritually awakened—Worship Krishna, Serve Krishna, Take the name of Krishna, Haridas declared.... "Today the Lord will dance Himself dressed up as the goddess Laxmi".

Another performance was recounted, where not only the performers, but the spectators were described.

> In the company of devoted married ladies, the mother (Sachi, his mother) sang, and was absorbed in the nectar of the Krishna rasha, the mother said to Malini, "Who is this pundit?" and Malini said, "I have heard that indeed this is a pundit." The

> mother, a great Vaisnava, was the universal mother, and she was surprised to see SreeBash as the pundit. And possessed by the mood of great joy, the mother swooned and fainted, and everybody was surprised to see her swooning. They did not know what to do as there was no stuff at hand to restore her. And quickly the devoted married ladies began to chant the name of Krishna, whispering it in her ears. Coming back to her senses the mother began to call for Govinda (Krishna). She was so beside herself that the ladies could not keep her quiet.
> In this way, whether inside or outside the house, all were unaware of the immediate surroundings and were externally speechless and all cried...
>
> In another room Chaitanya was engaged in dressing himself up, he became possessed of the bhava of Rukmini (Krishna's first wife), absolutely. Under the trance of the Rukmini bhava the lord became self-forgetful, and he took himself to be none but the daughter of King Vidharcha. He began to compose a letter addressed to Krishna using his tears as ink. And the earth became paper and his finger a pen. Rukmini's letter was composed of seven slokas to be found in this Bhagabata.
>
> Those who sang and those who listened to the songs were all afloat on the sea of Ananda, and by the grace of Chaitanya everybody was under a trance, insensitive to immediate surroundings. The whole assembly of Vaisnavas cried, "hari hari", and all raised their arms and voices, being full of bliss. The son of Madhaba began to dance dressed up as a gopika, at that moment Chaitanya entered dressed up as the primal sakhi of existence. Before him Nityananda dressed up as an old lady walked wobbly, afloat on the sea of ananda and full of the rasa of love.
>
> The performance of singing and dancing went on all night.

While the above is a loose translation, it does give some important clues for understanding the jatrawalas adherence to this story of origin. First of all, Chaitanya told everyone to act, but he left the choice of character up to the individual. In a hierarchically arranged society, like Bengal (past or present) taking on any role or position is a potentially revolutionary action. Jatra actors feel especially susceptible to 'evil eye' because they play with identity—being who they are not; it is both powerful and dangerous to a sense of 'normal order'. A performance

in which everyone can participate, either as audience or performers, has the potential for social change, and social criticism.

Chaitanya, in other places, is said to have played the parts of, or become possessed with the bhava of, Radha (the paramount sakhi), Laxmi and Hanuman (the god of the winds). He was even known to take the part of Krishna himself. Possession trances, and the actions carried out while in them, were clearly a part of Chaitanya's power; a way in which he and his followers found the divine essence of Krishna—total sensory participation. This power is another clue to understanding why this story is still important. If lila, or the sports and play of Krishna, is the activity of gods and goddesses (energies), and Krishna demonstrates through Chaitanya the lila of acting, then being possessed by Krishna gives one the power of being a good actor, writer or composer. Chaitanya was the first *jatra adhikari* (holder or possessor of the tradition of enacting life's journey).

Chaitanya is more (and always has been more) than a saint to the jatra performers—he is the paramount ACTOR. Chaitanya's lilas were the acting out of Krishna's lilas; he had the power of being possessed by the essences of the players in the Krishna cosmic drama or the cosmic joke, and he was worthy of being possessed and acting accordingly, in character, as it were. By performing the jatra (pilgrimage) Chaitanya allowed devotees to participate in the mobile processions (jatra) that are necessary in the bhakti devotional experience, without going to Puri, in Orissa, or Gaya in Bihar. One could experience the pilgrimage (jatra) and the transcendental universe in the jatra asara. All the important songs in praise of Krishna were performed, set in motion, but in a fixed place. The step from jatra (pilgrimage) to jatra (performance) had been made.

The current jatrawalas do seem themselves directly linked to this event and process. Even though Krishna themes are rarely performed now, the identification and process are the same. The modern jatra still sees its position as one of social criticism, political change, public education as well as a form of entertainment. This attitude of critic that is assumed by the jatrawalas is self-critical as well. It makes the people who inhabit the jatra jagat social commentators; commentators on Bengali social and cultural practice.

The Jatra: the importance of social criticism

Social criticism has always been the pastime of a certain portion of the Bengali population, and social reform has frequently been attempted; usually from people in the elite of Bengali society. As I pointed out before, the roots of jatra were in a social and religious movement, but until the late 19th century social reformers and the jatra personnel remained apart from one another. Jatrawalas are quick to point to several jatra adhikaris who were 'revolutionaries' and responsible for rousing the Bengali countryside to action against the British. In the Dramatic Performances Act of 1869, the jatra is one of two forms explicitly mentioned as being seditious and prohibited; Mukunda Das, a Bengali revolutionary in the twentieth century, is always mentioned as an important jatrawala; and now the exposition of class-struggle dramas and revolutionary historical reinterpretations are cited by jatrawalas as proof of their continuity with the past and their present importance. The 'religious' and the 'political' aspects of the jatra's continuous present do present an interesting marriage; what lies behind it is one of the main contradictions that the jatra is embedded in. Both the religious and political movements

with which the jatra has been associated have at their 'root' a concern with the three critical moments "Truth, Freedom and Justice", a justice that disclaims 'hierarchy' and exploitation. These three moments are of concern to most of 'the Bengali people', particularly the 'common folk in the countryside'. With a form (intensified motion and mobility) and content (frequently 'revolutionary' enactments) both bound in contra-order activities and enactments, the jatra does defy spatial, temporal and structural constraints on human life in Bengal. It appears, or seems to, defy the common Bengali existential dilemma of moksha and maya, within a material world of meaning and making a living.

This contradiction should be illuminated in what follows.

PART TWO:

THE JATRA BUSINESS

THE ORGANISATION OF THE BUSINESS OF CULTURAL PERFORMANCE:

The *Jatra* as a business and as a profession

Somewhere between the intentions and intended meaning of the performers and of the spectators of a jatra performance, and the phenomenal meaning of the jatra and its attendent and composite concepts, there is the realisation that the *peshadar jatra* (professional jatra) is, afterall, a commercial enterprise (*byabsha*)—a business, an occupation, and a way of ensuring a livelihood (*jibon jatra*) for about 1500 people in Calcutta. As a business, the jatra directly deals in *artha* (meaning, the political economy and money), and it does so quite profitably. Actors, actresses, singers, dancers, musicians, composers, writers, directors, technicians, managers, brokers, costume renters and salespeople, publishers, printers, bus owners, servants, and, of course, the owners of the jatra parties, all earn a major part of their living from their part in or association with the professional jatra. Even though the specialty of this business—the production of 'cultural performances'—is different from most other Bengali businesses, the owners, managers, technicians, bus owners, costumers, publishers, printers, and brokers, are bound up in the world of business, as much or more than they are bound up in the world of performance.

What I intend to do in this section is to provide an introduction to the physical locality of the jatra businesses, the language of the jatra business world, the structure and decision-making hierarchy of the business, the structure of the jatra party, the logistics of the travelling jatra, and the jatra as a social institution. An understanding of these parts are important background for beginning to understand the

jatra as a whole.

The Physical World of the Jatra

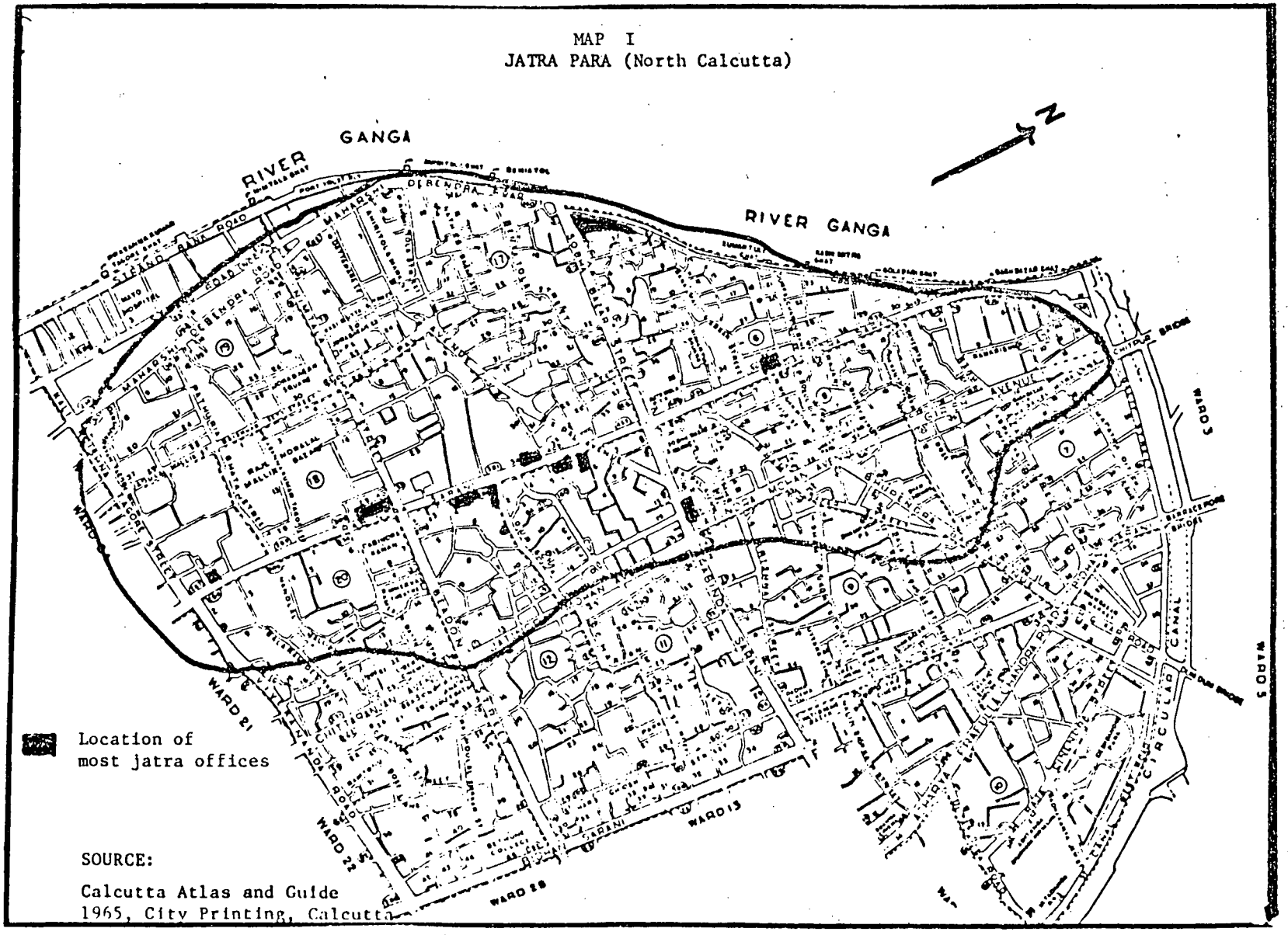
The Jatra Para:

While the *jatra jagat* is a primarily conceptual world, a state of mind, a referential locus of identity for those engaged in the jatra enterprise, an intangible sphere of mental and aesthetic activity, the *jatra para* is a concrete locality, physical surroundings, a place for the social interactions of the jatra business to take place. A *para* is, literally, a small cluster of human habitation, a place where a specific group of people 'hang-out'. In a village context a para is usually a residential area inhabited by primarily one *jati* (caste group, e.g. Brahmin para, Bauri para, etc.), but in a city as large and as diversified as Calcutta, a para is usually an area of fairly uniform use and occupation. The jatra para is a fairly large area in North Calcutta, where the various jatra parties have their offices, rehearsal halls, and extra sleeping rooms for party members with no other residential arrangement in the city. It is an area bounded on the south by Vivekananda Road, on the north by the Maratha Ditch, on the east by the distributary of the Ganges known as the Hooghly River, and on the west by Chittaranjan Avenue and its northerly extensions Jatindra Mohan Avenue and Girish Avenue—the very heartland of what was known in Colonial days as Indian Town. Within this area there are a few major reference points: Rabindra Sarani, expecially where it is crossed by Beadon Street and Shovabazar Street and the area between; and Nimtala Ghat and the banks of the Ganges. Clustered and nestled in these areas, most of the jatra office activity of running, booking and maintaining the parties, is made 'secure'. (See Map I). I

Map 1

THE JATRA PARA

MAP I
JATRA PARA (North Calcutta)



SOURCE:

Calcutta Atlas and Guide 1965, City Printing, Calcutta

use the word 'secure' with some reservation, since at the time that I was conducting the research reported here, the area was one of most 'troubled' in Calcutta. It was anything but *shantik* or peaceful, yet for the people who lived in the para, there was a certain sense of security in an area definitely and typically Bengali.

The area was the arena in which the battles, between various political parties and between the many political parties and 'anti-social elements' who entered the fray, were waged. The main battle, the one for political control of the area, was waged in a somewhat guerilla style, using home-made bombs, Malatov cocktails, pipe guns and knives, thrown or shot from seemingly nowhere by combatants mainly from the Congress Party and the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPM), or their supporters and hired mercenaries, hired from the ranks of the groups of para and nearby hooligans or *gundas*. Since the area is laced with narrow meandering streets filled with innumerable nooks and crannies to duck into and hide, the frequently patrolling troops of CRP (Calcutta Reserve Police) were thwarted in their search missions designed to rid the area of these troublemakers. The CRP were, for the most part, outsiders to the area and in some cases even to Bengal, so they were completely at a loss in this tightly knit and controlled para.

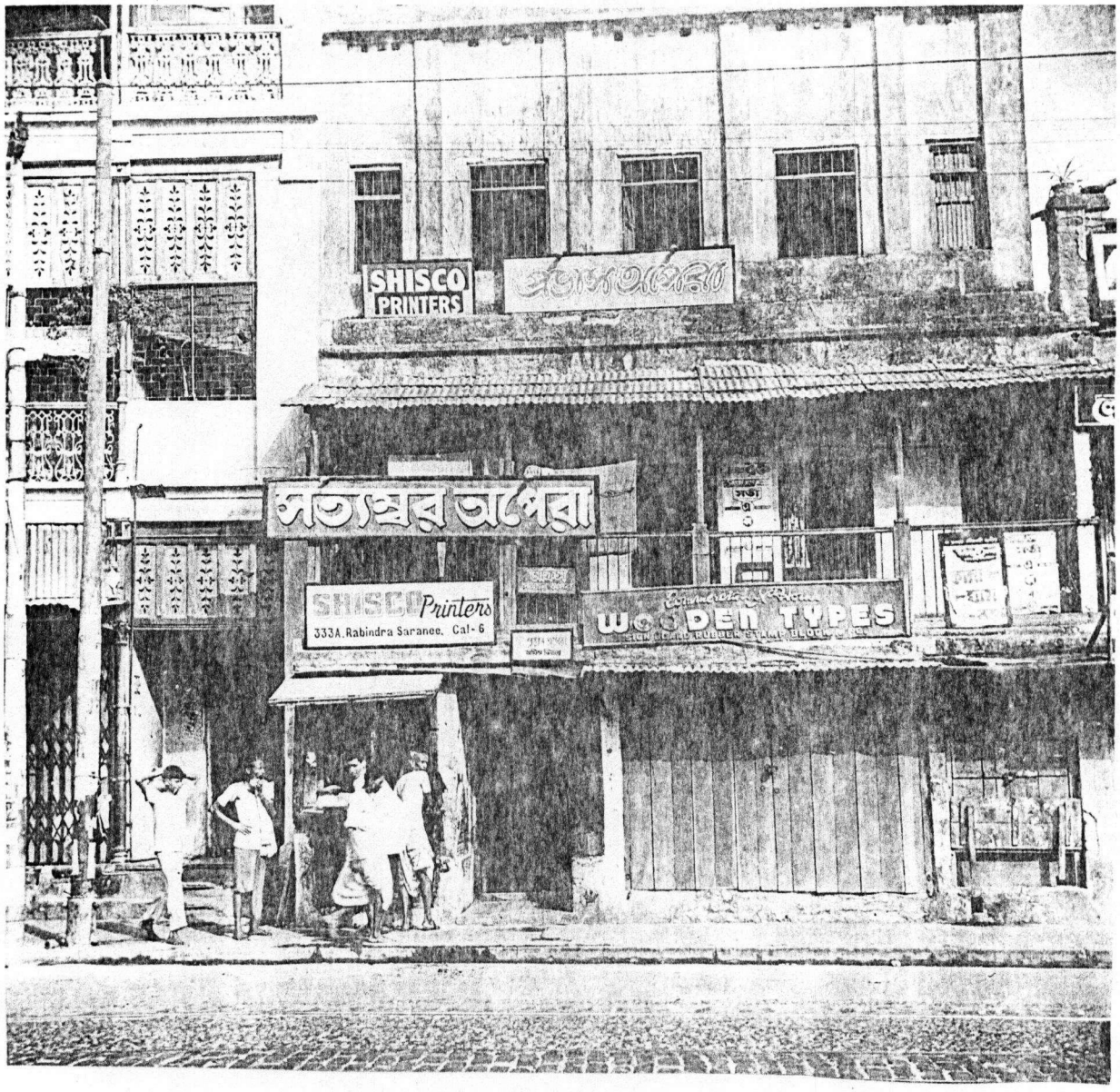
Subsidiary battles were attacks on locally prominent politicians. Some of these were successful—a member of the Legislative Assembly was shot in the para and a member of the Forward Bloc party, a leader, was also shot in the area. Police were frequently attacked while walking in the area, and the local thana (police station) was bombed once.

One day, when I was at the home of the owner of the Satyamber Opera, Shoilen Mahanto, which is tucked way back in one of these streets, the CRP came and searched his house for 'anti-socials', bombs and guns—

instead they only found a strange foreign woman. It took a lot of explaining, since the area was cordoned off to prevent entrance or escape, and I should not have been able to reach his house. I had simply walked to his house from Nimtala Ghat, where I had left the taxi I arrived in—something that should not have been possible, in CRP eyes. After a long walk and many assurances that I was 'okay' and that I would be safe the CRP reluctantly left to continue their searching. The day before the front mainfloor business in Shoilen's office area, wooden block artisans (see Photograph 1), had been bombed while I was 'hanging around' the Satyamber Opera office. I was afraid to go back to the office area right away, so I had come to Shoilen's house to finish a conversation we had begun the previous day. After the CRP search I asked Shoilen if I should stay away from the area for a few days—maybe people were concerned about a 'foreigner' in the area. Shoilen replied that since there was a lot of *gondagal* (trouble) in the area, and since it had become quite common, it was 'just normal life' and I shouldn't worry because in that area people knew me to be associated with the 'jatrawalas' and that made it safe. "You know, we aren't part of the trouble—we have protection from people in the para" Shoilen told me. In many ways the jatra para was 'secure', even during the most dangerous times. After the war with Pakistan broke out, and the concern in West Bengal was with the plight of the Bengalis in East Bengal, the area became quite quiet, and what I could even agree with then, 'secure'.

The area is well serviced by trams, taxis, buses, carts, and rickshaws and from 6 a.m. til about 11 p.m. the streets are bustling and crowded. In this area of the city a lot of life is 'public'—it takes place out in the streets or in shops that open face front onto the broken and narrow sidewalks. Rabindra Sarani, the main street for jatra offices,

sliced in half with shiney steel tram tracks and jammed full of every kind of transport, is the most public street. The sidewalks are lined with barbers and vendors and all the shops a multi-tiered. Calcutta is a most vertical city, particularly in the older and more densely populated areas of the city. Photograph 1 can serve as a very good example of what I am talking about. The building in the centre of the photograph houses the following kinds of enterprises at different levels and parts of the building: a *chawala* (tea seller) at the subterranean level and a *biriwala* (a seller of local hand-rolled cigarettes as well as manufactured cigarettes) at the street level just above the tea seller—these two businesses are always well-patronised, as shown in this early morning photo; again on the left side of the entrance, and at street level is the wooden type makers shop and at the rear on this same level is the Shisco Printers office and printing shop, where the bookings for the New Prabash Opera are also made; the second floor has four rooms that are occupied by theSatyamber Opera; the third floor is the office and rehearsal hall of the New Prabhash Opera; and interspersed between levels there are small cooking and sleeping areas. This building alone occupies no more space than a large three-storeyed house, but it hosts over 20 people on a normal day and up to 100 people when both jatra parties are in the city. Most of Rabindra Sarani is lined by such buildings that are aglomerations of artisan shops, small businesses, jatra offices, book sellers, eating establishments and concessions (see Photographs 1-7 for additional glimpses of the jatra para). N. K. Bose, in his social survey of Calcutta, writes of this area as full of "numerous household industries like pottery or idol-manufacture, hosiery-making, etc. set up in portions of old residential mansions or in godowns once built for different purposes", and occupied by "Bengali commercial castes and artisan castes" (Bose 1968:



1 SIGN POSTS AND OFFICE FRONTS: 'A' Class Parties
Satyamber Opera (and its posters)
New Prabhash Opera
Shisco Printers (New Prabhash Owner and Jatra Printer)
Other artisan businesses

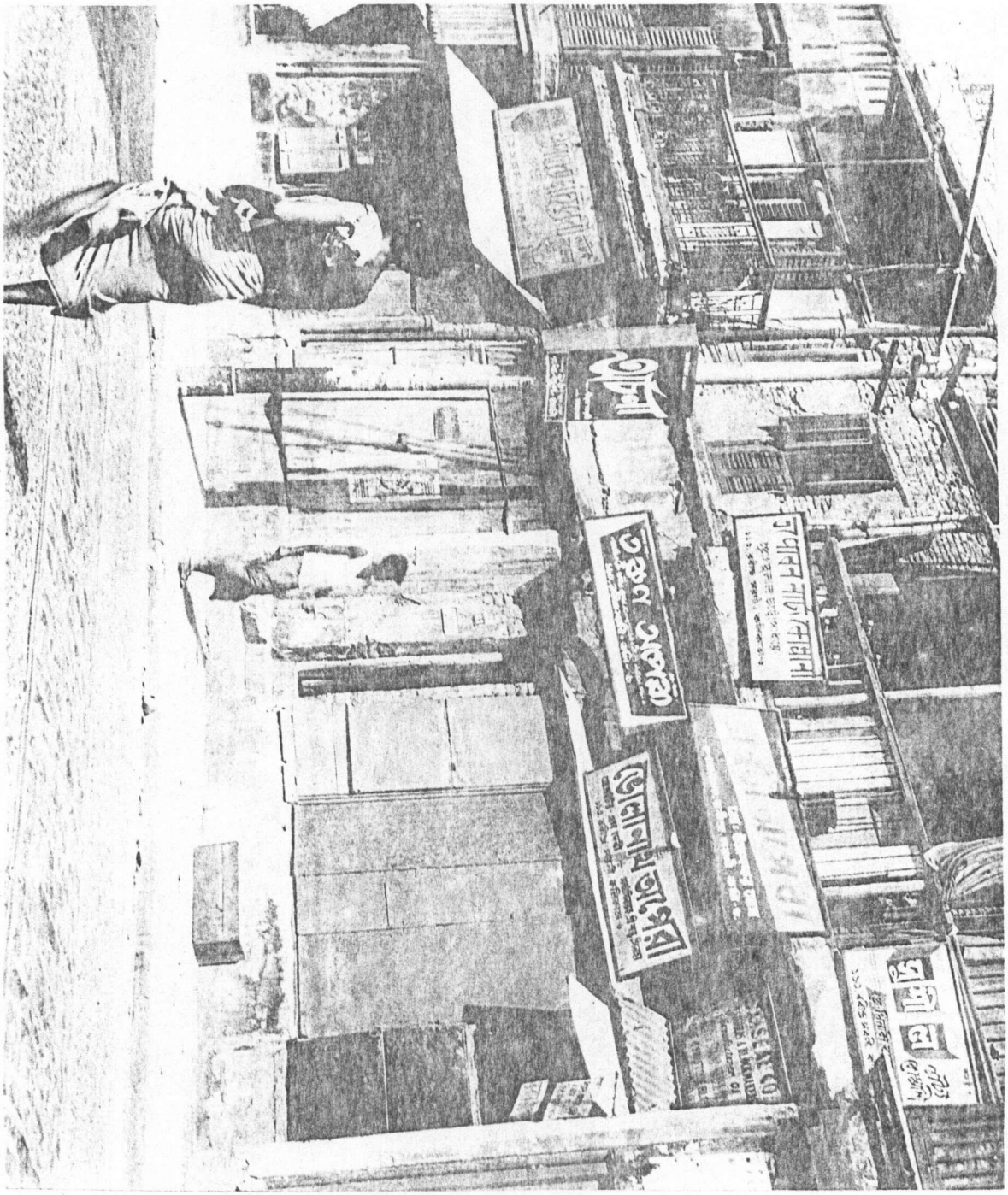
2 SIGN POSTS AND OFFICE FRONTS: 'A' Class Parties
Shilpi Thirtha (Opera Company)
Loka Natya
Other artisan businesses

3 SIGN POSTS AND OFFICE FRONTS: 'A' Class Parties
Janata Opera
Naba Ranjan Opera
New Royal Binapani Opera
Sweet shops and other small businesses

4 Close-up New Royal Binapani Opera's Sign Post and Play Advertisements for 1378 and Bishupriya (play about Chaitanya's wife)

SIGN POST: 'B' Class Party, New Annapurna Company

5 SIGN POSTS AND OFFICE FRONTS: 'B' and 'C' Class Parties
Ganesh Opera
Arya Opera
Calcutta Opera
Bhandari Opera
Entrance to the inside market



6 SIGN POSTS AND OFFICE FRONTS: 'A' Class Parties

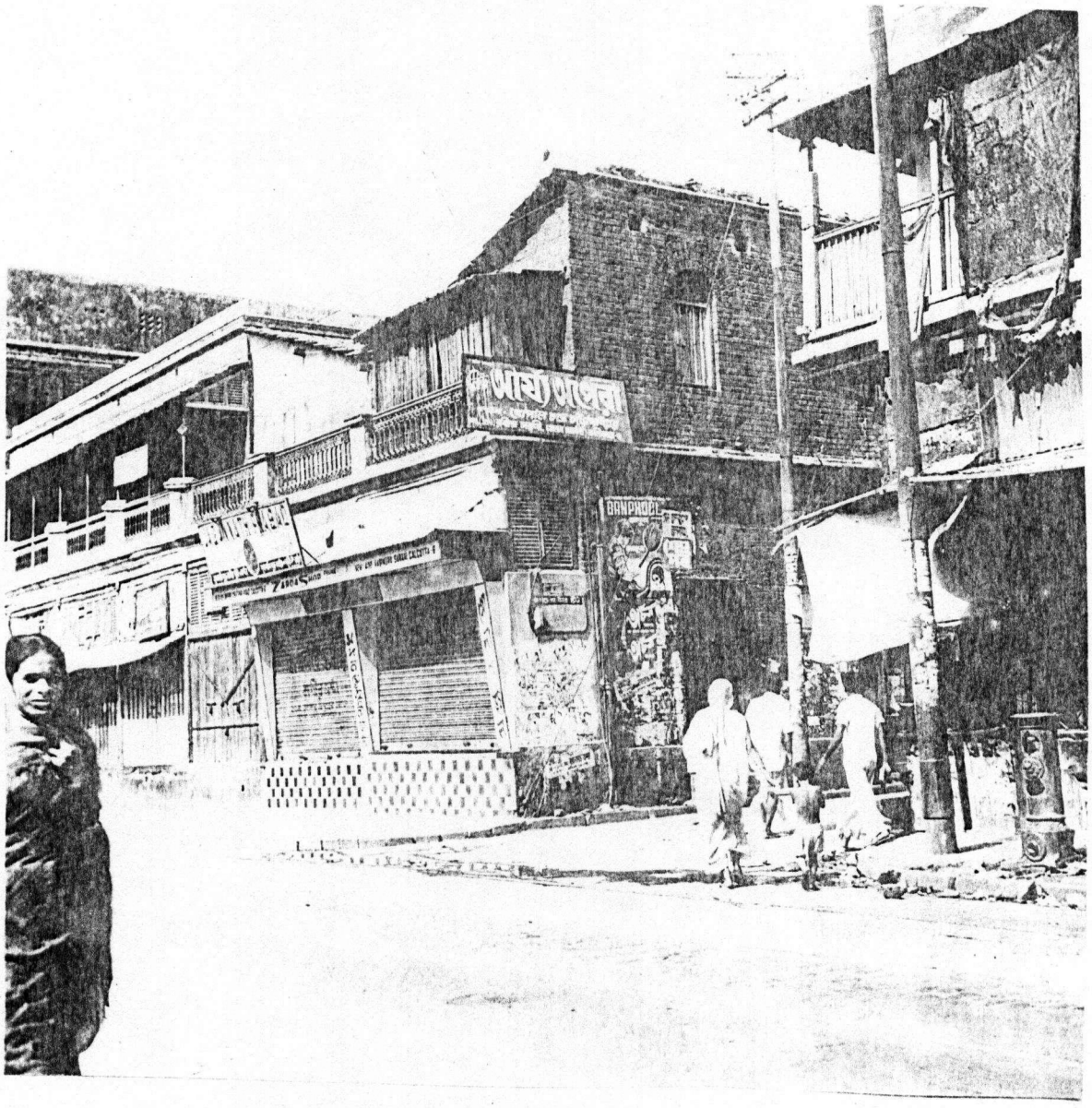
Tarun Opera Bholanath Opera

Bharati Opera

'B' and 'C' Class Parties

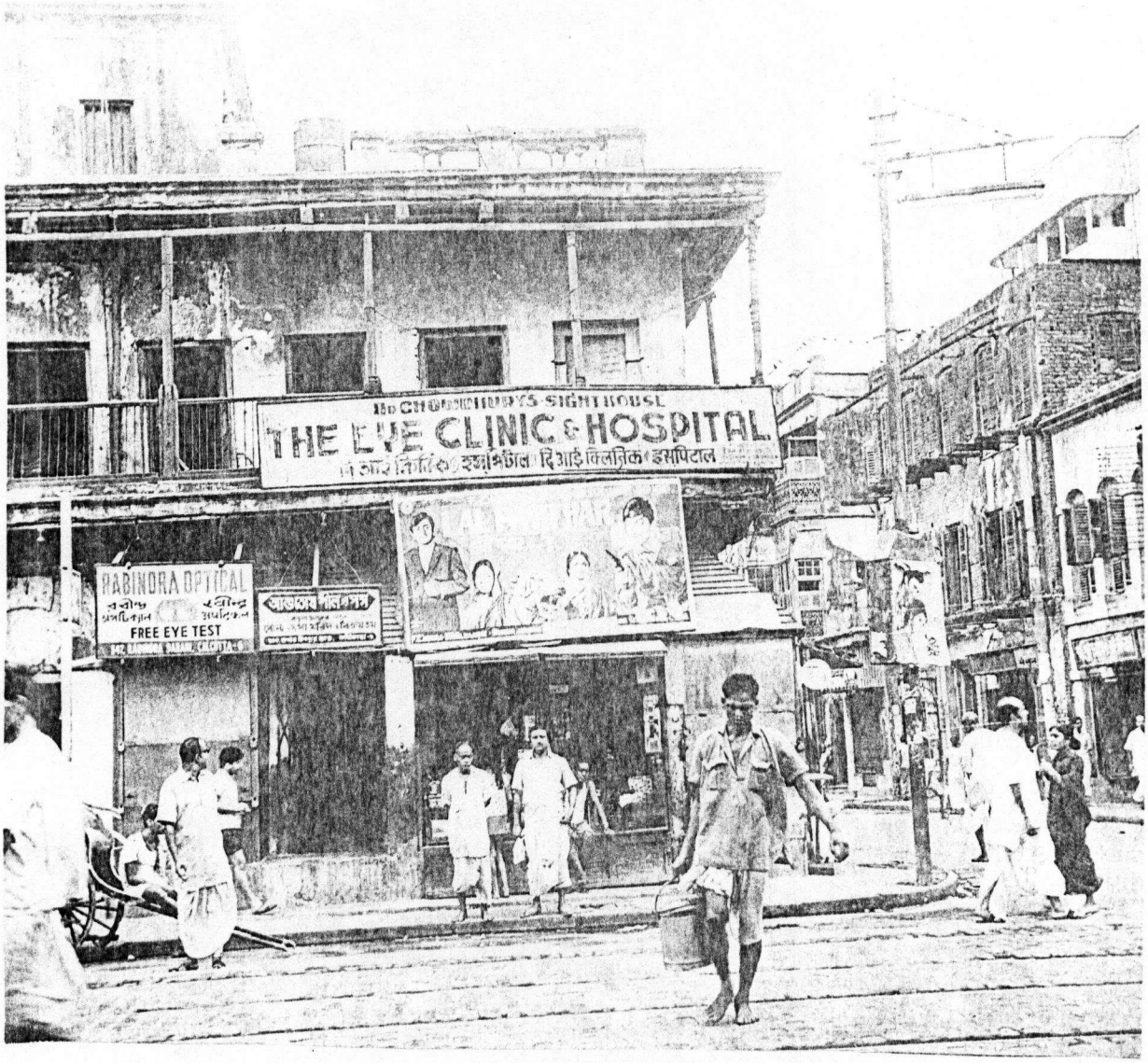
Shushil Natya Company

Tapaban Natya Company

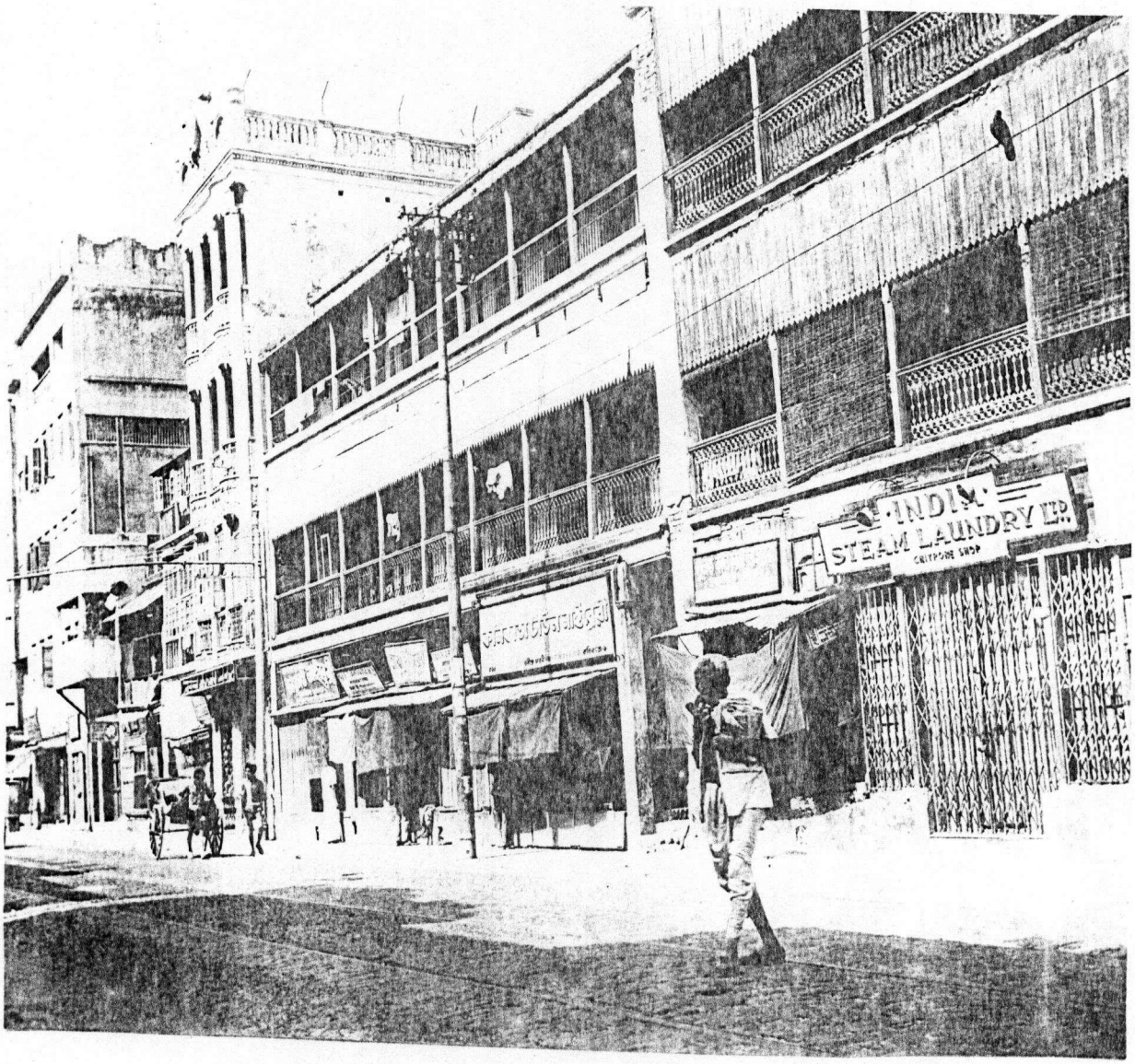


7 SIGN POST AND DIRECTIONAL SIGN: 'A' Class Party
New Arya Opera

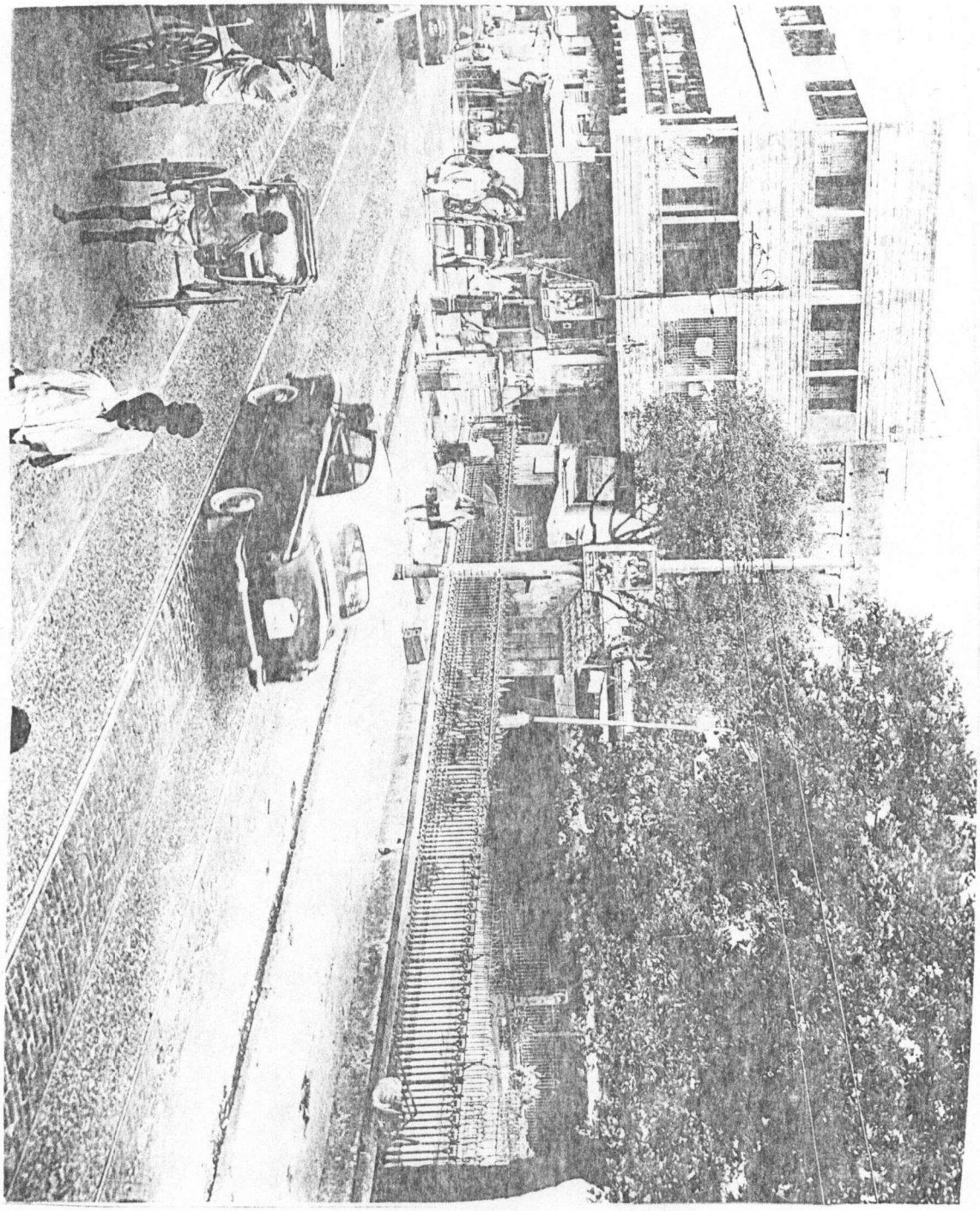
Entrance to Market
Entrance to Brothel area



8 The Busy Corner of Rabindra Sarani and Beadon Street
Small businesses and street activity



9 Rabindra Sarani north of Beadon Street
Small businesses-India Steam Laundry
The Calcutta Town Library (jatra publisher)
The Tara Library (jatra publisher)



10 Life on Rabindra Sarani

23-27). The multi-purpose uses of this combination commercial residential area is underlined in Photograph 5, where the jatra office signs are flanked with saris and shirts drying. This outside, public area is a panorama of sounds and sights—Bengali life.

The Jatra Gadi:

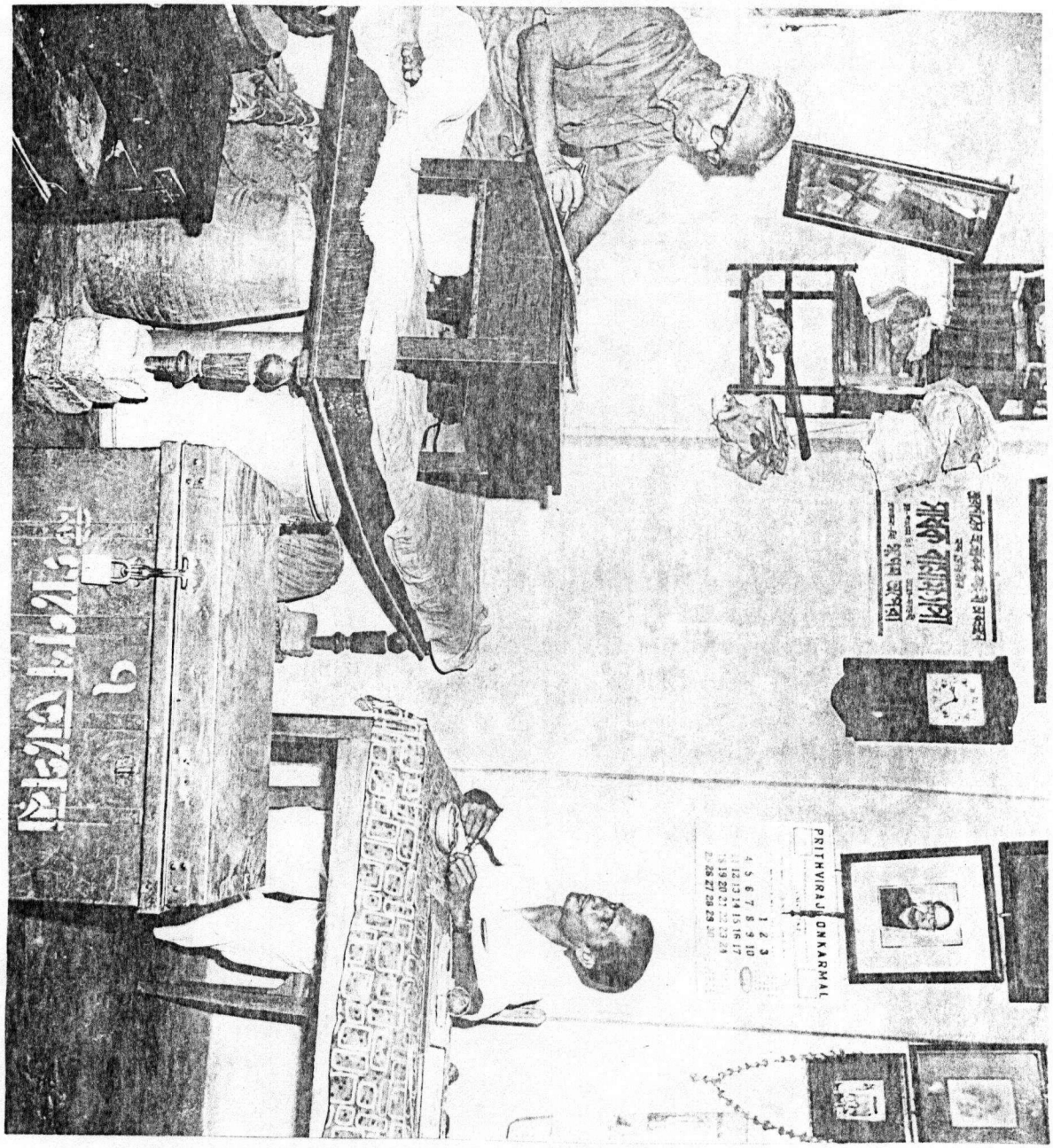
Just as the outsides of this area are very busy places, so too are the insides. The jatra offices (*gadi*), where I spent hundreds of hours 'hanging around', were always interesting, lively places that felt somewhat like the proverbial 'Grand Central Station'. There would always be a 'parade' of people with various purposes coming and going in the office. It is inside these offices in Calcutta (or occasionally in the branch offices in outlying districts—See Map 3) that most of the activity associated with running the jatra party takes place. All the jatra offices are staffed by 'live-in' office managers, whose whole life it seems passes inside the office, as well as the booking manager and occasionally the owner.

By just carefully looking around some typical jatra offices, the sense of the universe of jatra business becomes clearer and clearer. The most important piece of furniture is a large wooden bed, about 6 feet by 10 feet covered with a large cotton-stuffed mattress. This mattress is what gives the office its name—it is the *gadi*. Most of the business is conducted with the managers and sometimes the sponsors sitting on this mattress. Occasionally there will be several chairs or a bench located at the side of the mattress where guests and sometimes sponsors sit. On the gadi there is usually a portable writing desk, built just high enough for someone to comfortably sit cross-legged on the gadi and work at it. In a few of the newer offices the gadi is reduced in size and a larger

floor-standing desk has replaced it (See Photographs 14 and 15).

On or near the desks, whether permanent or portable, there is the all-important telephone encased in a lockable wooden holder. Many bookings and logistical arrangements are made by telephone; it is locked so that the use of it is not abused by actors and actresses or merely para people—telephone monthly bills are exhorbitant. Also on the desk there are a host of rubber stamps saying everything imaginable, pens, ledgers, contract books, and the most recent advertising copy. Around on the walls there are pictures, posters, calendars, book and display cases, and the usual electrical wires leading up to a light fixture fitted with a small wattage bulb.

The pictures in the various offices are, of course, different but a glance at the walls of the outer office of the Satyamber Opera (Photograph 13) gives a good example. The top picture on the wall behind the office manager Jamini, is of Gour Chandra Das, the former owner of the party. When he died he left the jatra party to his son-in-law, Shoilen Mahanto since he had only one child, a daughter, who would not know how to manage the party. Every morning the picture is decorated with flower leis and fresh flowers are placed in the vases to the right and left of it. The picture just below that is of Shoilen and Indira Gandhi, taken when the party went to perform in Delhi. Just above the door into the main office there is a picture of Lenin—placed there because Shoilen is a member of the Communist Party of India and because he finds the life of Lenin to be a good example of someone who cared for the people. Next to this there are several additional pictures all of well-known actors and writers—people who were associated with this party at various times. Underneath these pictures there is a framed copy of the policy of this party—its aims, goals, and rules. The walls are literally covered with



11 BOOKING OFFICE for New Ganesh Opera: 'A' Class Party

Note:
- Pictures
- Gadi and Desk
- Posters
- Green Metal Travelling Trunks
- Book Storage Shelves
- Calendars

12 BOOKING OFFICE for Tarun Opera: 'A' Class Party

Note:

- Pictures
- Posters
- Calendars
- Awards
- Gadi and Desk
- Telephone on Desk
- Bookkeeping materials

13 BOOKING OFFICE-outer office Satyamber Opera: 'A' Class

Note: Pictures
Gadi and Desk
Policy Statement
Name Sign

14 BOOKING OFFICE for New Prabhash Opera: 'A' Class
SHISCO PRINTERS OFFICE

Note:
- Pictures
- Calendars
- Free standing desk and paraphernalia
- Outside electrical wiring
- Printing storage units

15 BOOKING OFFICE for New Royal Binapani Opera: 'A' Class

Note:
- Pictures
- Poster for Booking Advertising
- Calendar with Chaitanya
- Bookkeeping paraphernalia
- Gadi and Free standing desk

tradition and remembrances of continuity and importance. Other jatra offices are similarly full of visual history.

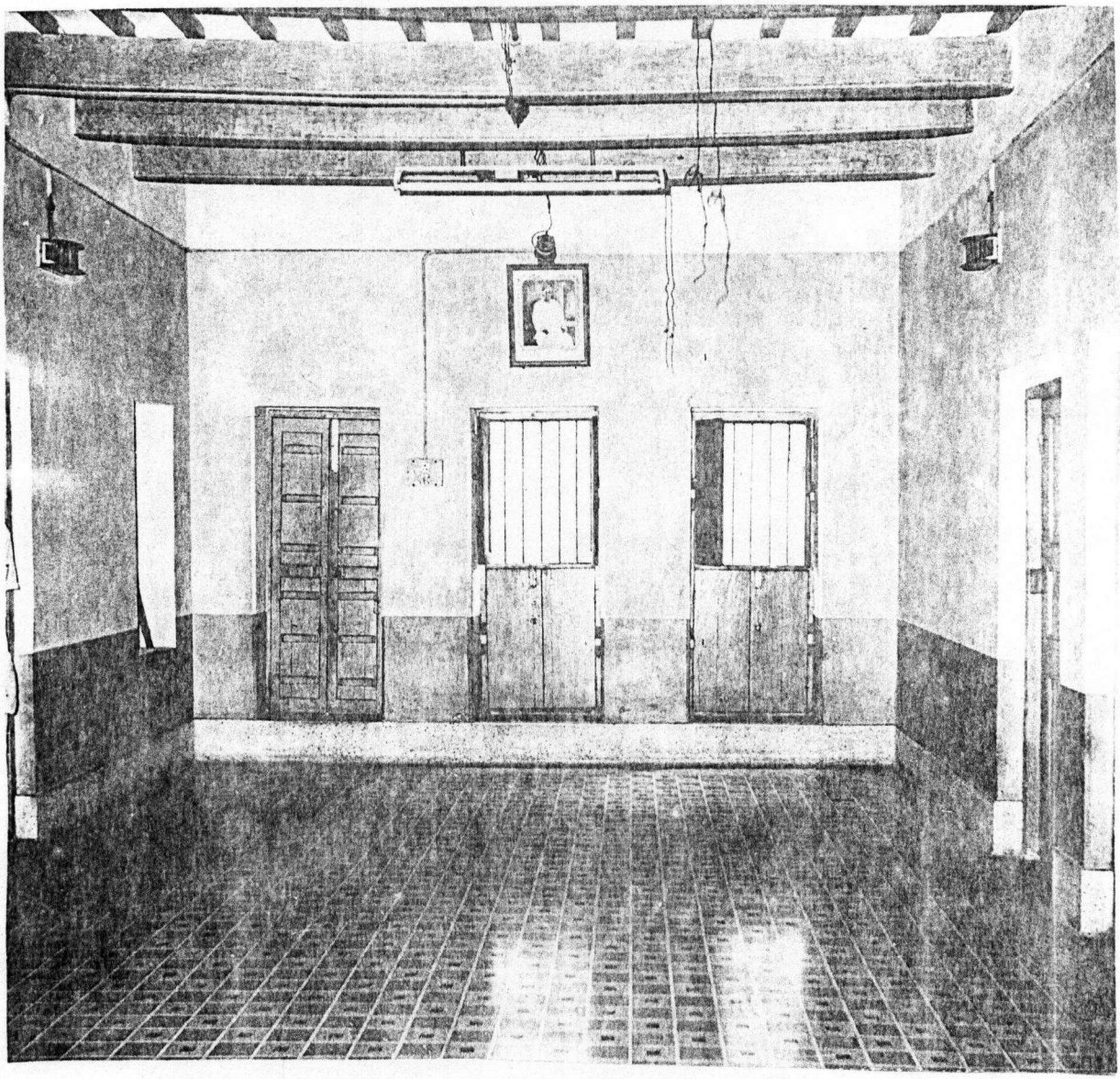
Posters that are placed on the walls are of two major kinds; ones that are used as general advertising posters and flyers, and ones that are used to help sponsors decide on a play. The latter are always full of photographs taken by the jatra photographer either during dress rehearsal or at one of the first performances of the season. The calendars that are hung on the wall are both English dating and Bengali dating. The largest one in Bengali months is used to mark off the location of the party and to mark off the passing days.

The book and display cases are also filled with momentos, awards, past play scripts, and writing supplies that should be locked up to prevent overuse. Photograph 12, of the inside of the Tarun Opera office, is a good example. The loving cups and awards have been given for best performance in a jatra festival, best actor in a jatra festival and most popular jatra party of the season, and they have been given by different localities and organisations.

The jatra gadi, then, is an environment that constantly reminds one of the link with a jatra tradition and a continuity with the jatra of the past. It is both living and lived-in history, particularly of the link between the jatra parties and the people who hire them and watch them.

Other relevant outsides and insides:

Also within the jatra para there is the necessary rehearsal hall. In most instances the rehearsal is attached to the jatra office, but as with the Satyamber Opera, sometimes it is located elsewhere. The Satyamber Opera rehearsal hall is the third floor of Shoilen Mahanto's



16 REHEARSAL HALL for Satyamber Opera
Note: Picture of founder on the wall

residence. Photograph 16 shows the inside of this rehearsal hall. What is needed in this hall is a floor space equal to the size of a jatra stage, about 16 feet by 16 feet or 20 feet by 20 feet; room for exits and entrances; and room for the musicians to sit on either side of the stage space. The month of August is spent in rehearsal, before the party sets out on its seasonal round of performances—this means that the rehearsal hall is 'home' for about 25-28 people for 1 month.

When the parties are in Calcutta, and for the office people who remain most of the year in Calcutta, there is an important place within the para where many go each day—the hotel. A hotel in the jatra para is not a place to stay but rather it is a place to eat. The Shanti Hotel (Photograph 17) is the one used by the Satyamber Opera, and other nearby opera parties. Shoilen and I would eat there daily—it served a good menu of rice, fish, dal, vegetables and yogurt, cooked in Bengali style with mustard oil and a few chilis on the side. While at the hotel business contacts could be made and information was exchanged between various jatra personnel. By looking around the hotel, I learned a lot about other kinds of business' spaces: right in front of the eating area, placed high on a platform attached to the central support was an image of the god Ganesha, the god that is supposed to remove obstacles and ensure financial success, that was decorated daily by the para priest. The walls were covered with pictures and calendars depicting the goddess Laxmi, the goddess of wealth and fortune; Saroji Ma, the wife of the Bengali saint Ramakrishna; Ramakrishna; and frequently Kali, the goddess of destruction and personified unleashed power. Kaliprasad, the proprietor, could always be seen sitting at his desk, keeping track of the accounts people were running up—since most people paid him monthly. The hotel, at lunch time—11 a.m.-1 p.m.—was as busy as the jatra office in the morning and

17 SHANTI HOTEL

Note: Wall coverings
Eating areas
Ganesh
Proprietor's Desk

late afternoon, and the hotel is an integral part of the physical surroundings of the para.

The printing and publishing companies, called 'libraries' are additional busy enterprises in the para. The Calcutta Town Library, the Diamond Library, the Tara Library, etc. are all located in the para, and they publish jatra palas as well as traditional religious texts and manuals. Not only do they publish them, but they have a retail and mail order business located within their offices. If a village club or organisation wants to put on a jatra play, they will write to one of these 'libraries' and ask for a certain number of copies of a play to be sent to them. The clerk in the 'library' will wrap them and mail them off. By visiting these libraries and talking with the proprietors I was able to collect over 150 plays, from various playwrights and various eras, and record information about the sales and popularity of various jatra plays. While sitting in the small, crowded by books and papers everywhere, main room of these libraries I could feel and see the weight of tradition and the importance of a tradition of publishing for the 'modern' jatra.

Another important indication of the meeting of tradition and modernity in the jatra is seen in the photograph that follows. This photo captures a kind of essence of the juxtaposition of old and new—the priest is performing a Satyanarayana Puja on the floor, or the base of the room; applied to the wall is the poster of the play Raktata Afrika (about the Angolese/Portuguese conflict). Each office has a priest (many have the same priest) who comes daily to the office to adorn the images (*murti*) and various pictures with flowers and to do obesiance (*anata*). In addition the priest will place sandal paste on the forehead of the proprietor and any others in the office—I was frequently blessed in this

18 SATYANARAYANA PUJA at Naba Ranjan Opera Office
Note: Set-up for worship service
the Priest and the Poster:
Tradition and Modernity

manner. Every Thursday there is a puja, such as the one in the picture, to ensure good fortune in Business. The priest is paid both money and uncooked rice for performing this service for the party.

By spending this much time and space trying to give a sketch of the physical surroundings of the jatra para, I have intended to create an image of a very dense, crowded, vibrant area—an area where there is a prodigious sense of continuity and visual reminders of the place and links that the travelling theatrical tradition has with other small businesses and the people of Bengal. I really felt good, moving around in this area, where all the shopkeepers and people on the street are connected in one way or another to each other—where they are all *paralok* (people of the place). This is not to suggest that all is just 'fine' in this area, as I indicated earlier, nor is it to suggest that the various parties, various publishing and printing firms, hotels, etc., are not in a certain competition with one another. They are, but they also are all part of the same sphere of action (*the jatra jagat*) and the same locale (*the jatra para*); they are part of the same life style and intention.

With this as a physical setting for the jatra as a tradition and business, I will go on to the language of the business. I will lay out what words are used for aspects of the business and what business discussions and negotiations consist of. For the most part it is the language and negotiations of small business in general.

The Language of and the Negotiations in the Jatra Business

While watching and trying to understand the meaning of a jatra performance or when waxing eloquent about the phenomenal meaning of the jatra, or when translating and interpreting the written script of a jatra play, it is very easy to forget that the modern *peshadar jatra* (professional jatra) is a business—the business of the production of meaning through 'cultural performances'. When I spent time 'hanging around' the jatra offices, talking with and watching the negotiations of the owners and managers, however, I was immediately and constantly reminded that the jatra is also a world of ledgers, payrolls, logistics, rentals, fees, advertising, incomes and disbursements, performance strategies, contracts, and the like. The professional jatra shares the concerns of most Bengali privately owned small businesses. The management (*shashan*) of the jatra party (*jatra dal*) expresses concern over the expenditures (*kharacha*) and profits (*labh*) of the party while the workers (*chakure or karmachari*—in this case actors, actresses, dancers, musicians, technicians, middle management and the support staff) expresses concern over salary and wages (*mahina or betana*) and whether they will be paid on time, or paid at all. For the most part the jatra business is a lucrative one, but occasionally, due to unseasonal weather, political trouble in the countryside, wars, or anti-Bengal feelings in Assam, Bihar or Orissa, the contracts negotiated cannot be fulfilled and the business finds itself in financial straits. In this eventuality it is usually the workers who suffer first, and of the workers the 'stars' are the last to feel the strain.

The activities of the jatra office and officers, the 'parade' of people coming and going in the office to which I referred earlier, is all centred around the running of the jatra as a business—negotiating contracts, compromising with creditors, and the buying and selling of the party's performance expertise. Each jatra party must be registered with the Government of West Bengal and must be licensed (*anujnapatra*); legally listed with all liabilities (*mot dena*) and contracts (*chuktipatra*) subject to Calcutta High Court Jurisdiction.

One of the first and most important negotiations that takes place in the jatra business (if it is necessary) is the raising of capital (*artha or taka*) to cover the initial expenses each year before the contracts are negotiated and paid. If the party has been very successful the previous year the owner(s) (*malik*) usually reinvest a portion of their profits in the party in order to pay the advances demanded by artists as they sign their contracts for the coming season. If the previous year has not been as profitable as necessary to ensure the capital to assemble the best party possible, the owner will negotiate with a patron or 'angel' (*pristhapashak*). The patron will, for a fixed rate of return on a percentage basis (it varies from 10-25% depending on how much the owner needs the money and how much the patron can lend), invest the amount of capital needed by the owner. These patrons or 'angels' are usually silent partners, unknown to most of the artists and middle management and hopefully, unknown to the other jatra parties. If they became known, or so the owners reason, other parties may seek their capital. A few, however, are well-known and are backers for several parties. Occasionally, the web of contractual agreements becomes indeed entangled, and a 'star' who has received his salary all year, may reinvest in the party as a

patron. While this is necessary for owners to do, in some cases, they do so with a certain reservation—it dilutes, considerably, the contract with the artist as artist.

Another important series of dealings and negotiations that takes place in the running of the jatra party, once there is capital accumulated, are the ledgerly concerns of receipts and disbursements (*jama-knaracha*) A jatra party has a number of creditors (*uuomarna*) acquired for their rental fees (*bhara taka*) and material costs (*kharacha*). Some of these costs are fixed—they require dealing with people only since there is no room for negotiation here; these are costs like electricity, telephone, government registration fees, advertising, purchase of technical equipment, printing, food and utensils, etc. Other costs are negotiable; office rent, costume rental, bus rental for the travelling party, car rental for the management and 'stars' travel, rehearsal hall rental (when it isn't owned), payroll, purchase of jatra plays, the percentage fee for a broker or contract arranger (*dalal*), etc. Most of these negotiations are made between the creditors and the owner of the party, but occasionally the negotiations will be handled by the manager of the party on the owner's behalf. This takes up a considerable proportion of the management's time and energy, and requires that they spend a great deal of time in the office. The party, as rentees, do command the upper hand, however, and most of the rentors come to the party office to conduct business, rather than making the party officials go out all over the city of Calcutta to ensure that all the arrangements for the party are made.

Once there is capital and all the expenditures necessary for the running of the business are set out, the jatra season is about to begin with everything ready—all, except of course, the main function of the business itself—the performers necessary for the production of the

performance. Each year the owners and the artists (*jatra shilpi*) negotiate and sign new contracts (*chuktipatra*). Each year jatra playwrights (*palakars or lekhok*—both words are used) are commissioned for or they peddle, newly written plays (*pala*). Each year artistic directors (*parichalak*), composers (*sur karas*), and dance masters (*nritya guru*) are engaged for each pala. And, each year new contracts are made with sponsors to ensure performances throughout the season.

Negotiating Contracts with Performers:

Jatra performers are under contract to a specific jatra party for a 10 month period, beginning in August and ending in at the close of May. The jatra season, in Bengali terms, is bounded by the fall puja cycle and and the *kal boishaki* (the pre-monsoon thunderstorms that occur unpredictably from the end of the month of Boishak through til the monsoon breaks). When the weather no longer allows these open-air performances to take place the artists are freed from their contractual obligations. It is at this time, around the month of June each year , that negotiations are made for a party spot the next year. When both owners and artists were trying to explain to me how this system works they used an analogy with the North American football system. When the football season ends, they said, the players and managers negotiate for the next year; players move from one team to another depending on how good a contract they can make. As a result the teams are better or worse for their players. Whether or not that is actually the way the North American football system works, it is how they perceive it to work and it is close to the way the jatra system works.

Depending on a number of factors a jatra artist will be able to negotiate a more or less advantageous contract with the owner of the

party. The factors that help to negotiate a favourable (one might even say, healthy) salary are: number of years in the jatra world; reputation among the management and other artists—this means reputation as a reasonable person and artistic reputation; popularity among the spectators; previous employment in the cinema or film world; reinvestment in the party; characteristics that will allow one to be cast as either the hero, heroine, anti-hero, or comic character such as voice quality, comeliness, facial pliability, ability in stage fighting, emotional expertise, etc.; connections in the jatra world, and the like. The monthly salary (*mashik mahina*) negotiated by each artist in their contract varies considerably from as much as Rs.6000 (about $850) to as little as Rs.85 (about $12)—this has consequences that I will discuss in the section on the internal organisation of the jatra party.

The party owner (*malik*) has a number of factors weighing in the final contract he negotiates with an artist: a contract for fewer rupees ensures more profit (*labh*) for him; but if he is unwilling to negotiate a good salary the more profitable and prestigious artists will go to the parties that will—this could mean that he would make fewer or less advantageously funded contracts during the coming year. Somewhere in the balance a decision is reached and the 'stars' contracts are negotiated. The more the 'stars' or 'box-artists' as they are frequently called, get as a salary, the less the other artists will get. Consequently there is not only tension between the owners and the 'stars', but between the 'stars' and the other artists as well.

Also thrown in, under the same contracting system, are the technicians and support staff. They, however, have less leverage in a negotiation since people with their qualifications are literally 'a dime a dozen' and eager to get into the glamour and employment of the jatra party.

The contract (*chuktipatro*) with the employees (artists, technicians and support staff alike) is quite a simple one, with only one printed paragraph listing the duties of the artist or worker, the responsibilities of the owner and the monthly salary to be paid and received. The duties vary, of course, with the type of job performed but a common and necessary duty is to be able to perform the job assigned to you every time the party is engaged. The responsibilities of the owner, as stated in this short contract, are to pay for the food and lodging of the artists while they are employed. In addition, should there be any injury acquired while either moving to and from a specific performance (e.g. a bus accident, which happened to the Loka Natya company while I was there) or while actually performing, the owner is required to pay for any medical costs that the performer incurs. The monthly salary that is stated, of course, is the one that was settled on during the negotiations.

For the 'stars' or 'box-artists' as well as a few others who are able to negotiate salaries above Rs.8000 (about $115.5) there are additional clauses appended to this simple contract that include specific items such as the following: specific kinds of 'fish' as food; lodging while travelling with only people of the same caste; an advance of up to 60% of their monthly salary to cover their expenses during the months of June and July; and the like. The top 'box-artists' will frequently have it stipulated by contract that they will be provided with motor car transport rather than travel with the rest of the party by bus, for specific locations where car travel is possible.

If the artists do not fulfill their contracts they could be taken to court over the matter, since the contracts are registered as subject to the Calcutta High Court, and when I went through the records at the Calcutta

courthouse I found that in fact, only three contracts had ever been taken to court. In all three instances the artists had failed to complete the year, and the owner had incurred considerable expense in hiring another artist to replace the recalcitrant one. The last such court case was in 1964, however, and most people within the jatra jagat indicated that they were surprised that I found even those three cases. The parties involved didn't remember the incidents very well.

Once a contract is signed in early summer, and an advance has been given, artists return to their family residence—if they have one—until early August when they are scheduled to begin the new season's rehearsal. All the contracts are kept safely locked up in the jatra office.

Securing the Plays for Performance:

The jatra playwright is a very important person in the jatra jagat; without new plays to perform the prestige of a jatra party would rapidly wane. Each 'A' Class Jatra Party has a repertoire of 4-5 plays each year and at least two of the plays will be new ones, performed for the first time.

When selecting the new plays for his party's repertoire, the owner takes into account a number of things: who the artists are—some artists do a better performance in some kinds of plays than in others; what the audiences seem to want—at the time this research was conducted the most popular plays were either revolutionary plays of both modern and historical themes or modern class struggle drama; the playwright's popularity and proven public success; and what he has heard about the intended plays of the jatra parties—this is usually a guarded secret until rehearsal has begun, since the plays themselves are an important factor in the status

and prestige of the party. This is one of the most important pieces of information that all owners try to find out, however.

There are several strategies and ways of securing the plays for a new season. From an owner's point of view, the simplest way, is the one that occurs least often—that is to have a playwright come and leave him a script to read in hopes that it will strike his sense of appropriate plays for the season. If a playwright peddles a play like this, the owner reads it and discusses it with his managers and the director of the plays. More often, however, the owner, after a discussion with the 'star' artists and the director will approach a playwright and ask him to write a play on a certain subject, taking into account that so-and-so is his director and that such-and-such are the main artists. A playwright can then say yes or no, and can command a higher price for his work.

Still another way of securing a play is to have a playwright associated with the party. Many of the more established parties in fact do have playwrights attached. In this instance the playwright becomes a more active member of the party—more active in shaping the repertoire of the party in any given year. Brojen De, the most prolific living jatra writer, while he writes plays for other parties occasionally, usually writes plays for the Natya Company (one of the oldest and most venerable parties in the business). The Satyamber Opera, the Loka Natya and the Madhabi Natya Company usually perform at least one play written by Bhariob Ganguly each year. The Tarun Opera, an innovative and decidedly political party, usually performs at least one play of the school master Sombhu Bagh. And so it goes.

Depending on the way that a play is secured, and depending on the reputation of the playwright and his ability to use language powerfully (*sakti likhe*) the play will cost more or less money. A party purchases

the play and the right to perform it exclusively for at least a two year period—then it becomes part of the public domain. The owner and the playwright will negotiate and arrive at a price that usually is within the range of RS.2000-Rs.6000 per play (about $280 -850).

Given the cost of a play from a known and powerful playwright, the owner will frequently purchase one play from a lesser known writer as well. If the play goes over well with the audiences it is a chance for a new writer to break into the jatra jagat.

Occasionally the play is purchased before it is finished, and to ensure that it gets done in time the owner will offer the jatra office to a writer as a place to stay while writing. Bhairob Ganguly, for example, who because of his association with the Communist Party of India-Marxist was unable to go back to his native village of Mulgram during the 1972 elections, lived at the Satyamber Opera office for over three months while he was writing a new play for the 1973 season. This way the owner has more constant control and watch over the production of the script.

Once there are artists and a script, there are negotiations with the director, composer, and dance master to consider. Since the jatra performance is a combination of verbal drama, songs and musical accompaniment, and dance-drama performances, the coordination of all these elements must be achieved. It is not only the owner's job to do this—since in some cases the owner does not get involved at all, but the management in general and the 'stars' are usually involved as well as a few people from outside the usual boundaries of the jatra jagat—theatrical playwrights and producers, professional musicians, drama teachers from university, and the like.

Securing Direction, Music and Dance:

The Director:

The director (*parichalak*—currently the most frequently used word or *adhikari*--an older word still used by some people in the jatra jagat) at present is usually either the main male artist or an older more experienced actor. An owner, when signing a contract with this artist will write in an extra clause adding some money and 'boxed billing' to the contract to encourage a good actor to take over the position as director as well. The owner, the director and some of the more prominent artists will discuss the meaning and the intentions of the play, deciding how best to stage it, how to play the dialogue to all sides of this open-air in-the-round production, how to move on the stage, and how to best use the minimal props available. The director usually also discussed the story-line and character motivations with the playwright. He will also discuss the music and its style and importance in each play with the music director or composer. The director only negotiates with the dance master if there is a dance scene in the play—say a caberet dance or a village dance—otherwise the dance-master is in charge of the dance-drama that precedes the dramatic performance.

Occasionally a director is secured from outside the usual jatra jagat. This is done, the owners told me, in order to produce an innovative play, or to attempt to enlarge the urban audience by changing slightly the jatra style, or to upgrade the image of the jatra as it competes with the cinema and the theatre. The Satyamber Opera consults frequently with Gouri Shankar Bhattacharya, a professor at Rabindra Bharati University; the Tarun Opera uses Amar Ghose, an instructor at the same university as director and production consultant; the New Prabhash Opera occasionally

engages Ramen Lahiri, a theatrical director, to direct their revolutionary plays, etc. Also the famous film star, theatrical actor and writer Utpal Dutta has become involved within the jatra jagat and has been writing, directing and backing a number of jatra party productions recently. In fact, Utpal Dutta, by 1970 when I began this research, seemed to be a spokesperson for the jatra, particularly outside Bengal; he participated in several national conferences on traditional and folk theatre where he presented both papers and discussion on the jatra of West Bengal (Dutta 1971:7-35). I refer to these papers elsewhere.

The Music Director-Composer:

The music is an essential part of the jatra performance, and so too is the music composer an essential part of the direction team. Within the jatra jagat there are two main types of composers, traditional and modern, although the traditional composers are being forced to compose songs of a more 'modern' style in order to keep their position within the jatra jagat. Once the owner has secured a script he will retain, for a set fee, a composer to write the music for the pre-performance concert, the dance-drama, and the accompaniment for the play. The composer reads the script, especially the words for the songs, talks to the director, and sets about writing the music in either a traditional or modern style. Many of the songs are still written using the canons of classical music, with a touch of Bengali folk songs, while some western and other foreign musical themes are making their way into the jatra. A composer may do the music for up to four or five plays per season and may work for as many different jatra parties. The owner chooses the composer on his past reputation and on the nature of the play. Prosanto Bhattacharya, a composer in much demand, is particularly known for his ability to write

songs for Western-themed plays and modern revolutionary plays. He has even been known to write music for the theatre, and particularly the plays of Utpal Dutta. Mohendra Dutta, my mastermahashya (music teacher and teacher about jatra music) and an older jatra composer, is chosen usually for plays on a village theme, historical themes or modern social drama. He writes songs considering traditional 'ragas' and classical styles of singing—he has been a music teacher of classical voice for some years.

Among the musicians on contract as regular seasonal artists there is usually one that acts as the director (*sur-parichalak*). During the rehearsal they direct the musicians and suggest the accent music that underscores and accentuates the dialogue. This is usually done through discussion and negotiation with the director, and occasionally with the composer as well. This 'head musician' is able to negotiate a slightly higher salary with the owner, for having this additional duty.

The Dance-Master:

Occasionally the dance-master (*nritya guru*) also dances for the party as a contracted artist, but more commonly the dance-master is employed to do choreography only, and he will do so for a number of different jatra parties each season. He negotiates with the owner about the content or theme of the opening dance-drama (some parties have traditional ones they have used for years and only like to change the dance choreography from time to time, not the theme) and then is left pretty much on his own. He is paid a set fee for his work, and it varies from Rs.800-Rs.1200 (about $115 -180) depending on his reputation and bargaining power.

If, within the play itself, there is a dance scene (a common feature of modern Western themed plays and historical plays using the Mughul court as a setting) the dance-master and the director will discuss and plan the dance portions. In this aspect the owner has little say.

With the play and the personnel needed in writing and/or directing the various parts of a jatra performance acquired, the jatra owner and his management turn their concerns to securing their audience—the spectators without which the performance would not happen.

Securing the Jatra Sponsors and Audience:

There are four main ways of reaching the attention of the sponsors (*chutkikaraka*) and the people who comprise a jatra audience or spectators (*shrotrimandali or drishak*): formal advertising media (which I will deal with at one level here and analyse in the following section) and informal advertising, such as word of mouth, etc.; contact with a jatra broker (*dalal*); personal connections with the party or sponsors; and the preseason performances staged either as a festival in Calcutta or party sponsored previews.

The formal advertising initiated by the jatra party is designed to reach as wide an audience as possible—through newspapers and posted advertisements in district towns and larger villages. In addition, recently jatra parties have taken out ads in film magazines, placed ads in puja special publications, and ads in the frequently consulted Bengali almanac known as a *panjika*. After a contract has been made with a sponsor the jatra party provides the sponsoring group with flyers, brochures, posters and the like for local advertising. In addition to this the local sponsoring group may make up its own advertising, particularly if they have decided to sponsor a whole festival of jatra with several different

parties participating. Both the parties and the sponsors rely heavily on the use of 'word-of-mouth' advertising—anyone who has seen the play in another locality is usually more than willing to provide critical commentary. Along with the party or sponsor initiated advertising there is reviewer initiated commentary in the newspapers in the form of stories and critical reviews. Personal contacts in the jatra world provide much of the same kind of information.

It has become a common practice, especially since 1962 and the Shovabazar Revival Jatra Festival of that year, to hold a couple of weeks of jatra performances before Viswakarma Puja (the worship ceremony for the god of manual works) and the beginning of the contractual jatra season. People from various rural and district town locales come into Calcutta and watch these performances hoping to decide on the best parties to come to their locale. From a party's point of view these performances are final rehearsals and from a sponsor's or audience point of view they are a 'sneak preview' of what will be offered.

In order to make a contract with a party and/or set up a jatra festival in a specific locale, many sponsors choose to go through a broker, an arrangement middleman known as a *dalal*. Although specific brokers are not attached to particular parties, there is some association with a broker and some parties in that they may get a small payment (6%) from the party for having brought a potential sponsor to the office. The broker's job is as follows: When a sponsor appears in the jatra para (and news that this is happening travels very rapidly) a broker will approach him/them and ask if they need some help moving about in the jatra para, finding offices and meeting booking managers. If they say yes, then he will negotiate a fee for arranging their meeting and if the sponsor is not set on which parties they want to engage he will suggest parties with

whom he has an arrangement or from whom he thinks he can exact a fee. Sometimes a sponsor, who has used a particular dalal in the past, will come to the para, ask the whereabouts of the broker, and request him to arrange, on the sponsor's behalf, an entire festival. In this way, although brokers cannot live completely from the remuneration of this job, brokers can charge a larger fee.

Once the sponsor reaches the jatra office itself, there is a lot of negotiating and discussion that takes place, either with the owner of the jatra party, his booking manager or both. There is always some tension in this meeting since the monetary concerns of the two sets of people (sponsors and the party officers) are at odds. The party administration (*shashan*, in this case the booking manager or the malik-owner) and their backers (*pristhapashak*) are concerned not only that the party 'meet its expenses and break even', but the return on their investments and their daily expenses require that the contracts (*chukti-patra*) for performance be negotiated so that the total of the contract (*mot pharana*) is large enough to ensure a profit (*labh*). The sponsor (s) (*chuktikaraka*) are concerned that the total negotiated for the contract not be so high that they cannot make some profit from their ticket sales for the performance. Ticket sales are usually handled by the sponsor, and the price of various classes of tickets is decided by the local arrangers. Most sponsors are engaging the party in performance not only for the entertainment (which they all want and require), but to make some money for a local cause; a new road, a charity, club expenses, a local dispensary, temple fund, or the like.

Since it costs between Rs.1100 and Rs.1600 (about $150-225) per day to meet the expenses of a jatra party (party maintenance when they

are on the road, office and business rentals, and fixed charges), contracts are negotiated for between Rs.1800 and Rs.3500 (about $260 - 500). The final contract amount depends on how hard the sponsors bargain, how well they are able to make the owners and managers of the jatra party understand the good cause for which their profits are going, and what play and 'stars' will be engaged for performance. If the sponsor has personal connections within the jatra jagat he has a better chance of negotiating in his favour. If the party has had a lean year the sponsor also has a better chance of engaging them for less money. If, however, the sponsor comes from what is known as a wealthy locale, or a locale known for its 'love of jatra', the party can hold out for more money. Parties with a particularly popular repertoire, or even a popular single play, are also able to request and negotiate for more money. While there is tension in this bargaining process, it is apparently enjoyed by both parties—I have seen and heard a lot of joking, cajoling, and manipulating going on in this otherwise serious business of discussion.

There is one area of negotiation where the interests of the party and the interests of the sponsors coincide; the negotiation for more than one night of performance. If the party can be engaged for 2 or 3 successive evenings they usually will request less money per performance. This is largely because their overhead and energy are both saved from constant moving from locale to locale. Since the party plans its repertoire to include several types of plays, there is the possibility that a sponsor will engage them for several performances. The only things mitigating against this are whether a particular play (in this case perhaps a very popular one that season performed by a different party) has been requested by people in the sponsoring locale, or whether the sponsors

have planned a festival in which they are intending to give prizes to the different parties for best play, best actor, and the like.

When a contract has been signed, the sponsor is given the various advertising materials (posters, brochures, flyers) that he requires as well as a diagram indicating how and to what specifications the performance area should be set up. If it isn't done to the proper specifications (proper size stage, musicial seating, lighting, generating power, green room, etc.) the party can legitimately refuse to perform. Having the specifications as early as the contract helps to ensure that the sponsors will have all the appropriate arrangements made. Each party uses basically the same stage, but for particular plays there are usually some changes in specification. On the following three pages there are two examples of stage specifications given the sponsors.

The more set a party is in its itinerary early in the season, the better and more secure a party feels about its negotiations for the rest of the season. Branch booking offices are set up in several locales in order to facilitate the regional success of the party. The process of negotiating a contract in a branch office is much the same as in the Calcutta office, even though a party may share an office. Some of the large district towns or other state capitols, where branch offices are located do have their local dalals as well. In fact, making a contract in a branch office may be considerably easier, since two or three parties usually join together in running these offices in order to minimise the costs of an extra office. In Tinsukia, Assam (the very heartland of the Assam tea estates where jatra is very popular among the Bengali managing elite as well as the Assamese workers—Assamese and Bengali are closely related languages) for example, the New Arya Opera, New Prabhasb Opera,

JATRA STAGE SPECIFICATION TERMINOLOGY

Mancho- Stage, usual dimensions 20' by 20' and 2-3' high.

Musik Bakla- Place for the musicians to sit, usual dimensions 4' wide and 1-1½' high.

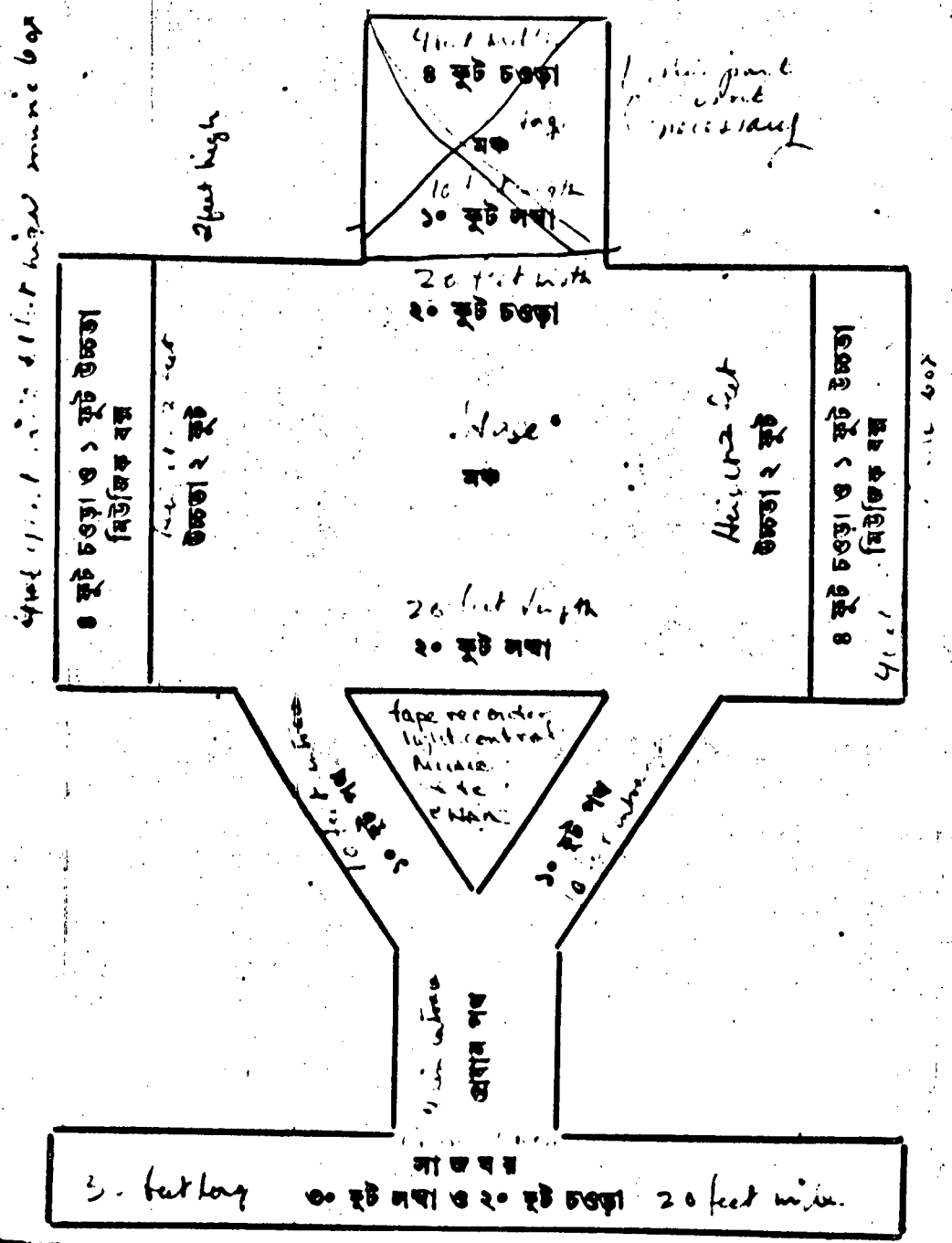
Prabesh Path- Entrance/Exit path, usual dimensions 4' wide and 10-15' long.

Saj Ghar- Green Room (dressing room), usual dimensions 20' wide and 30-50' long.

Alô- Lights and lighting arrangements, lines, loops and switches.

Shamiyanar- Stage centre for action, the 'pandel' clearance needed here is at least 14-16' high

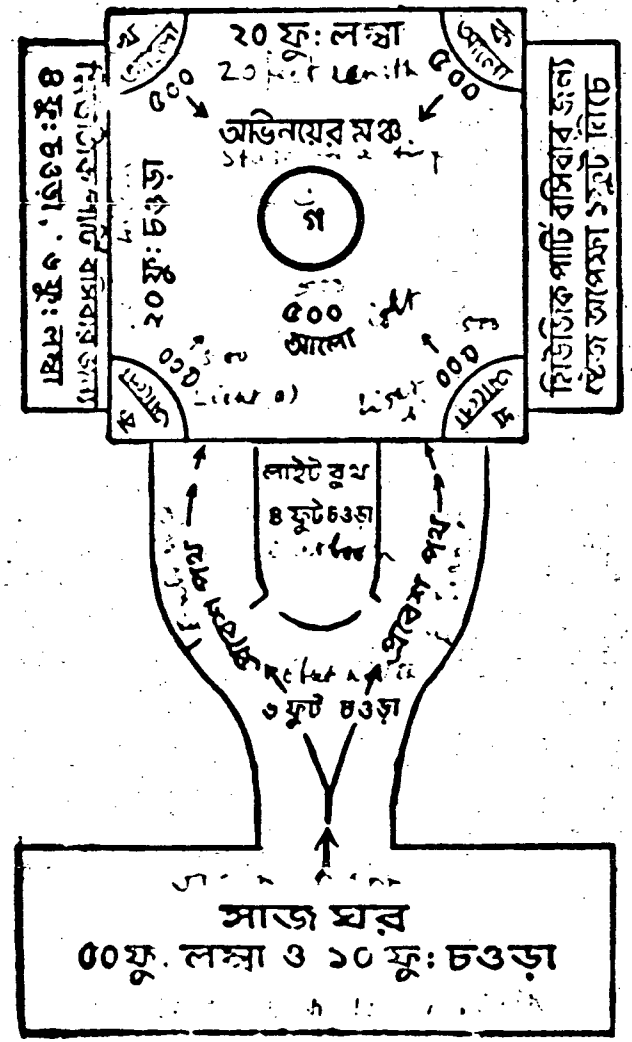
সত্যম্বর অপেরার
জালিয়ানওয়ালাবাগ
নাটকের মঞ্চ ও পথ নির্দেশ



তরুণ অপেরা

১১৩, রবীন্দ্র সরণি, কলিকাতা ৬ ফোন : ৫৫-৭১২১

আমাদের মঞ্চ পরিকল্পনা



১। আমাদের নক্সা অনুযায়ী ষ্টেজ তৈরী করাইবেন।

২। ষ্টেজের বামদিকের মিউজিক পার্টি বসিবার স্থান ডানদিকের তুলনায় অর্ধেক রাখিবেন। ষ্টেজের উচ্চতা হইতে মিউজিক পার্টি বসিবার স্থান দেড়ফুট নীচু ষ্টেজের লাগোয়া থাকিবে।

৩। ষ্টেজের উচ্চতা কমপক্ষে তিন ফুট হইবে। তার অধিক হইলে ভাল হয়।

৪। ষ্টেজে উঠিবার দুই পাশের প্রবেশ পথে ৪ ফুট চওড়া করিয়া তক্তা থাকিবে।

৫। (ক) হইতে (ক) একই লাইনে দুটি আলো জ্বলিবে।

৬। (খ) হইতে (খ) একই লাইনে দুটি আলো জ্বলিবে।

৭। (গ) মধ্যে একটি লাইনে আলো জ্বলিবে।

৮। মোট তিনটি লুপ লাইন নীচে লাইট বুথে থাকিবে। আমরা আমাদের লাইট বোর্ড ভয়েন করিয়া লইব।

৯। প্যাণ্ডেলের চারপাশে আলোর সুইচ আলাদা থাকিবে এবং নাটক যখন আরম্ভ হইবে তখন সমস্ত অন্ধকার থাকিবে, কোথাও কোন লাইট পাস করিবে না।

১০। প্রতি সারিতে ৫০০ পাওয়ার করিয়া আলো থাকিবে। মধ্যে গ ৩০০ পাওয়ার, ক—৫০০, ক—৫০০, খ—৫০০, খ—৫০০।

১১। যদি ডায়নামো হয় তাহা হইলে প্রতি সারিতে ৪০০ শত পাওয়ার এবং গ ২০০ শত পাওয়ার থাকিবে।

১২। ষ্টেজে তিনটি সিঙ্গল মাইক লাগিবে। নীচে লাইট বুথের কাছে একটি টার্ণার মাইক থাকিবে। চার পাশে ৪টি হর্ণ থাকিবে, মেসিন যেন ভাল হয়।

১৩। ষ্টেজ লাল রংয়ের কাপড় দিয়া সাজাইবেন না, সাদা অথবা ব্লু রং থাকিবে।

১৪। ১৫০ এম্পারেজি ব্যাটারী ৬টি রাখিবেন।

১৫। যদি ডায়নামো হয় তাহা হইলে মাইক চালানোর জন্য ফুললোডেড মটরকার ব্যাটারী ১টি রাখিবেন।

ছাপাই প্রেস : রূপায়ণ পত্রিকা, ৮১, [illegible] কলিকাতা ৩। টেলিফোন : ৫৫-১৮০০ থেকে মুদ্রিত।

INSTRUCTIONS FOR TARUN OPERA'S *LENIN*

1) Make the stage according to our blue-print.

2) The place for the accommodation of the music-party on the left side of the stage should be half in measure to the right. The place for the music-party to sit must be 1½ feet lower than the height of the stage and it must be next to the stage.

3) The height of the stage must be at least three feet. It is better to have more height for the stage.

4) Entrances for alighting the stage, on two sides of the stage, must be made of planks 4 feet wide.

5) From ' ka' to ' ka' two lights must be on this line.

6) From ' kha' to ' kha' two lights must be on this line.

7) ' Ga' in the middle must have one light on.

8) Altogether three loop lines must be there for the light booth. We will take the responsibility to bring our own light-board.

9) On all sides of the 'pandal' there should be separate light switches and when the play begins the whole place should be in darkness.

10) In every line there should be 500 watt bulbs, except in the middle where there should be a 300 watt bulb.

11) If an electric dynamo is used, then on every line 400 watt bulbs may be used and in the middle a 200 watt bulb.

12) On stage, three sure microphones must be installed. Below, near the light booth there must be one turner mike. On four sides there must be four horns. The instruments must be in working order and of good quality.

13) Do not decorate the stage with red cloths. The colour should preferably be either white or blue.

14) Keep ready six '950' Brand Everready batteries.

15) If an electrical dynamo (generator) is used, then for running the mikes keep ready two fully loaded Motor car batteries.

Tarun Opera and any other parties that may have decided to go to Assam that year, all share a single booking office; a representative from each party has their own desk within the office. This facilitates setting up a jatra festival, particularly it saves having to move all around the jatra para and the expense of having to go to Calcutta.

The terms of the contracts with sponsors are reproduced on the following few pages. They do speak for themselves, but certain items are of note: responsibility for generating power, food and lodging, transport, and government taxes lie with the sponsors; specified performers, beginning the performance on time, provision of programmes, and paying the generating costs if a performance does not occur, lie with the party.

The language and negotiations made in the jatra business are specific to it, in that not too many businesses deal with the production of cultural performances, but they certainly fall within a bargaining idiom that is very familiar to all Bengalis: a generalised code which all parties share.

নং ———— ৺ পোড়ামাতৃকায়ৈ নমঃ ফোন নং ৫৫-৮১১০

লোক সংস্কৃতির একনিষ্ঠ পূজারী ৺গৌর চন্দ্র দাসের নিরলস কর্ম্মসাধনা সমৃদ্ধ

রেজিঃ নং ২৬৪৯

সত্যম্বর অপেরা

স্বত্বাধিকারী—শ্রীশৈলেন মোহান্ত, বি, কম্
৩৩৩এ, রবীন্দ্র সরণী, কলিকাতা-৬
(All Subject to the Calcutta High Court Jurisdiction)

৺বৃত্তি ————
তহুরী ————
খোরাকী ও পাথেয় সহ
মোট ফুরাণ ————
একুনে—

শ্রীযুক্ত
সাকিম থানা ফোন নং
পোষ্ট জেলা টেলিঃ অঃ

কস্য চুক্তি পত্র মিদং কার্য্যঞ্চাগে—

মহাশয়,

সন ১৩ সালের মাসে তারিখে বারে সময় গ্রামে উপলক্ষে আমার অপেরা পার্টি অভিনয় করিবার জন্য খোরাকী কলপানি মোট ফুরাণ দেং ধার্য্য করিয়া স্বয়ং বা আপনাদের পক্ষ হইতে শ্রীযুক্ত মহাশয়ের নিকট হইতে অগ্রিম বায়না বাবদ টাকা পাইলাম, বাকি টাকা প্রয়োজনে অভিনয়ের পূর্ব্বে বা অভিনয়ের মধ্যে এককালীন মিটাইয়া দিবেন। স্থান হইতে আমাদের জন্য সাজপত্র আপনাদের নিজ ব্যয়ে লইয়া যাইবেন এবং গহনা আদি উক্ত স্থানে পৌঁছাইয়া দিবেন। পার্টি উক্ত স্থানে উপস্থিত হইলে, আপনাদের যানবাহনাদির বন্দোবস্ত না থাকে যদি যথাসময়ে অভিনয় না হয় বা পরবর্ত্তী অভিনয়ের কোন ক্ষতি হয়, আপনারা সেই ক্ষতির দায়ে বাধ্য রহিলেন। যদি কোন দুর্ঘটনাবশতঃ ২/৪ দিন অভিনয়ের তারিখ পিছাইয়া যায় বা কোন অভিনেতা অনুপস্থিত হয়, তাহার জন্য আমি ক্ষতিপূরণের দায়ী হইব না, এতদ্ব্যতীত অন্য কোন কারণে আপনার অভিনয় না করি বা চুক্তিপত্র ফেরৎ করি তবে আপনাদের আসরের বোকসান হইলে দায়ী রহিলাম। আপনি যদি কোন কারণে অভিনয় না করান বা চুক্তিপত্র বাতিল করেন তাহা হইলে চুক্তির সমুদয় টাকা বিনা আপত্তিতে মিটাইয়া দিতে বাধ্য থাকিলেন। উপরোক্ত সর্ত্তে আমি অভিনয় করিতে সম্মত হইলাম। প্রত্যহ ২৫ খানি হিসাবে প্রোগ্রাম পাইবেন। আমি বা আমার ক্ষমতাপ্রাপ্ত কর্ম্মচারীর স্বাক্ষর ব্যতীত উক্ত চুক্তিপত্র বা টাকা আদান প্রদান সঙ্গত হইবে না। পুনঃ প্রকাশ থাকে যে—হাঁড়ি, কাঠ বা কয়লা, পাতা, মাছ এবং সম্প্রদায়গণের থাকিবার জন্য চা১০ খানি বাসাঘর দিবেন। সাজঘরের আবশ্যকীয় দ্রব্যাদি দিবেন। যদি তাহা না দেন তাহা হইলে সাজঘরের জন্য প্রত্যহ টাকা হিসাবে দিবেন। ধার্য্য তারিখের দিন পূর্ব্বে অগ্রিম টাকা নিম্নের মত ঠিকানায় লোক মারফৎ অথবা টেলিগ্রাম মনিঅর্ডার দ্বারা পাঠাইয়া দিবেন। ধার্য্য তারিখের মধ্যে অগ্রিম টাকা না পাঠাইলে চুক্তিপত্র বাতিল হইবে। প্রত্যহ অভিনয়ের টাকা অভিনয় আরম্ভের পূর্ব্বে মিটাইয়া দিবেন। প্রয়োজনবোধে প্রথম শ্রেণীর ফ্রি পাস প্রত্যহ খানি হিসাবে দিবেন।

মোকাম— ইতি—সন ১৩ সাল, তারিখ—

বিঃ দ্রঃ—কোনও প্রকার সরকারী করের জন্য কোম্পানী দায়ী নহে।

শ্রীশৈলেন মোহান্ত
লেখক শ্রী—

SATYAMBER OPERA

CONTRACT—WHAT THE PARTY AGREES TO

No._____ Our Poramatrikao Nama[1] Phone No._____

Enriched by the ceaseless efforts of the late Gour Chandra Das, a devoted votary of folk-culture.

Reg. No.[2] 2649 S A T Y A M B E R O P E R A

Proprietor: Shri Shoilen Mahanto
333A Rabindra Sarani, Cal. 6

Allowance_____
Amount in Prizes_____
Expenses for boarding lodging and travel
_____

(All Subject to Calcutta High Court Juridstiction)

Agreement for total amount_____

_____

All totalled_____

Mr. Shrijukta _____(name and surname)
Address_____Police Station_____Phone No._____
Post_____District_____Telegram Off._____

Kashya chuktipatra karyyeagea[3]

Dear Sir,_____
The year ( ), in the month ( ) on the date ( ) on the day ( ) the time ( ) in the village ( ) on the occasion ( ). My opera party for dramatic performance, taking into account all expenses, boarding, lodging, honouraria, etc. All totalled as fixed by the company, got from yourself or from Mr. _____, on your behalf as advance for booking _____ amount of money, and the rest of the amount you must pay before the dramatic performance or during the performance by _____ time. You must take the persons of the jatra party and their costumes, decorations and various other items at your own expense from _____ (place) and then after the performance take them back to the same place at your expense. When the party arrives there, if due to

your failure to arrange conveyance the performance cannot take place on time, or if due to that failure the next programme of performance is hampered in any way or harmed, you remain bound to compensate for that. If due to some accident or unavoidable reasons the date of acting is postponed for a few days and if some actress or actor fails to be present, for that I will not be liable to compensation. Besides this point, if for any reason or other we do not perform at your place or if we return the contract papers, then I am ready to pay you the amount spent on the illuminations of the 'ashara' of the performance, by you. If you, for some reason or other stop the performance or cancel the contract paper, then you must remain obliged to pay all the money according to the contract without raising any objection. I am ready to perform according to the conditions mentioned above. Every day you will get programmes to the amount of 25 free. Any payment made to anybody other than myself or to an employee of my organisation authorised by me, would not be valid and would be sanctioned by us.

Again it is pointed out that you must give the party utensils for cooking and eating and banana leaves to be used as plates and fuel for cooking and fish as an essential item of food, six to ten rooms for lodging. If you do not do so, then you must pay _____ (amount) for the expenses of the green-room. This amount of advance money _____ must be sent by you to the address given, either by person or by telegraph money-order a few days before _____ the date fixed for performance. If the advance money is not sent within the fixed date, the contract will be null and void. The money for daily acting must be paid by you before the commencement of acting. If necessary you should give us _____ first class free passes daily.

Address of Jatra Party

Yours, etc. year 13__

Date_____

Signed: Shri Shoilen Mahanto

Contract copier:

Shri_____

Please note: The Jatra Party is not responsible for the payment of any taxes levied by the Government.

NOTES

1. On their letter head is the name of the patron goddess of their party—here it is Kali, whose temple is in Navadip. Nadia District in West Bengal; the name literally means 'burnt mother' because the temple and the image were once really burned by an accidental fire. The locality of Navadip is known as the 'burnt mother locality', and this party once was affiliated with that place.

2. All professional jatra parties are registered as small businesses with the Government of West Bengal. Each party receives a registration number and that must appear on all official documents.

3. This is a conventional legal phrase in Sanskrit; it is usually used at the beginning of a legal contract or a letter written in legal language. It means this is the legal contract paper of sombody, i.e. of a particular party on the occasion of entering into a contract or agreement.

নং _____ ওঁ পোড়ামাতৃকায়ৈ নমঃ কোন নং ৫৫-৮১১০

লোক সংস্কৃতির একনিষ্ঠ পূজারী ৺গৌর চন্দ্র দাসের নিরলস কর্ম্মসাধনা সমৃদ্ধ

রেজিঃ নং ২৬৪৯

সত্যেশ্বর অপেরা

৺বৃত্তি _____

তহুরী _____

খোরাকী ও পাথেয় সহ

মোট ফুরাণ _____

স্বত্বাধিকারী—শ্রীশৈলেন মোহান্ত, বি, কম্

৩৩৩এ, রবীন্দ্র সরণী, কলিকাতা-৬

(All Subject to the Caloutta High Court Jurisdiotoin)

একুনে—

শ্রীযুক্ত

সাকিম থানা কোন নং

পোষ্ট জেলা টেলিঃ অঃ

কস্য চুক্তি পত্র মিদং কার্য্যঞ্চাগে—

মহাশয়,

সন ১৩ সালের মাসে তারিখে

বারে সময় গ্রামে উপলক্ষে

আপনার অপেরা পার্টি অভিনয় করিবার জন্য খোরাকী জলপানি মোট ফুরাণ কোং

ধার্য্য করিয়া স্বয়ং বা আমার পক্ষ হইতে

শ্রীযুক্ত মহাশয়ের নিকট হইতে অগ্রিম বায়না বাবদ

টাকা পাইলেন, বক্রি টাকা প্রয়োজনে অভিনয়ের পূর্ব্বে অথবা

অভিনয়ের মধ্যে এককালীন মিটাইয়া দিব। স্থান হইতে পার্টির লোকজন

সাজপত্র আমাদের নিজ ব্যয়ে লইয়া যাইব এবং গাহনা অন্তে উক্ত

স্থানে পৌঁছাইয়া দিব। পার্টি উক্ত স্থানে উপস্থিত হইলে, আমাদের যানবাহনাদির বন্দোবস্ত না থাকায় যদি যথাসময়ে অভিনয় না হয় বা পরবর্ত্তী অভিনয়ের কোন ক্ষতি হয় আমরা সেই ক্ষতি পূরণে বাধ্য রহিলাম। যদি কোন দুর্ঘটনাবশতঃ ২।৪ দিন অভিনয়ের তারিখ পিছাইয়া যায় বা কোন অভিনেতা অনুপস্থিত হয়, তাহার জন্য আপনি ক্ষতিপূরণের দায়ী হইবেন না, এতদ্ব্যতীত অন্য কোন কারণে আপনি অভিনয় না করান বা চুক্তিপত্র ফেরৎ করেন তবে আমাদের আসরের রোশনাই খরচের দায়ী রহিলেন। আমি যদি কোন কারণে অভিনয় না করাই বা চুক্তিপত্র বাতিল করি তাহা হইলে চুক্তির সমুদয় টাকা বিনা আপত্তিতে মিটাইয়া দিতে বাধ্য থাকিলাম। উপরোক্ত সর্ত্তে আপনি অভিনয় করিতে সম্মত হইলেন। প্রত্যহ ২৫ খানি হিসাবে প্রোগ্রাম দিবেন। আপনি বা আপনার ক্ষমতাপ্রাপ্ত কর্ম্মচারীর স্বাক্ষর ব্যতীত এই চুক্তিপত্র বা টাকা আদান প্রদান মঞ্জুর হইবে না। পুনঃ প্রকাশ থাকে যে—হাঁড়ি, কাঠ বা কয়লা, পাতা, মাছ এবং সম্প্রদায়গণের থাকিবার জন্য ৮।১০ খানি বাসাঘর দিব। সাজঘরের আবশ্যকীয় দ্রব্যাদি দিব। যদি তাহা না দিই তাহা হইলে সাজঘরের জন্য প্রত্যহ টাকা হিসাবে দিব। ধার্য্য তারিখের দিন পূর্ব্বে অগ্রিম টাকা নির্দ্দেশ মত ঠিকানায় লোক মারফৎ অথবা টেলিগ্রাম মনিঅর্ডার দ্বারা পাঠাইয়া দিব। ধার্য্য তারিখের মধ্যে অগ্রিম টাকা না পাঠাইলে চুক্তিপত্র বাতিল হইবে। প্রত্যহ অভিনয়ের টাকা অভিনয় আরম্ভের পূর্ব্বে মিটাইয়া দিব। প্রয়োজনবোধে প্রথম শ্রেণীর ফ্রি পাস প্রত্যহ খানি হিসাবে দিব।

মোকাম— ইতি—সন ১৩ সাল, তারিখ—

বিঃ দ্রঃ—কোনও প্রকার সরকারী করের জন্য কোম্পানী দায়ী নহে।

শ্রী

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CONTRACT—WHAT THE SPONSOR AGREES TO

No._____ Our Poramatrikao Nama Phone No._____

Enriched by the ceaseless efforts of the late Gour Chandra Das, a devoted votary of folk-culture.

Reg. No. 2649 S A T Y A M B E R O P E R A

Proprietor: Shri Shoilen Mahanto
333A Rabindra Sarani, Cal. 6

Allowance_____
Amount in Prizes_____
Expenses for boarding lodging and travel
_____

(All Subject to Calcutta High Court Jurisdiction

Agreement for total amount_____

_____

All totalled_____

Shrijukta_____(name and surname)
Address_____Police Station_____Phone No._____
Post_____District_____Telegram Off._____

Dear Sir,_____

In the year ( ) in the month of ( ) on the day ( ) at the hour ( ) in the village ( ), your opera party, for dramatic performance, as expenses of boarding and lodging and as honouraria ( ), the total amount fixed by your company from me or from Mr. _____ on my behalf, gets as advance for booking _____. From _____ (place) we will take the persons of the party, costumes decorations and other such items, at our own expense to _____ (place) and after the performance carry them back there at our expense. If the party, arriving at the place of performance, cannot perform on time due to our failure to arrange conveyance, and if that hampers or harms in any way the next programme of acting, we remain bound to compensate for that. If due to some accident or unavoidable reasons or if due to the absence of any actor or actress, the performance is postponed for a few days, you will

not be liable to compensation. Besides this point, if for some reason or other you stop the performance or if you return the contract paper, you will be responsible for paying for the epxense of illumination of our soiree. If I, for some reason or other stop the performance or cancel the contract, I will be liable to the payment of the whole amount as fixed by the contract without raising any objection. I assume that you are agreeing to perform in accordance with the above conditions of agreement. You should give programmes in the amount of 25. With the signature of yours or of any of your officers authorised by you, neither this contract paper nor any exchange of money should be considered as properly sanctioned.

Again, let it be pointed out that we will arrange for supplying the party with utensils for cooking and eating, fuel for cooking, fish and other food stuff and six-ten rooms for the lodging of the party. We will also supply necessary items for the green-room. If we do not supply items then we will pay daily Rs.25 cash for the expenses of the green-room. A few days before _____ the date fixed for acting, we will send the advance money to the address attached, either in person or by telegraph money-order. If the money is not sent within the fixed date, the contract will be null and void. The amount for daily acting, we will pay before the commencement of acting. If necessary, we will provide you with _____ first class passes everyday.

Address of Sponsor _____

Yours, etc. 13__

Date_____

Signed_____

Please note: We take it for granted that the Jatra party is not responsible for any Government taxes levied.

The Structure of, and,

Decision-Making Hierarchy in, The Jatra Business

In the previous section I introduced most of the specialised language and negotiations of the jatra business. Most of the positions and people were introduced from the point of view of the activities necessary for running the jatra business, and the considerations and words used in accomplishing this job. In this section I will explicate further the structure (and sub-structures) and organisation of the jatra business as a whole(*jatra byabsha and jatra byapar*) through a closer consideration of the 'parts' of the business, and the character of decision-making within the jatra jagat.

Most jatra parties are privately owned—they are alienable property; they could be and have been bought and sold, they are occasionally leased, and they are frequently inherited as are other forms of private property. Jatra owners (*malik*) and lessees (*ijaradar*) talk of the jatra party (*jatra dal*) as 'my jatra party', 'my artists', 'my managers', etc., no matter how the party was acquired. But to say that they are only concerned with *jama-kharacha* (income and disbursements) or that they are only 'tycoons', 'profiteers', and 'opportunists' as they have been portrayed by Utpal Dutta (Dutta 1971:17-20) is to paint only one part of their portrait—albeit an important outline and background. To be sure, they are concerned with their personal monetary gain and the money-making half of *artha* (meaning, money and political economy) takes precedence over the meaning-making half, however, it is difficult to separate these considerations from those of making an excellent or a superb performance. Most of the decisions they make and pass on to the

party are meant to ensure maximum booking, and maximum aesthetic entertainment and pleasure.

The jatra owner could be viewed as Hegel (1966:229-40) did the Master in a master/slave relationship; someone who is independent only when and if he is dependent on the slaves or Bondsmen. In most cases the owner does not travel with the party, he does not act, but he does receive his profits (*labh*) from the efforts and labour of the people he hires for the purposes of performing or facilitating the performance. The decisions that the owners take have bearing on 'large' issues and major changes, rather than the nitty-gritty or day-to-day decisions and dealings that managers have to contend with. Not without some consultation and discussion, he decides: which themes and plays should be in the repertoire; which 'stars' to hire; which artistic directors to engage; whether to send the party to outlying areas such as Assam, Bihar, Orissa, Tripura, Manipur, or, currently, Bangladesh; etc. He talks with his managers on a regular basis—at certain times of the jatra season this is daily; he deals his creditors whenever it is necessary; he worries about how the season is going and contacts his production manager from time to time during the season to find out what audiences are saying—he keeps 'his ear to the ground' or his 'fingers on the pulse of the people' as much as he can; and he approaches and negotiates with his backers or patrons whenever the occasion calls for it.

For the managers of the jatra party my presence and research was a nuisance—they disliked having to accommodate me within the travelling arrangements; they thought that they had to change normal operations for my ease and comfort, for the artists my attention and interest was flattering—they enjoyed being yet another centre of activity, but for the owners I was a real boon. In a very real sense I was their marketing

research, their avenue to knowledge about what the audiences thought about what they were seeing and their requests for changes in the themes presented in the jatra asara. In addition to this, since I was seeing the various jatra parties perform in various contexts, I knew their competitors for contracts. The owners realise the purport of Samuel Johnson's words in the Prologue at the Opening of the Drury Lane Theater:

> The stage but echoes back the public voice.
> The drama's laws the drama's patrons give,
> For we that live to please, must please to live.

even if they have not read his words. The group interviews that I held with audience members about which plays they liked best, what about the plays they most liked, which artists were best and why, and the like were critical pieces of information for them. On more than one occasion Shoilen Mahanto, the owner of the Satyamber Opera, would come out to a village where the party was playing in order to listen to the interviews I was conducting, and at the same time ask questions of the audiences. One could say, as Utpal Dutta does critically, that owners think "We (meaning himself and others who are trying to get into the jatra jagat) are destroying the jatra form becuase we are interfering with their profiteering" (Dutta 1971:18), but that is only a small part of their purpose.

Most owners that I talked with were seriously concerned about what village audiences knew, and saw their task, consonant with the traditional import of the jatra, to also be one of 'education' (*shiksha*) as well as entertainment. By catering to the wishes of the jatra goers, and buying plays written by the best jatra playwrights they can negotiate with on the popular themes, they can extend the exploration and understanding of the issues that are of importance to the people. Some

of the jatra owners and one lessee have particular political interests, leftist in nature, that guide their choice of plays and playwrights. They are actively concerned with the reinterpretation of Bengal's history and having a part in the shaping of Bengal's future.

Shoilen Mahanto, of the Satyamber Opera, talked a lot about the socially conscious side of the jatra malik. "I believe the society and the country cannot stay beyond politics and so now I am always watching the scene closely—choosing books (plays) with some politics and social message." As he understands Bengali society there are two kinds of politics; reactionary—meaning taking advantage of the 'toiling masses'. Many people, he says, "are taking advantage of the masses, and those people have the newspapers, weeklies and capitalist control of the radio—using it to their own choice." "Millions of people are being exploited and my dramas will be for the people—those who are actually working—clerks, office workers, labourers in factories, in industries, agriculturists and even middle class business people... these people may be educated through the drama so that the country can develop and the people can take control." The owner of a jatra party, in his opinion, has a noble profession, particularly if he looks ahead and produces plays for the betterment of society; "a jatra producer has a mission, like a doctor." He carefully chooses the plays—which should show that evil must die and good must conquer, the artists—who should have the talents to portray these themes well, the managers—who should keep a well-running team together, and keep the party financially running—so that the artists have pay for their work.

Some of the owners are less politically and socially concerned, but the jatra jagat, as I experienced it in the 1970's, was definitely alive with discussion about how to get new and social messages across to

the Bengali people—rural and urban alike.

On a sultry monsoon-soaked day in June when I was moving about in the jatra para, I dropped in at the Satyamber Opera office, where I happened upon a good example of this other side of an owner's concerns. An intense discussion was underway between Shoilen, Bhairob Ganguly (a playwright) and a person I had never seen before, and even though I tried to simply ooze in and melt into the background, as a foreigner in the jatra jagat it was impossible. The conversation stopped momentarily and after brief introductions were made and I was filled in on the nature of the request being made by the outsider, it continued. The outsider, a woman from the West Bengal Committee to Irradicate Illiteracy, wanted Bhairob to include a character in his play who was learning to read and write Bengali. Shoilen and she were discussing what kind of person the character should be in order to make the plea for becoming literate powerful and believable. Bhairob was actively listening and thinking. After she left it was decided that Bhairob would write in a character, a sweeper, who would talk about and demonstrate how he was learning to read and write, and how he was better understanding the world he was subjected to. This committee was formed when the United Front Government was in control in Bengal, and although it was still operating its funds for publicity and reaching the villagers had been cut. Shoilen, who is also a member of the Communist Party of India (one of the parties that helped to form the government), could reach many people through his jatra party, and agreed to do so. He and other owners are concerned about the people of Bengal, as well as making money.

Most important decisions emanate from the owners, and in return he receives information about his party from a number of sources, as well as the profits from it, or the losses, if the party has a bad year. The

consequences of a bad year, however, are not only felt by him—they are realised by all the people associated with or hired by the party.

The managers (for which the English word is the most common term used for this position) themselves have a hierarchy and a division of labour. The office manager, for example, has very little to do with anything other than keeping the actual party office in working order—he attends to paying the bills for rentals, does the errands associated with advertising either the plays or the whereabouts of the party (although he is not involved in composing or deciding about the contents of the copy that he transcribes and takes to the newspaper or printers), sometimes acts as a scribe when additional copies of the new script are required by actors for rehearsals, and sees to the security of the office. He takes direction from the owner and deals with few of the others in the party, except occasionally when he must deal with the head manager—the business and booking manager.

The business or booking manager oversees the other two travelling managers, makes contracts, plans the itinerary, and deals with the 'stars' and other members of the party in terms of complaints and payroll. He spends most of his time in the jatra office, as well, but whenever the party has difficulty, or whenever the party is performing near to Calcutta he will go and see what the party requires. When the party is 'on the road' he contacts the travelling managers to inform them of any changes in the itinerary or any news from Calcutta—directives and relevant political matters. Madal Boral, the head manager for the Satyamber Opera and himself a former actor of female roles, described his job to me as "the most important in the party", with a smile on his face. He has to answer to the owner if anything goes wrong with the running of the party. He and Shoilen, as a matter of fact, had a falling-out over his handling of

a personal matter between two of the main artists—an argument that ended with Madal leaving the party in the middle of a season. This left Shoilen in some difficulty and made Madal free to act as a sort of impressario for a while until it was patched up.

The two other managers, the one in charge of logistics and the one in charge of the production itself (this is where the traditional word *adikari* is most usually and sensibly used) take direction from the business or booking manager, but have their own realms of decision-making and responsibility as well. The manager in charge of logistics makes sure that the cooks and 1 other servant precede the jatra party to any location well-enough in advance to have the food and lodging arrangements secured by the time the party arrives, makes sure that the technical equipment is in order, and makes certain that any 'special' arrangements for a particular 'star' or stars or any special effect required are in order.

The production manager, on the other hand, looks to all the essentials of the performance. The *adikari* in the past was often the owner as well as the lead actor—someone who was truly in command or possessed of the jatra tradition. At present the role has changed, however. He takes direction from the playwright and the various artistic directors as to the particulars of the performance, he oversees the rehearsals and makes note of specific instructions and artistic suggestions that are made then and sees that the prompter is informed about changes, he handles complaints and problems that arise from the artists, and sees that the technical parts of the performance are integrated into a whole. Nowadays the production manager is still someone who has been in the jatra business for a long time, who knows the tradition of performance well, and who has been an actor himself. Subal Adhikari, of the Satyamber Opera, is a good example. He was an actor of female roles until he became too old to play ingenue

parts and lost the stamina for nightly performances, then he took on the role of production manager. He has been with the Satyamber Opera for many years, having first served under the former owner Shri Gour Chandra Das, and now under Shoilen Mahanto. In fact, he knows more about how the party should actually artistically run than does Shoilen himself. Before Shoilen makes production decisions he checks with Subalbabu about the appropriateness and feasibility and listens carefully to the information he receives from him.

Most of the artists (actors, actresses, singers, dancers, and musicians) have a say in decisions only to a limited extent—primarily they listen to orders and take direction, although they can suggest interpretations of characters. All but the 'stars', of course. They, too, take artistic direction, but they frequently apply pressure in the decisions that are made or taken by those who are technically in positions higher than theirs. They give orders to the servants, liberally—but this will be explicated further when I consider the interaction and organisation of the travelling jatra itself, in the following section.

The technicians and the support staff, being at the bottom of both the materials and artistic substructures give no one orders, take no decisions that have bearing on the running of the party or the performance as a whole, and listen to the managers and the artists. The technician in charge of lighting and the technician in charge of sound, however, are pretty much on their own—their areas of expertise gives them a certain autonomy envied by the others—it occasionally even gives them credits or mention in the jatra advertisements.

Most feedback to the owner about the running of the business reaches him through a retracing of the formal channels. Since all the

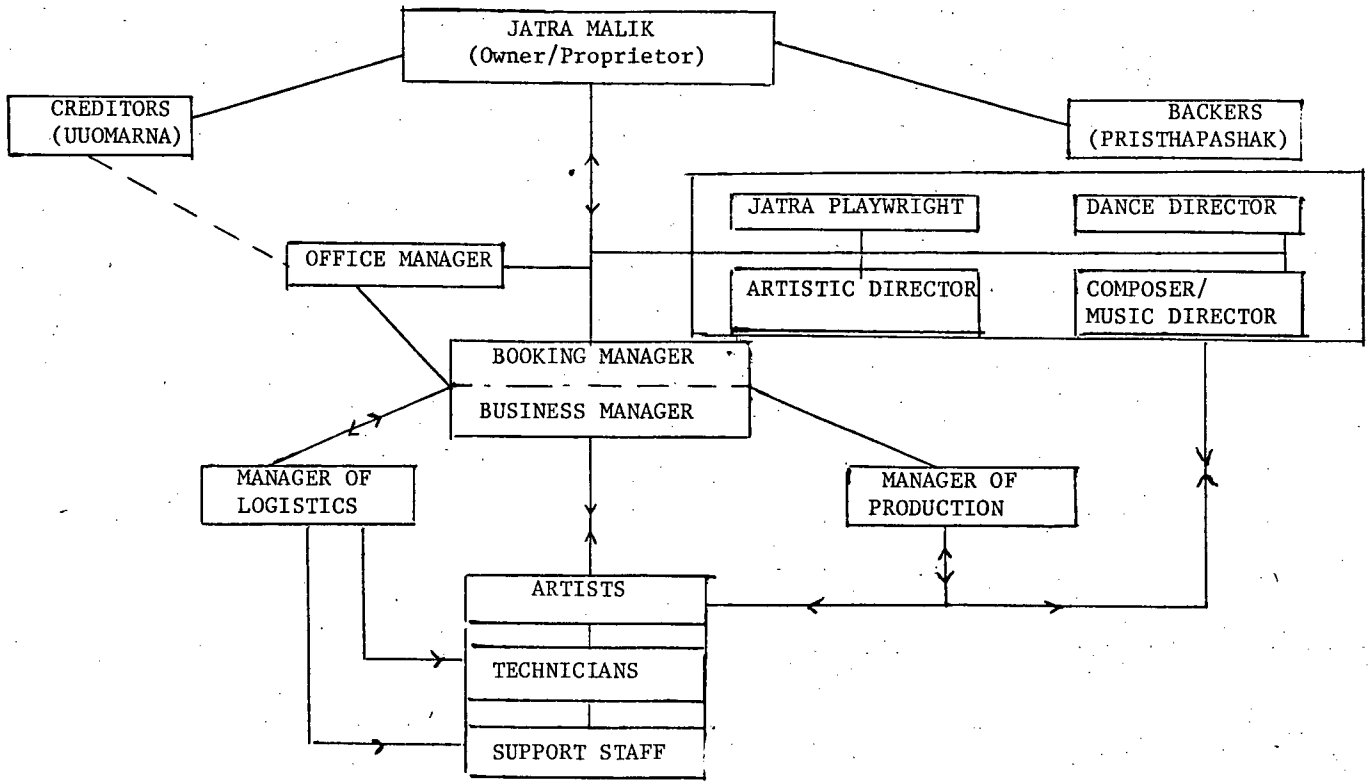
employees (*chakure*) are under contract, the terms of that contract lay out the duties and responsibilities.

The chart on the following page is a schematic view of the two interwoven sides of the jatra business as a whole. Solid lines represent direct links and the 'chain of command'; the dotted lines indicate an indirect link in which there is no hierarchical decision relationship, only one of interaction.

The Travelling Jatra Party: its structure and life on the road

The word, *jatra*, you will recall, means a trip, a journey, a procession, a pilgrimage, as well as, of course, an operatic dramatic performance. Part of the phenomenal meaning of the jatra is its sense of life process and realisation or freedom from attachment through motion, even though the journey and motion are depicted on stage; even though the people who participate in the 'journey' are for the duration of the performance themselves stationary. As is pointed out in Part Seven of this thesis, for the performers, the journey is both literal and figurative; abstract and concrete; life and symbol. It is through the nature of the performer's life-style, the structure of a jatra play, the themes in the performance, and 'virtual' combination of these elements that the audience or spectators acquire a sense of the 'reality' and 'illusion' involved in Bengali life. In this section I will consider the concrete journeying of the jatra performers and party in general by first, explicating the size and structure of a typical travelling party, and then examining the nature of 'life on the road.'

INTERLOCKING STRUCTURES IN THE JATRA BUSINESS



MATERIALS SUB-STRUCTURE

ARTISTIC SUB-STRUCTURE

While the Jatra Malik keeps track of most sides of the business other personnel are more specialised in their duties, it seems as though there are really two business structures meshed into one.

The Structure of a Typical Travelling Party:

The size of a travelling jatra party is determined primarily by a physical and economic constraint—the upper limit defined by the number of people that will fit into the Mercedes bus that most parties travel in, and the lower limit being defined by number of people needed to serve and assist the performers. If a party were to exceed 52 travelling personnel a second bus would be required, adding over Rs.850 (about $120) to a party's monthly bills. If a party were to go below 42 members the support and personnel would not be able to stage a play adequately. Most jatra parties I travelled with varied from 45-52 members.

Although, as A. W. Hare put it in his *Guesses at the Truth, Series II:*

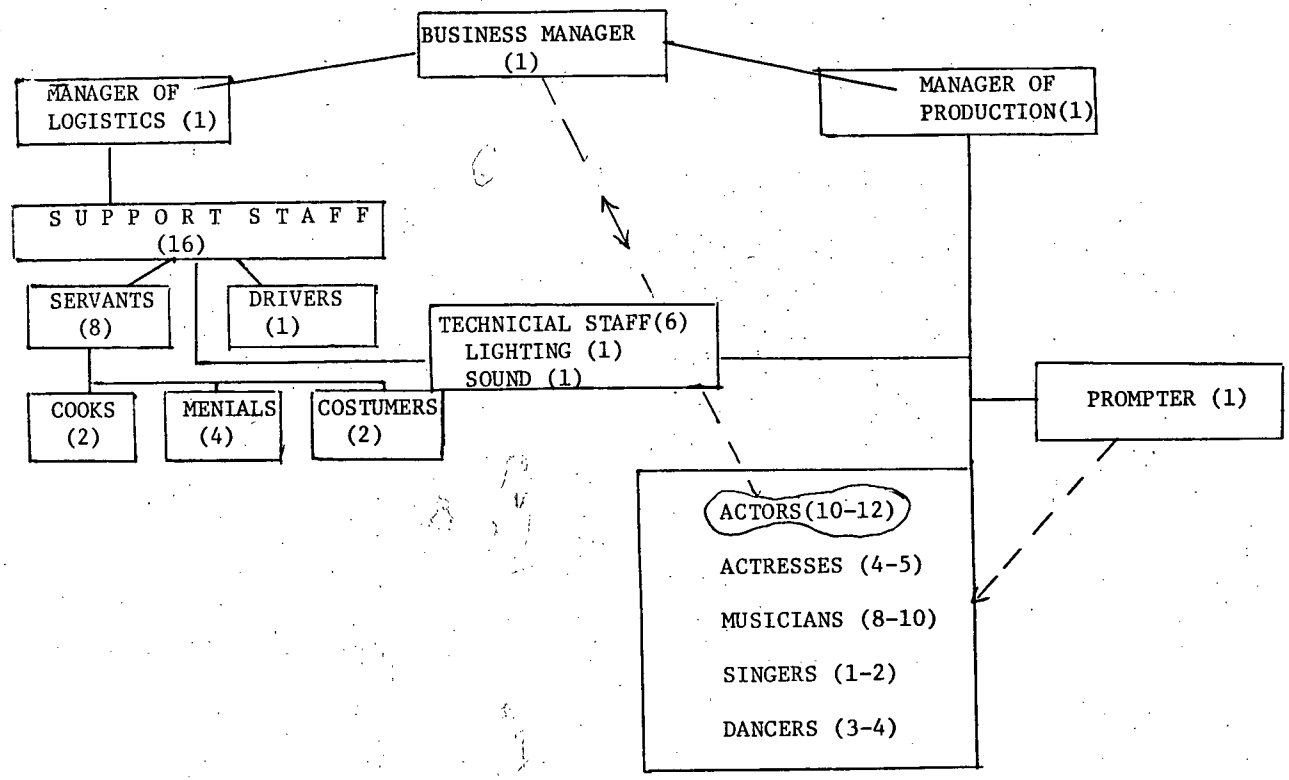
> Everybody has his own theatre, in which he is manager, actor, prompter, playwright, sceneshifter, boxkeeper, doorkeeper, all in one, and the audience into the bargain.

a travelling jatra party, in order to put on a performance, needs all these single aspects of a person's imagination to be separated into various people with these various functions.

The following schematic diagram shows how the travelling party is structured; the solid lines indicate direct links and formal lines of communication, the dotted lines indicate informal lines of communication.

Figure 2

TRAVELLING JATRA PARTY



When a jatra party travels there are about 45-52 members in the bus. The division of labour falls between the technical support side of the chart and the artistic production side of the chart.

The technicians seem to be connections between the two sides, along with the business manager.

The Extent of the Jatra Performance Area and Travelling Strategies:

Within a jatra season a jatra party may travel as many as 21,000 kilometers, primarily in the area outlined in Maps II, III, and IV. They do travel nearly around the world, in distance, but it is around their world—the Bengali speaking audiences found from the iron and steel towns of Raipur (in Eastern Madhya Pradesh) Rourkela Orissa, and Jamshedpur Bihar, all the way up to the tea estates and oil fields of Dibrugarh and Tinsukia, Assam, and, of course, all over the state of West Bengal and the country of Bangladesh. They play as often to audiences of industrial workers and management as they do to peasant-farmer villagers. In fact, the travelling jatra party is one of the few links between these distant and differently employed Bengalis.

Although I never witnessed a formal discussion of it, nor was I told that there was conscious planning of it, parties do not seem to 'run into each other all over the countryside', except occasionally at a planned festival with several performing parties, and they seem to be able to supply the demanded number of performances a year. I was able to discern a generalised pattern in the jatra party movement, however. At the beginning of the jatra season most parties are either performing out in the coal fields in and around the area of Asansol, or in the areas within 100 kilometers of Calcutta. Later on in the season, during the winter months about 6 or 7 of the 20-22 professional jatra parties move up to North Bengal and Assam to the areas around Siliguri, Cooch Behar, Gauhati and up to Tinsukia. Toward the end of the season, just before the monsoon downpours make open-air performances difficult, most of the parties are again in Southern Bengal. There are always a few parties that are able to go wherever a contract takes them; no potential audience is deprived of a jatra performance when they want one, although on

occasion they will have to either settle for a party that is in the area or change the desired performance date to correspond to when the desired play or party is available. The parties that go up to Assam one year, for example, may not go up again for another two years. Since they usually perform some of the same repertoire for two or three years (depending on the popularity of the various plays) an audience in an outlying area can usually get to see the plays they wish to.

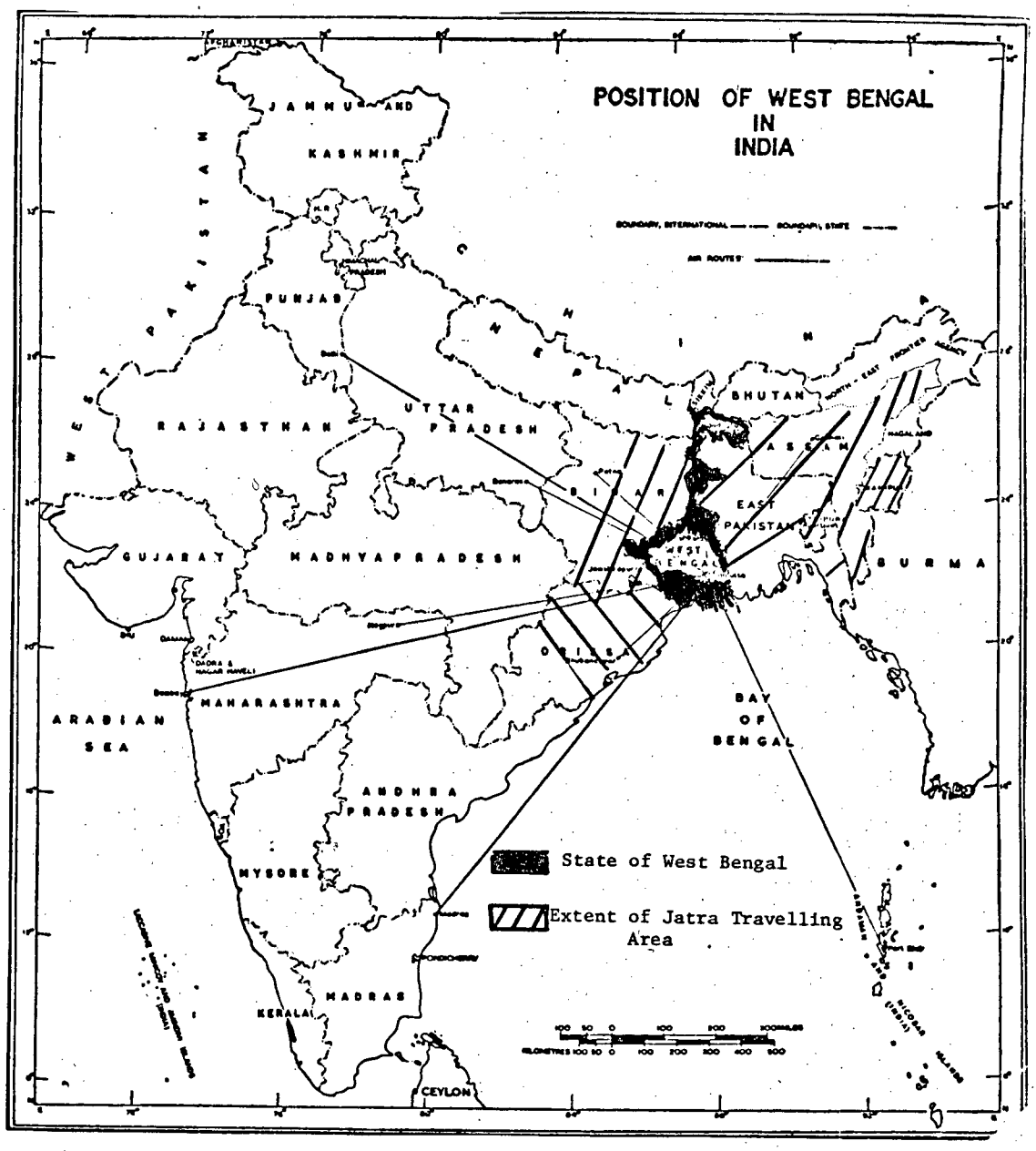
When a party chooses to accept a contract in a place as distant as either Raipur or Tinsukia they usually abandon the bus and travel by train, in first, second or third class accommodations depending on their rank within the party. Stars have been known to fly to certain places, to avoid the time and discomfort of ground travel. The decision to go to these places can be a costly one in other terms as well. Bengalis are not 'loved' in all the areas that border Bengal. In the past Bengalis were the management and landlords—colonists of sorts—and animosities were built up in the local inhabitants. Occasionally even now the anti-Bengali feelings are strong enough to cause difficulties for the travelling parties. More contracts have to be cancelled in outlying areas than in West Bengal itself. When the Tarun Opera was in Gauhati once, for example, they had to cancel a performance because there was a demonstration staged against the Bengali management of the company that had hired the party—the play was never performed for that contract.

The maps that follow provide an outline of the extent of the jatra area and indications of the location of the various branch offices that a party may set up during the year.

It seems that many localities are on a usual yearly circuit—it is not at all uncommon to have the same party appear in the same village or district town several years in a row. Parties usually play in the

Map 2

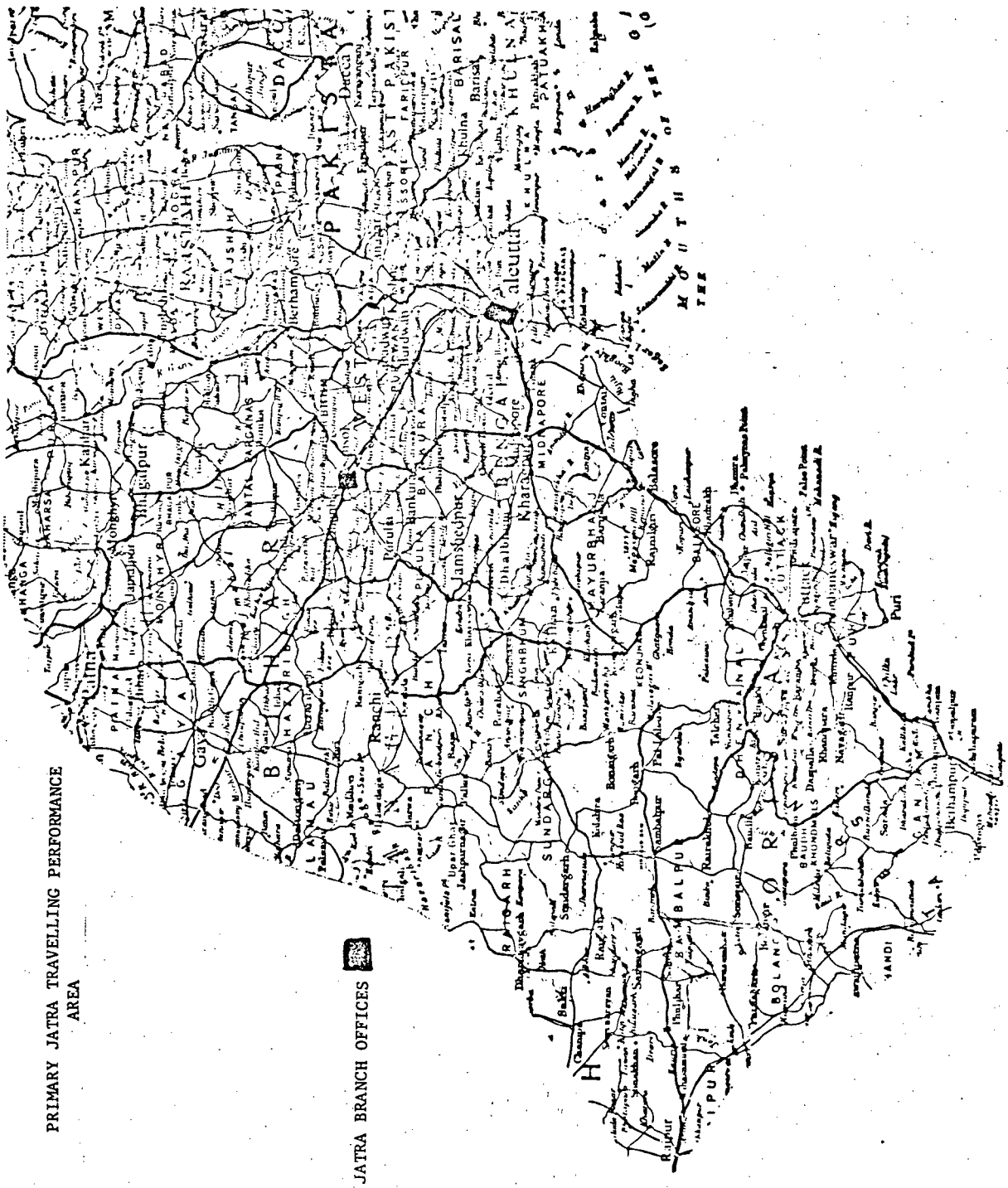
EXTENT OF JATRA TRAVELLING AREA



SOURCE; Census of India , 1961, Volume. XVI, pp. 76

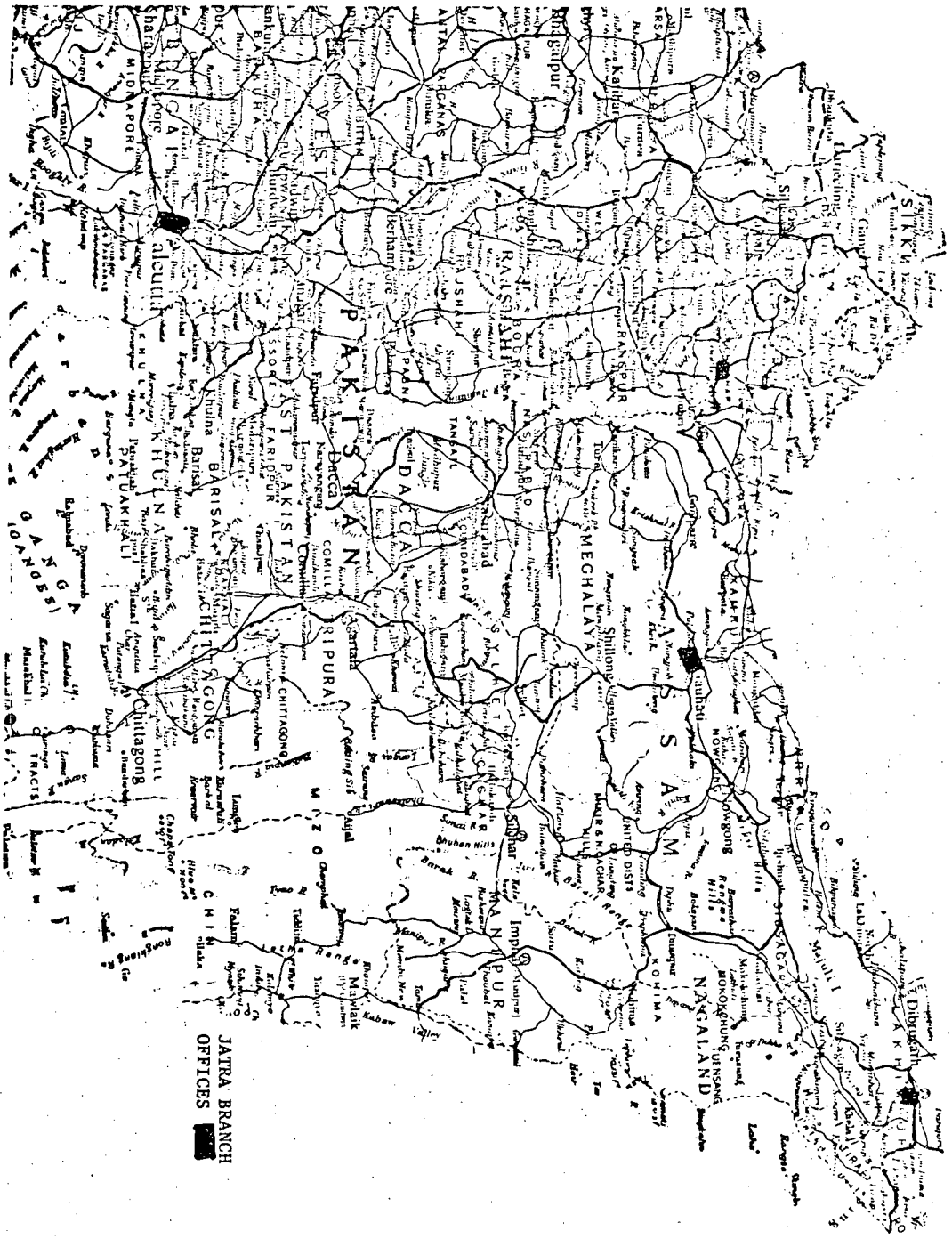
Map 3

PRIMARY JATRA TRAVELLING PERFORMANCE AREA



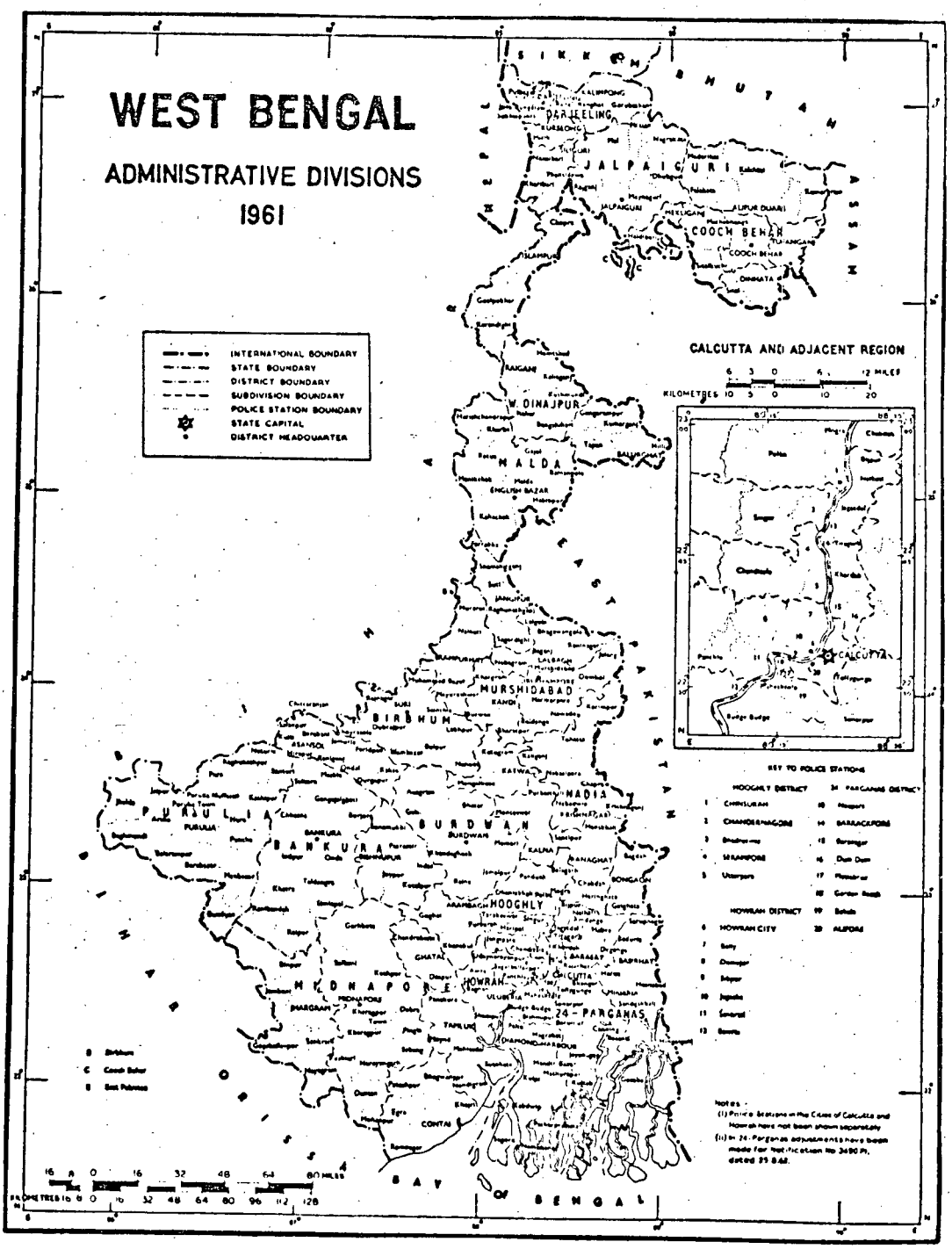
Map 3

PRIMARY JATRA TRAVELLING PERFORMANCE AREA



Map 4

LOCATION OF MOST JATRA PERFORMANCES



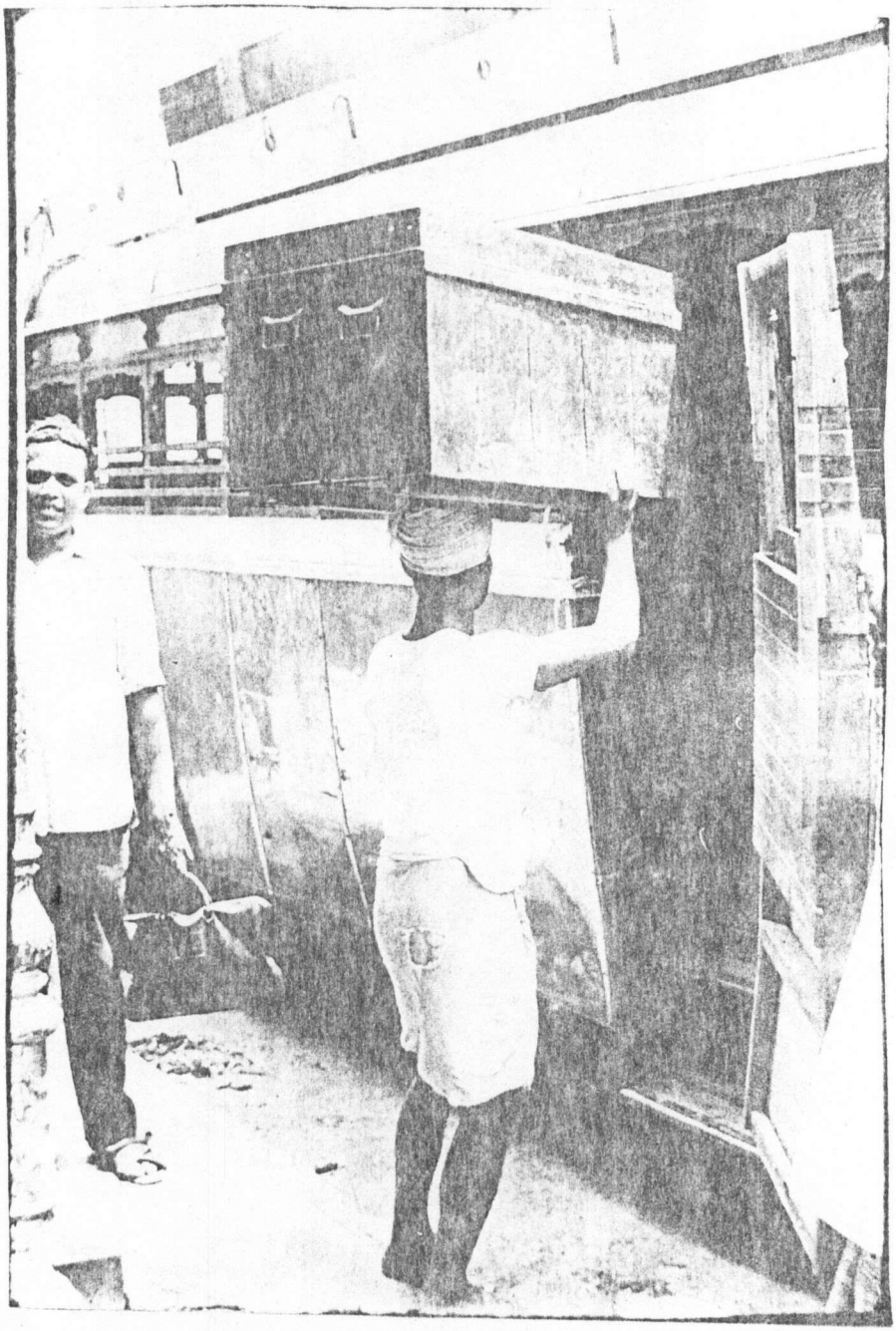
SOURCE: Census of India, 1961, Volume XVI, pp.75

localities where either stars, managers or owners have special ties; ties of land or kin.

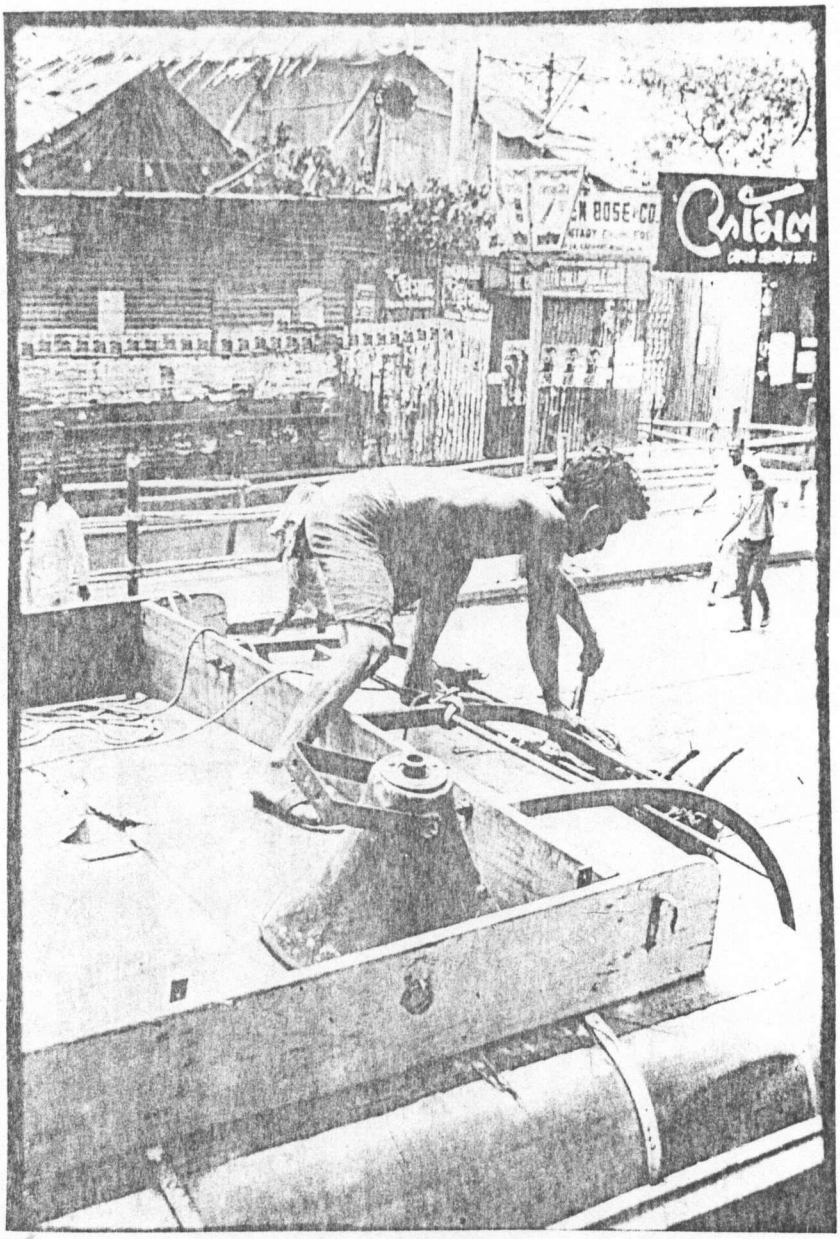
On the road:

Everything necessary for putting on a performance, except the stage and the power for lighting and sound, is carried with the party in green metal trunks, small grey metal cases, or muslin travelling cases placed either inside or on top of the bus covered with a canvas tarpalin (see the following three photographs of loading and taking off).

Travelling in the jatra bus is an uncomfortable and claustrophobic experience; I immediately understood why the stars and owners like to have cars for travel to and from the acting place. The seats are thinly covered metal or wood, but they feel like slabs of granite, the shock absorbers are usually non-functioning, several windows are usually broken letting in enormous clouds of dust and dirt, the aisles are filled with green trunks making moving or shifting position difficult, several people are filling the air with the stench of *biris* (raw rolled domestic tobacco), and there is either utter silence or an ear-splitting din with little in between. Add to this that the drivers, while usually very competent, attack the narrow, ill-paved, gravel, mud or dirt roads with speed and vengence. Artists and support staff alike complain—but also seem to be able to sleep or rehearse lines while inconvenienced in this way. The travelling life is hard, hectic and exhausting. It requires remarkable stamina.



19 LOADING THE BUS
Packing the Green Trunks used for carrying costumes and equipment



20 Packing and Loading the sound and light equipment

21 Loka Natya Bus loaded and ready to go to the countryside.

A typical two-day travelling schedule is as follows:

11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.	Arrive at place of performance
1:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m.	Bathe and set up bed-rolls, etc.
3:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.	Eat
4:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m.	Sleep or rest and relax
7:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.	Prepare for performance-make-up, etc.
9:00 p.m.-2:00 a.m.	Performance
2:00 a.m.-3:00 a.m.	Eat
3:00 a.m.-4:00 a.m.	Pack up and load
4:00 a.m.-whenever	Travel to the next place of performance
10:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m.	Drink tea and have something to eat, etc.

This is the schedule for between 24-26 days per month. Of course, it does vary depending on how far apart the various performance sites are, or whether the party has a two or three day engagement in the same locale. Basically, however, this nomadic life style (*jajabar jatir jibon*) is hard and surprisingly unvarying. A performance begins anywhere from 9:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. and ends 3½-4 hours later, and places may be anywhere from 50-150 kilometers apart.

Travel, in rural Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Assam, is difficult at best. The countryside is laced with rivers and swampy backwashes, and a wait of several hours for a ferry or boat that can take a vehicle of bus size is common. During the early season the rivers are still swollen in flood proportions, and roads are frequently either blocked, washed out or muddy. If the party travelled during the day they would be slowed and hampered by the amount of foot and animal traffic moving to and fro from market area to village or from paddy fields to village. There were a few times, when I was in the bus along with the party, that even at 5:00 a.m.

the narrow country roads would already be filled with enough traffic to slow us to the point where some actors would alight and walk along for a while, stretching their legs, and then hop the bus again when the traffic allowed us to pick up speed. If the road to a village or other performing area is impassable by bus, the sponsors of the performance will have to send transport to meet the bus and get the party to the village. I watched one party enter the village on a convoy of bullock carts, piled several feet high with trunks, lighting and sound paraphernalia, and people. Needless to say, a party must allow enough time to travel from one performance to another.

In spite of these difficulties of peregrination and the arduous schedule, performances usually manage to take place and the artists remain healthy and awake enough to perform. They must 'keep their wits about them' since they may be playing a different play each evening, and it wouldn't do to get their dialogue mixed up or the required actions confused. If the journey between one performance and the next is a long one, perhaps 250 kilometers, everyone seems to get on edge, lose patience, and tire, especially the children in the party (each party has one or two children to act the parts of children or to dance).

The number of performances of the Tarun Opera for the 1971-2 season is presented on the table that follows. While it was a particularly good year for them, their schedule is very much like any other performing party. The party travelled from Raipur, Madhya Pradesh, New Delhi, and Cooch Behar to places all around Bengal. They covered close to 23,000 kilometers while performing 211 times. This was a schedule that kept them away from Calcutta most of the year, although they performed in Calcutta more than a dozen times.

Table 1:

SAMPLE 1 YEAR ITINERARY

	NUMBER OF TARUN OPERA PERFORMANCES
	211
PLAY PERFORMED	
Lenin	78
Raja Rammohan	38
Napoleon	33
Mohenjodaro	32
Hitler	20
Ramalar Circus	10

COMMENTS:

1) Usually a repertoire does not include this many different plays. The Tarun Opera has been very innovative in using foreign themes, and so the reputation of some of their plays causes sponsors to request plays that are quite old. In this case Hitler was first performed in 1969, it would have been retired except for its popularity.

2) The hope of most parties is to perform 24-26 nights for an 8 month period—that would be 192-208 performances. As is apparent this year was a particularly good year for the Tarun Opera. Other parties did not do quite so well during this season—1971 fall-1972 spring.

3) The Tarun Opera travelled a hectic itinerary this year; they went from Raipur, Orissa to Tinsukia, Assam, and points in between in North Bengal and West Bengal.

Arrival and Setting-up:

Even if a party does not arrive by a method as spectacular as a convoy of bullock carts, the arrival of a jatra party is always an exciting event. Such an event is frequently used in Bengali novels; novels written about Bengal village life just about always have some reference to or long descriptive passage about the jatra. Manik Bandopadhyaya's famous *The Puppet's Tale*, is a good example:

> ...A sudden wave of great excitement had quickened the placid pace of the villagers' life...The first jatra performance was traditionally held on the seventh night after the new moon. The troupe of performers arrived a few days earlier, Sital Babu having directed its manager, at the time he engaged the party, to come with his men a few days in advance so that they would have enough rest and sleep after their tiresome journey to this distant village before putting on their show... The party arrived in the morning of the day before—a large number of men with a large number of chests, The villagers were pleased.
>
> (Bandopadhyāya 1936 (1968):42)

The children of a village or of a specific section of a larger district town or city, line the road, all trying to get a glimpse of party as it comes in. The excitement is heightened by the fact that jatra performers are exciting outsiders to most areas they perform in. Adolescents see the artists as models of 'modern' Bengali dress and behaviour—they are stimulated and animated with the hope that they can hear and see what is going on outside in the larger centres. Village elders hope that the party will not influence too many of the younger ones and that they will behave properly—although people expect the performers to operate according to their own 'code'.

The cooks and some of the other menials will have arrived in most cases on the previous day to see to the food and lodging—purchasing

necessary foods from the local market. After a while, the party is set up in the local school, temple courtyard, or other temporary arrangements that have been made for their sleeping and eating accommodations. Several times, I heard that the party was housed in large tents with cloth partitions dividing the areas for women from men, and the areas for eating from relaxing and sleeping. Most parties require about 8-10 rooms or divisions of space, for housing the personnel—the party is divided into sleeping units, usually 4-5 in a unit.

The parties are made up of people from all castes (*jati*); little attention is paid to interaction and hierarchical rules of purity. The cooks, however, are most often Brahmins so that all party members, should they be concerned about dietary rules and rules of commensality, are able to eat the same food. Some of the older performers are concerned about these matters, and many of the Brahmins will eat together in the same area, or be the members of a sleeping unit—this varies greatly from person to person and party to party. A more important division of eating and sleeping units is dependent on a person's rank or status within the party; stars usually eat with other stars or alone, stars can occasionally command a single sleeping area. Couples within the party, whether married or unmarried but living together, usually are able to share eating and sleeping arrangements. Children are usually placed in the sleeping unit that consists of the unattached women in the party.

Another area of concern is bathing. Usually Brahmin members of the party are able to bathe in the pond (*pukur*) set aside for Brahmins in the village area. Other party members may use other pukurs, or, more often, they direct the menials to carry water to their sleeping quarters, a section of which they may set aside for bathing. In these instances

the menials may get the water from any number of wells near the performance area or designated by the sponsors as available for the party's use.

Most of the concerns of everyday life, are handled quite easily by these nomadic journeyers.

Social life in the Party:

Friendship in Bengali terms (*bandhu*) is a very restricted concept. Most members of a travelling party, while they travel together, eat together, sleep together, and occasionally bathe together, do not consider themselves as 'friends'; nor are they enemies (*shakra*). Rather they fall into several other categories of acquaintences and relationships; they refer to each other most often as associates (*sangi*), well-known persons (*su-parichito*), or companions (*sahachara*). The terms for the relationships vary depending on whether they are male/male, male/female, or female/female; occasionally they simply refer to each other as people of the party (*daler lok*). If people are higher in rank or older the usual kin term endings will be applied to a person's name, e.g. Swapanda, or Joytsnadi—the da and di being short for the reduplicated terms for older brother and older sister. If a person is clearly higher and no claim is being made on them, people will refer to them as babu—respected person. Owners and managers are always respectfully addressed. With the exception of couples or people unmarried but living together, relationships are familiar but not intimate; friendships are intimate relationships, where the two parties are tied or bound together by strong ties of sentiment and shared information about each other's feelings. This is unusual in a jatra party—people are rather co-workers.

Even though most of the associations are not of the closest Bengali kind, they are, nonetheless enduring, frequently well-beyond the jatra season. Most jatra people are known to one another, and even though there is competition between artists within the jatra jagat, most artists do respect each other. For example, when Panchu Sen, a famous, well-known innovative actor, died, most people in the jatra para were on hand to pay their respects as the body was paraded through the para on the way to the burning grounds (see Photo 22).

During the free hours when the party personnel are relaxing and resting before a jatra performance, if they are not sleeping, they engage in games of various sorts (cards and dice throwing, etc.) or in idle chat. The nature of 'chat' changes from the beginning of a season to the end of season; at the beginning it is primarily passing time by talking about something that happened on the road or in a performing village, etc., but later in the season, among the women at least, the chat becomes idle gossip about people within the party, various management decisions, or other people within the jatra jagat. It is unusual for either men or women to discuss their feelings or decisions they are facing—they do discuss some family hassles or family ceremonies such as a wedding or a funeral. They will take leave, if possible, to attend these functions within their kin networks. It is very difficult to describe what they 'usually' talk about, because my presence within a travelling party necessarily altered their conversation. With me they talked about most anything I wanted to know—they were very open; they did not seem quite as open with one another. If I wasn't asking them questions or discussing a technical point with them, they seemed to want to understand and know more about life on the Canadian Prairies—a subject I knew little about.

22 Panchu Sen :Paying last respects in the jatra para

23 Passing the time

Photograph 23 shows some members of the New Prabash Opera playing cards during a rest period. I was taught to play several card games while travelling with various parties.

Much of the interaction between party members is governed by the internal ranking or status system within the party. Since the current jatra operates on what people refer to as the 'star system', being a star has its prestige and social rewards; servants are at their beck and call almost all the time, managers try to placate them and facilitate their lives, and other party personnel do not infringe on their space or time unless invited to do so. Stars sometimes act as tyrants or despots—making unreasonable requests of those ranking lower than they. While there are some genuinely fond relationships and a certain sense of comraderie among the members of a party (and some parties operate on a more egalitarian basis than others) there are definite rifts in most parties between the stars and the rest of the party. Stars are known to demand better quality food, special transportation, special dressing arrangements and extra favours (manufactured cigarettes, good quality betel leaf, special and more comfortable sleeping arrangements, etc.). Other members of the acting and support staff of a party must defer to the stars or run the risk of the star deciding not to perform. Petulent behaviour is not the 'norm' for stars, but it is certainly common. Stars do it well, with seeming humility.

Men and women have different social lives within the party. With the exception of a few married couples and a few couples living together, men and women have little to do with each other. Some parties even have a code of ethics which employed artists must sign agreement to before they are hired. Most of the rules in the code are about being present at

performances, travelling together, etc., but a few of them are illustrative of the different rules and attitudes toward men and women. For example consider the following rough translation of some rules:

> The female artists of this party live in a separate house (room) and they have a separate green room—no male artists are allowed to stay in their house and no male persons are allowed to gossip unnecessarily about that house.
>
> None of the female artists can go out of their room without the permission of a responsible person of the party. They cannot go to the cinema without the permission of the party.
>
> Women are not allowed to take any wine or other spirits like that. If it is known a person can be removed from contract without any notice.

The same rules are not listed for the men in the party. Not all parties have such stringent rules for women, but the sphere of action for women in the jatra, while larger than for Bengali women as a whole, is more restricted than for men. Separation of eating and sleeping quarters by sex for unattached jatra personnel is common.

A sleeping unit, often called by the English word 'fleet' is put together by the manager, accounting for sex and who is getting along with one another. The manager takes account of who has feelings of competition and animosity. A fleet, varying from 3-7 artists, usually will spend a large part of the rest and free time together. In some parties the fleet will even cook their evening meal together, since the party does not provide cooks for the evening since they are already off to the next place to set up. Often in lieu of the cooking of the evening meal a fleet will receive some cash and buy and prepare some food. This cash in lieu of food is called the *jalpani*, and can only be collected by appearing in the green room before the performance. Women usually are a single fleet, and they

share one large sleeping room or two smaller ones. Once, when we were in Burdwan city the women and I, who shared one sleeping accommodation, went to see a matinee at the cinema; sometimes people go shopping or sit in a village tea shop. But, it is important to remember, the jatra people are outsiders to most localities they visit.

Just how much they are outsiders was brought home to me on one specific occasion in Jamshedpur, Bihar. It was during a performance; I was sitting in the donors section (see section on jatra seating) next to a local doctor—one of the lower status actors had a mild heart attack on stage. The party called for a doctor and the man next to me went to the green room—when he returned I anxiously asked him what had happened. The look he gave me was of total surprise—why would I be at all interested in what had happened to the party? Who was I to be interested? I explained that I had come with the party, and that I was known to them—I really did want to know what had happened. He told me that one of the artists had suffered a mild heart attack and was now resting. I asked him if he would be taken to a hospital in Jamshedpur (known throughout India for its excellent health care) and how he would be tended. I received a second look of surprise as he said "these people are not from this place—his people will have to take care of him—it is not our business". I then went back to the green room to see if I could do anything, and found out that the manager had engaged a car and was sending him, along with a servant back to Calcutta to be checked over. As it turned out, it was not serious, and I had learned a good lesson about 'not being from the place'. There were other similar incidents throughout my travels with the party—we really were curious, dangerous and exciting outsiders.

Jatra artists, who within the party seem to lead a pretty conventional life, when compared to the Bengali population as a whole lead very unusual lives in many respects. The first main difference from 'normal' Bengali life is their sense of relative unattachedness (*amaya*). This unattachedness is manifested in several ways; their generally nomadic life style, their primarily single life—relatively free from kin ties, their propensity for short-term sexual relationships and affairs, and their unconcern for most caste rules and regulations. The proportion of unmarried men and women in the party is quite high and of those unmarried most have never been. If a woman is married she is most likely married to someone within the jatra jagat—if she marries outside the jatra jagat she will likely leave acting or dancing. The same does not seem to be true for men. Men, whether they marry within or outside the jatra jagat, tend to remain with the party. No party members travel as a family unit—the children in parties are not attached to specific actors or actresses.

One important jatra wedding took place while I was doing this research. It was very instructive at many levels; the jatra world itself, a wedding itself, and an intercaste wedding that demonstrated family feelings and dissensions. The bride was the then Loka Natya heroine, Joyshree Mukherjee (the following season she signed on with the Satyamber Opera), and the groom was Madal Boral, the head manager of the Satyamber Opera. She is Brahmin; he is lower caste—a goldsmith caste by tradition. Needless to say, the marriage was not a traditional arranged marriage—Joyshree and Madal decided that they wished to marry, and then informed her father of it. The wedding was held at Shoilen Mahanto's large house, and guests were invited from among some of the people of the jatra jagat.

Roy (1975:73-123) and Inden and Nicholas (1977:39-51) provide good discussions of what usual Bengali marriages should be like, and Sen Gupta (1970:200-246) discusses variations in marriage by both caste and class in modern Bengal. While these sources are useful in outlining what 'ought to be the case' they point out places where this marriage was certainly unusual and different. While Joyshree's father consented to the marriage, he had very little to do with it, except to attend the wedding with her two younger brothers, and to provide some of the basic requirements. Joyshree's mother, I later learned when she wrote her autobiography for me, was in a sanitarium and her father's sisters and brothers were not in favour of the marriage—therefore all of the pre-wedding women's rituals were carried out by Joyshree and members of Shoilen's family (his wife, mother-in-law, and four daughters). Madal had very few family ties (I believe he only had one brother that he kept contact with), and had been raised by Shoilen's father-in-law, the former owner of the Satyamber Opera. Again, the groom's rituals were carried out by Shoilen's family as well. Since the wedding was taking place in Shoilen's house, and Madal and Joyshree had been given a room in his house for their own living quarters, there was none of the necessary travelling back and forth between residences that most Bengali weddings require.

The witnesses at the wedding, while some of them were related kin or assumed fictive kin, were people from the jatra jagat, and myself. Most of the jatra owners were invited (especially extended invitations were delivered to owners and managers of the other parties Joyshree had acted with), most managers were invited, and jatra performers who were prominent artists of about the same rank as Joyshree. Most of the invited quests appeared, those who were in the Calcutta vicinity at the time anyway.

24 Wedding Photo: Madal Boral

25 Wedding Photo : Joyshree Mukherjee
Traditional Bengali dress

26 Wedding Photo: Joyshree and Madal

The food served at the ceremony was prepared by the cooks of the Satyamber Opera (since the party suspended its performances for a few days in honour of the event), under the supervision of Shoilen's wife and mother-in-law. It consisted of the dishes usually served at Bengali weddings; rice, fish and vegetable curries, sweets and sweetened yogurt (*mishthi dhoi*), and was served on the traditional banana leaf plate.

Since the jatra season was not yet quite over, the ceremonies were condensed from the usual 4 days and 6 separate rituals, to 2 days of celebration and ritual. Otherwise to all outside appearances things appeared quite 'normal'.

Joyshree went back to acting and Madal to managing until the season ended when they were able to set up their household. Joyshree confessed that she really didn't know how to cook very well, nor did she know most of the other things a Bengali wife should know, since she had been acting since her late teens and had been away from her father's household. Madal, while he was employed as any Bengali man should be, also confessed that he didn't expect their household to run as other Bengali households, since they would only share the house when it was off-season or when Joyshree could come into Calcutta.

Joyshree's life changed very little by being married. She continued to send two-thirds of her salary to her father, to help with the cost of maintaining her mother in medical care, and the other one-third went to Madal for use in their family affairs. Her status, however, did change—she was now a 'married woman' and she had all the visible outward signs of new status; jewellery, the sindur (red powder) in her hair part, her sari wrapped in a married woman's style, etc.

For women in the jatra party, if they are married, life is very much as Joyshree lives it. Other women will become attached to males in the party as 'lovers'. Usually an affair is carried on with a male who has status within the party, not just any actor—stars and other prominent actors are the most desirable. Not all men could carry on affairs within the party, even if they wished to, since there are more males in the party than females. There is some homosexuality in the party, but it is far less common now than it used to be. People outside the jatra jagat believe that the men who play women's roles are all homosexuals. Most of them that I knew were, perhaps, bisexual, but had families and carried on 'normal' jatra lives.

Since the most active jatra times are during puja celebrations, the members of a jatra party do not take part in most aspects of usual Bengali ritual life. Individual party members may perform small pujas on their own, and have their own personal dieties (*ishtha debatas*) if they adhere to religious concerns at all. As a party, however, the jatra personnel engage in one important puja—the puja for the goddess Saraswati in mid-January. Saraswati is the goddess of learning and the arts—making her the patroness of the jatra enterprise. Because Saraswati puja falls in the middle of the jatra season they have to celebrate it 'on the road'. Wherever they are contracted to perform at that time becomes the locale for their puja. The logistics manager sees that an image-maker is hired from the locale of the performance, that all the necessary ritual paraphernalia and offerings are present, and that a local priest has been engaged. The puja is conducted before the performance and all the members of the party take part and witness it.

I celebrated Saraswati puja on the road with the Satyamber Opera. The owner went out from Calcutta to the performance village, as did the

manager and myself, in order to be with the party and take part in the ceremony. He then stayed for the performance and we drove back to Calcutta in the middle of the night.

The images are important and each party will choose a slightly different style. Below is the image that was used by the Loka Natya jatra party.

27 Saraswati Image commissioned by the Loka Natya Jatra Party

Whenever there is a lull in the performance itinerary party members can take leave to go to their family home (be it village or urban) or to go to Calcutta to replenish their make-up supplies, see a movie, or visit friends. Jatra artists love to go to the cinema. Most confessed that, in their 'heart of hearts' they would like to be cinema artists, and live the glamourous life they believe film stars lead. When I was in Bengal, however, the Bengali film industry was in financial trouble—the movie studios in Tollygunge (a section of South Calcutta) were in an area that was in political dispute and films were not getting made. Some of the film stars turned to the jatra for employment. They were hired easily, since the party could use billing such as "straight from the cinema" or "film-star" on their advertisements. Nonetheless, the cinema provides models for the jatra artists to emulate. Many jatra artists wear western dress and sun-glasses—it is the image of a film star.

While on the road friction develops between members from time to time, and only then do the managers try to regulate personnel behaviour. If a dispute becomes open enough to damage the running of the party the head manager will speak to the parties involved—if it cannot be resolved someone could be 'let go'. Usually a working arrangement can be made, and the differences overlooked. For the most part, management and party members maintain a *laissez-faire* attitude toward each other's behaviour idiosyncrasies—within tolerable boundaries. These are the widest boundaries I experienced in Bengali life.

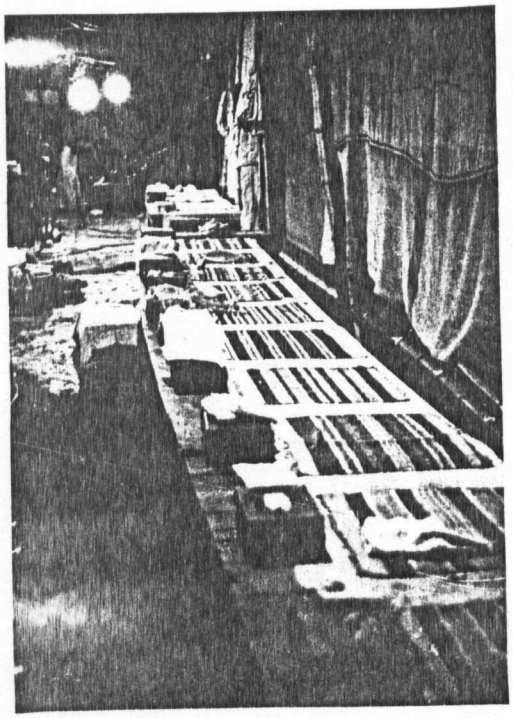
Preparing for Performance: Life in the Green-Room:

After arriving and setting up in a performance locale and before the performance actually begins, the technicians must set up the equipment, the musicians must warm up, and the performers must dress and make-up as their various characters. With the exception of the technicians, who are working out on the stage area and the technicians who are setting up props outside the green room (the dressing and waiting area for performers) all the activity takes place in various sections of the green room. When the performers arrive in the green room the servants will have already set up the green trunks that are used to carry paraphernalia in rows and placed each actor/actresses personal make-up box on one of the trunks. Extra cloths for use in make-up, water, and a supply of safety pins, elastic bands and the like are also placed in readiness, should they be required. Servants remain on hand to run errands and help performers dress, should it be necessary.

The green room is usually divided into a women's make-up dressing and make-up area and a men's make-up and dressing area. The women are often separated from the men by a temporary curtain strung across the room. As each artist arrives, he/she takes her place on the box with her make-up kit on it, and begins the job of transforming her character. Each artist (actor/actress, singer and dancer) is responsible for both supplying and applying his/her ownmake-up: a make-up box includes lamp black and eyeliners for accentuating eyes, rouge and lipstick for making lips visible for long distances, Max Factor pan-cake for general base, pencils used for aging lines, zinc oxide for lightening a skin tone (particularly used if a character is foreign), wigs, and if necessary skull caps, moustaches, false noses, eyebrows, teeth, and the like.

28 Green Room Set-up: Making up for Lenin

29 Tarun Opera
Artists making up for Lenin



30 Green Room Set-up

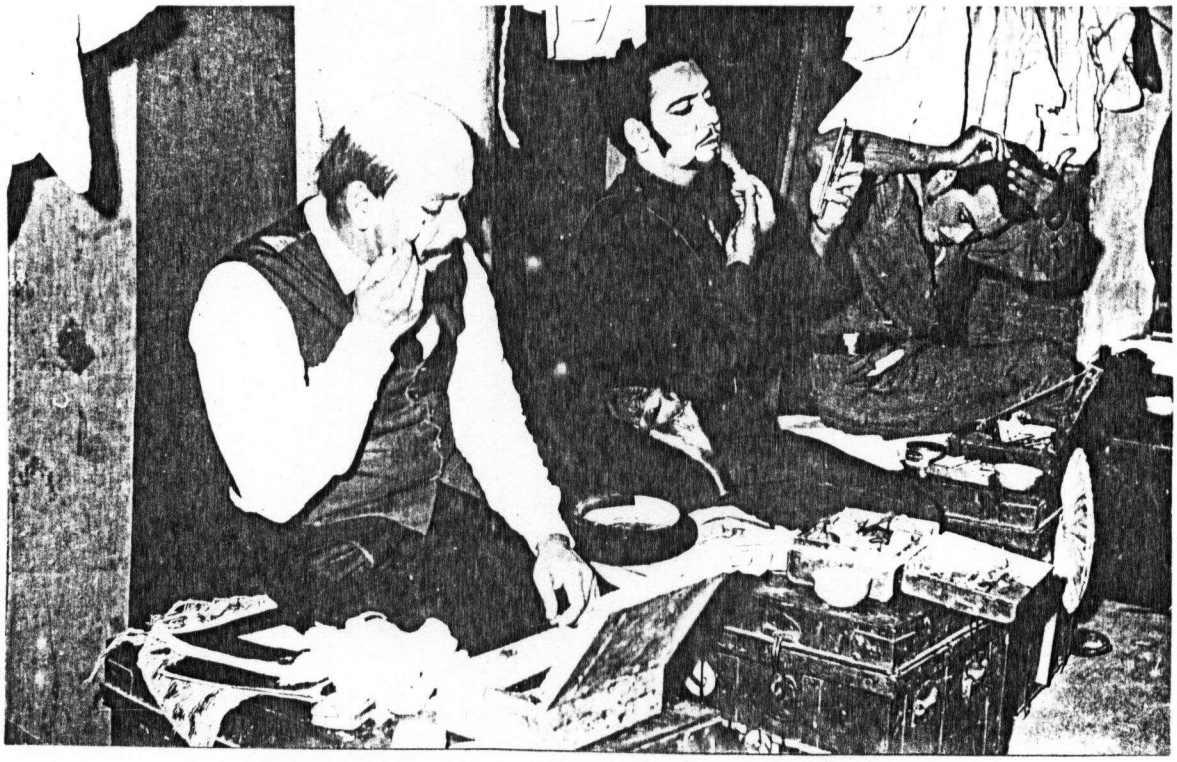
Make-up can take anywhere from ½ an hour to 1 hour, depending on the amount and nature of the transformation necessary. The rest of the time is used getting into character, smoking, or performing a group ritual.

Making-up takes a certain amount of practice and instruction from older jatra party members. Children will frequently be helped and instructed by those in the party with more experience. Most artists begin with a Pond's Cold Cream base, so that they can remove the make-up easily with as little damage to their skin as possible. Then they apply the Max Factor pan-cake base and begin the task of becoming a character. For power on the stage, and to ensure success in their character, many artists place a picture of Kali (the most important goddess in Bengal—referred to as The Mother, she symbols the essence of Power) before them as they begin to make-up, placing her next to the ever present mirror.

For the dancers, getting into costume can be a long process. If a dancer is playing Krishna or Kali, or some other mythological character it takes time to get ready—if a dance is on a more modern topic it is relatively simple. Occasionally, in a play, a character plays a god or goddess, demon or foreigner, and requires more time and help getting dressed. Plays set in a realistic, imaginary or apocryphal historical setting also require elaborate costuming. Only modern class struggle plays, or modern social plays are portrayed with regular everyday Bengali dress, such as a sari and a dhoti/pyjama outfit. The party carries all the necessary costumes with them, and they are supplied by and the property of the party. Some of the photographs that are placed in the section on performances are good examples of the various costuming strategies.

After make-up is applied, and before the last gong announcing the beginning of a play it is very common (less so in some of the politically

oriented parties) to have a group puja and singing of HareKrishna, Hare Rama, to ensure a successful performance. When I asked people about the integration of Kali and Krishna they replied "We take all precautions".



31 Santi Gopal: Making up for the role Lenin

Santi Gopal, main actor and lessee of the Tarun Opera Jatra Party, is considered a master make-up artist. The two seasons I was with the jatra parties he played a number of difficult roles; he was Lenin, Hitler and Napoleon, as well as a ringmaster for a circus, Shubash Chandra Bose (a Bengali nationalist hero), and Raja Rammohan Roy (a Bengali Brahmo Samaj leader and Hindu social reformer). Making-up for Lenin would take up to 1 hour, and involve a process of applying many layers of make-up. The

32 Santi Gopal:
Lenin

33 Santi Gopal:
Raja Ramohan Roy

34 Santi Gopal: Hitler

transformation was total; one did actually think that Lenin was there on the stage. In order to play characters, actors like Santi Gopal, do read historical accounts and biographies to attempt to give a true portrayal. Even the people from the Russian embassy, who came to Calcutta to watch the performance, were impressed with his characterisation, even though they didn't understand Bengali.

The Jatra Advertising System: its code, forms, and meaning

In the section on Securing Sponsors and Audiences, I introduced briefly the place and importance of advertising in the jatra business. Before I consider the jatra performance and the jatra audiences, I would like to re-present one of the main links between the party and the audiences, the advertising, and do so by constructing a system comprised of the various advertising forms. Even though advertising is carried out through a variety of different forms--flyers, posters, brochures, newspaperadvertisements, photographs and reviews—all forms share both a linguistic and iconic code understandable and interpretable by Bengalis.

Following and occasionally altering where necessary, the work of Roland Barthes (1967) and Paul Bouissac (1976:176-190) I will provide here a semiological analysis of the jatra advertising system. Barthes outlines the aims of semiology as follows:

> ...to take any system of signs, whatever their substance and limits; images, gestures, musical sounds, objects, and the complex associations of all these, which form the content of ritual, convention or public entertainment: these constitute, if not *languages*, at least systems of signification.
>
> (Barthes 1967:9)

and goes on to say:

> Where there is a visual substance, for example, the meaning is confirmed by being duplicated in a linguistic message (which happens in the case of cinema, advertising, comic strips, press photography, etc.) so that at least a part of the iconic message is, in terms of structural relationship, either redundant or taken up by the linguistic system.
>
> (Barthes 1967:10)

The jatra advertising system is bounded only by the number of direct and indirect ways that the jatra party and its repertoire get publicity, and the ways that the public gets information about the jatra plays and performance schedule. Most parties have sign boards and posters placed outside their offices in Calcutta (see Photographs in jatra para section), and most parties make up a scrapbook for the sponsors to peruse. The scrapbook is filled with the various advertisements the party has run in newspapers, magazines, and other publications; photographs they have commissioned; brochures, posters, and flyers they have had printed; stories they have placed in newspapers; interviews that have been published; and reviews that have been written by various drama critics. In addition to showing this scrapbook to potential sponsors to aid them in their decisions, they also keep the scrapbook from year to year as a record of party activities and their repertoire and its reception in the Bengali media. By examining both the links between and decisions made by people in the jatra jagat about advertising, and the various forms of advertising in more or less detail, I will explicate how they are made meaningful to those who read or see them.

The final say in the advertising, of course, rests with the owner of the jatra party, however, he will solicit and frequently delegate this task to his head manager. What information should be included in a form

of advertising is a part of what "everybody knows" and so there is little discussion about what to include—the design is, however, an area of creativity and discussion. The amount of time and energy spent on advertising depends upon the form in question: newspapers, magazine and other publication ads take very little time—they either list the name of the party, play, artists or the scheduled itinerary; flyers, posters, brochures and newspaper stories take more time, energy and consultation. The party has little control over what a critic or reviewer says, and they eagerly await Thursday's Bengali and English language newspapers to see if their party has been reviewed.

Most of the photographs are professionally commissioned by the party and then used in various forms of advertising. Rabi Das is one of the most popular photographers in the jatra jagat; I also hired him to do some photographs for me (those in the jatra para section, and some from performances). Jatra artists must be available for publicity shots, and Rabi must be prepared to travel with the party from time to time to get action and performance shots. While the aesthetics of setting up a shot are controlled by the photographer (with some input from the production manager or the artists themselves) how they are used in the advertising is out of his realm of control.

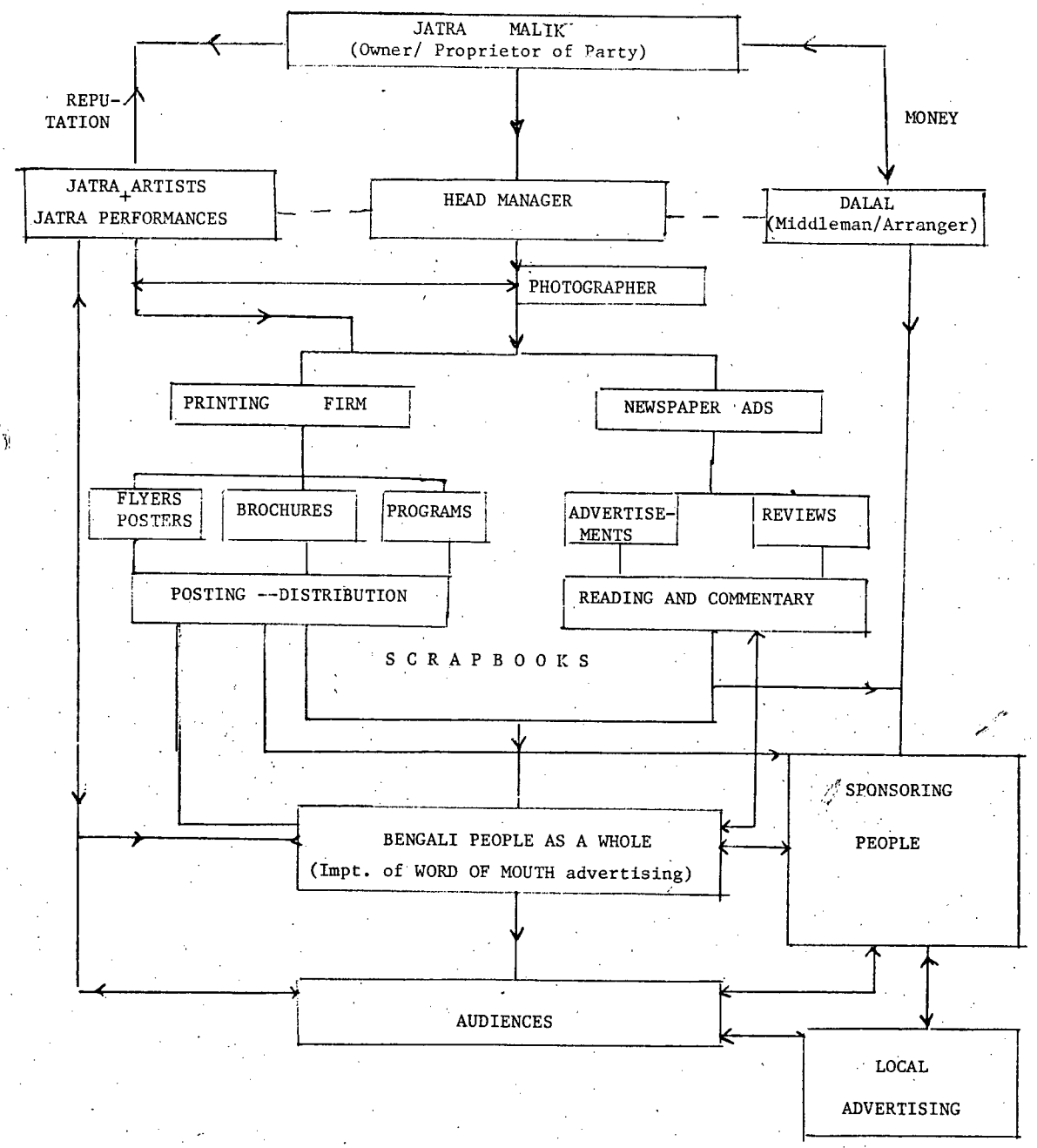
The head manager will engage a printing firm, such as the one that owns the New Prabhash Opera—the Shisco Printers—, and discuss the particulars of lay-out with one of the technicians there. When a mock-up is ready it will be brought back to the office for owner and artist perusal and approval. Discussions with the printers revolve around cost, colour, type face, catchy phrases and the use of photographs, while discussions with the owners and artists revolve around billing, design,

and the iconographic elements used. Once there is agreement the manager gives the printers the 'go-ahead' to print a specified number of the various forms. When placing advertisements in newspapers the main discussions revolve around cost and reproducibility of materials. A jatra advertising budget could be as high as Rs.50,000 (about $7,000) depending on the cost per inch in newspapers, the cost of paper and colour printing, etc. At the time I was conducting this research the advertising budgets were very high, since newsprint was in short supply and therefore costly.

Not only is the advertising a subject that links various people within the jatra jagat, it also is a medium through which there is a relationship between the party and anyone who reads or sees the advertisement. Consequently the jatra people have to decide where to place the advertisements, what information is essential to be placed on them and who the audience they are trying to reach is; the readers simply have to decide whether to attend to it or not. If it is read, then usually there is some feedback from the readers—either by increased audience size or increased number of contracts. Occasionally the feedback is even more direct—"I liked your ad, or I didn't like your ad".

Once there are contracts, and the party's advertising materials have been given to the sponsors, they are responsible for local advertising. This means that sponsors also have to make decisions about where to place the posters they have been given, what additional material to have printed as publicity for their performance, and how best to reach their audience. Visual images are used a great deal, partially for their redundant character for literate viewers, and also for their message content for illiterate or not functionally literate viewers.

Figure 3



INFORMATION AND NETWORKS IN THE JATRA ADVERTISING SYSTEM

Preceding is a flow chart that shows the links, decisional and informational, necessary for the jatra advertising system. Money flows down the advertisement chart (and hopefully finds its way back to the owner in the form of profits) and popularity and reputation flow back up the chart. This, of course, is only one subsystem in the jatra business—there are others that are as complex as this that I have treated in less detail.

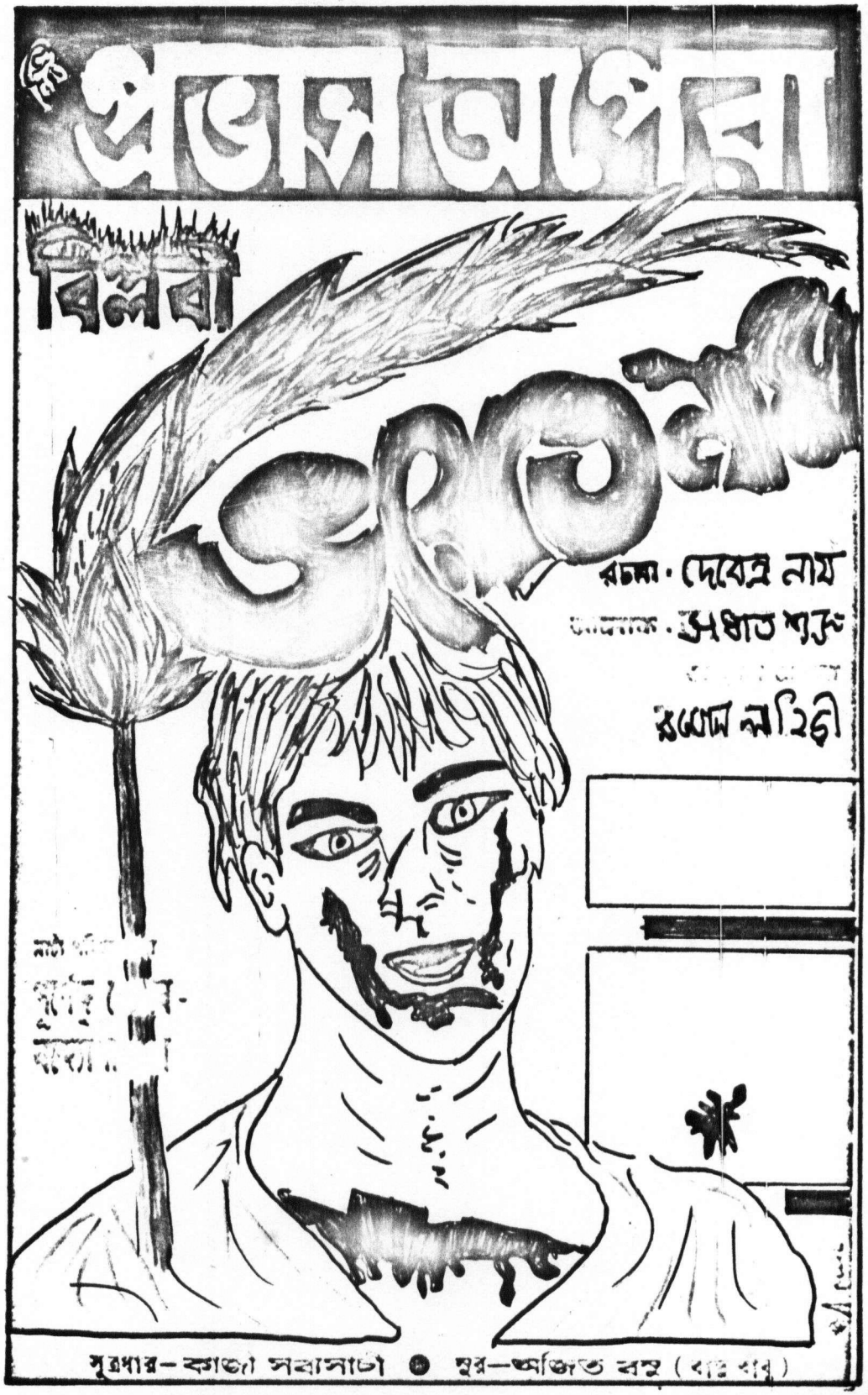
Although, and also because, all the various forms of jatra advertising use many of the same syntactic features in constructing their messages, I will focus my analysis of the elements in the message of a specific form of jatra advertising; the jatra poster. In addition, I will give brief examples of the various other forms of jatra advertising; the flyer, the brochure, and the newspaper advertisement. The intention here is to explicate the ways in which meaning is structured and how meaning can be decoded and reassembled with its culturally significant content; one can learn to 'read' a jatra poster as a 'sentence' or a 'whole paragraph' with subjects, predicates, and the actions that link them to circumstances. But since Bengali signs and meanings are not ours, I will undiscover their riddles and hopefully make the jatra poster more intelligible. Since it was easy to adapt the analysis from the one B Bouissac did of circus posters, it may be possible to use this type of analysis on posters in general—from travel posters to gallery opening posters.

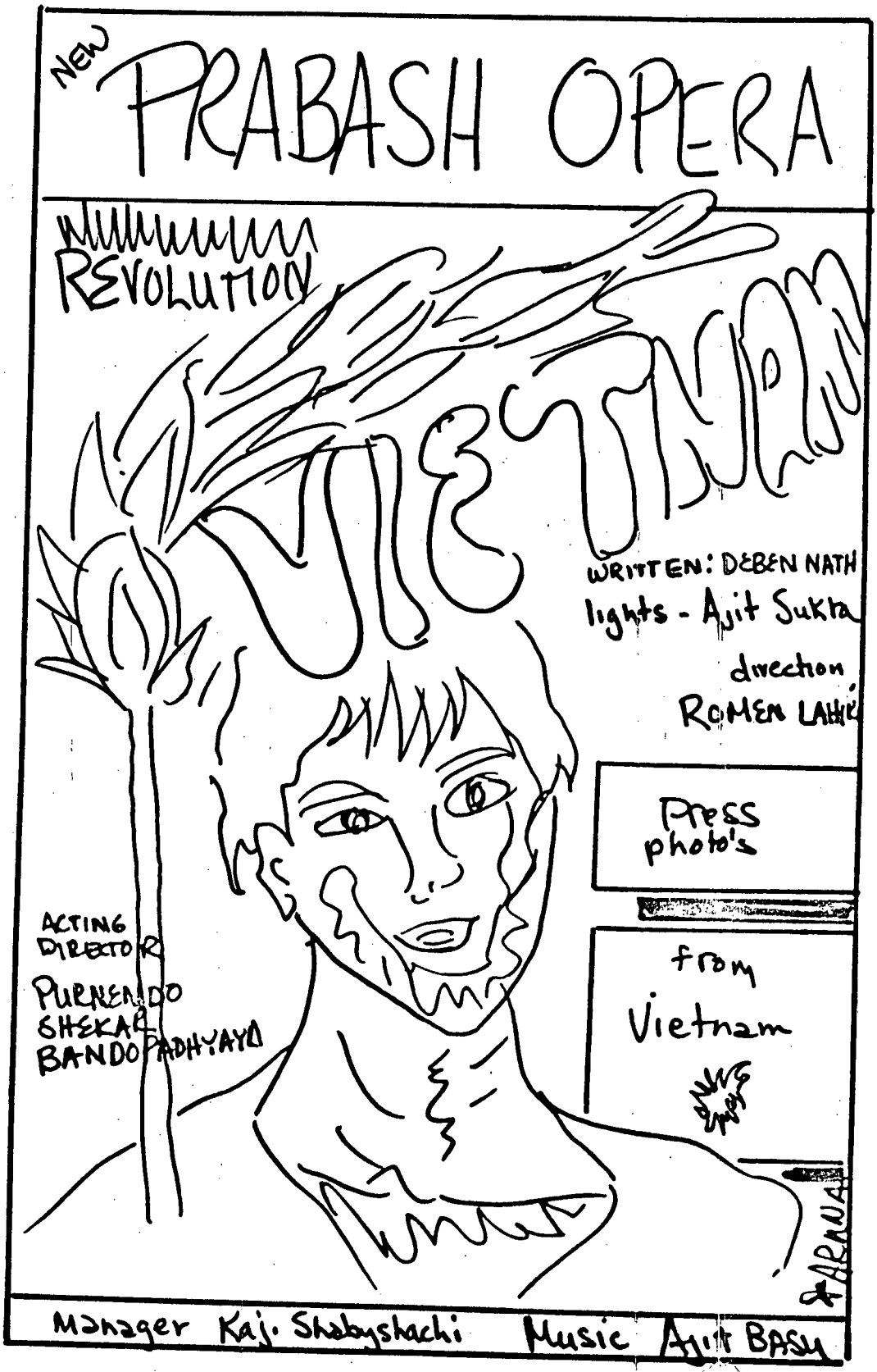
While there is variation in jatra posters—some are more 'vivid' and 'modern' than others—, the way in which the linguistic and non-linguistic features operate is similar. The 'form' of the message of the poster can be filled with various contents—but it does so in predictable ways. The formal message is carried through the use and placement of

various type sizes and styles, colour and highlighting, exaggerated and decorative applications, and their various juxtapositions. Jatra posters are highly redundant, but from this formal message it is possible to extract a kind of meaning—the meaning of the relationships within and between signs.

If I take a jatra poster (such as the one for the New Prabhash Opera's production of *Biplopi Vietnam* (the revolution in South Vietnam) which follows) and look carefully at both its linguistic and non-linguistic message it is possible to see how its meaning begins to take shape. First, take the linguistic message: Like all jatra posters this one includes the name of the play, the name of the performing party, the names and functions of a few people connected with the play. There are no pauses indicated, no punctuation marks, the message hits one all at once. All the verbal information given is necessary information—there is no redundancy within this part of the message. In this case we learn that the play advertised is *Biplopi Vietnam*; it is performed by the New Prabhash Opera; that it was written by Debenra Nath, lighting is by Ajit Shukra, directed by Romen Lahiri, and production managed by Purnendo Shekar Bandopadhyaya; it has music by Ajit Basu, and the manager is Kaji Shabyshachi. In addition we learn that the poster was designed by Aruna and printed in Madras (this is indeed an unusual piece of information since this party is owned by a printing firm—when I asked about it they said that they wanted it to be even better than they could produce themselves). The translated copy follows the coloured Bengali poster.

Through the variation of type sizes and styles, however, we learn a great deal more about the linguistic message that is being given here. There are five different sizes of type used, and two different styles of


প্রভাস অপেরা
বিল্বমঙ্গল
রচনা · দেবেন্দ্র নাথ
সুধাত শুভ
রঞ্জন লাহিড়ী
সূত্রধার—রাজা সরকার ● সুর—অজিত বসু (বাবু বাবু)


NEW
PRABASH OPERA
REVOLUTION
VIETNAM
WRITTEN: DEBEN NATH
lights - Ajit Sukla
direction
ROMEN LAHIRI
Press photo's
from
Vietnam
ACTING DIRECTOR
PURNENDO SHEKAR BANDOPADHYAYA
ARANYA
Manager Kaj. Shabyshachi
Music Ajit BASU

type. The size of type and information conveyed is as follows:

a) 1/8" type—functions of the people names

b) 1/4" type—people names
New of the opera name

c) 1/2" type—*Biplopi* Revolution—part of play title

d) 1" type—Name of the party—Prabhash Opera

e) 11/2"type—Vietnam—part of the play title.

This representa a hierarchy of information; on a jatra poster the name of the play is the most important piece of information, followed by the party who performs it, and down at the bottom the functions people have.

If I divide the information into subjects and predicates we learn even more about the linguistic message and its portrayal in various sizes and types. The subjects are given in d < b(a), and the predicate is given in e < c. Even though the size of type varies in the subject, and there are two styles of type used the message is straightforward. The two styles of type used in the subject are both standard varieties. In the predicate, however, there are two sizes of type and two different imaginative or whimsical styles of type. Again this indicates through the styles of type that the name of the play to be performed, which is the relationship between the subjects and the predicates, is to be immediately noticed.

When the colour is added to the linguistic message even more is learned. The poster is done on a field of white, the name of the play is done in red and blue with red accents, the name of the party is done in yellow, and the personnel and functions are done in black. These colours (*varna*) while they are easy to print, in the Hindu context carry a more important and deeper meaning. White, the colour of Brahmins is also associated with truth; Red, the colour of Kshatriyas is also associated

with truth; Red, the colour of Kshatriyas is also associated with blood, vigour, and strength; Yellow, the colour of Vaisya's is also associated with the viscera and the soil, and Black, the colour of Sudras is also associated with Kali and Krishna. In addition there is some green, the whole spectrum of reddish colours and a bit of light blue, used as accents. These four main colours form a kind of Hindu unity of the social order. The colours seem to unite the linguistic and the figurative messages in the poster.

The figurative message is achieved by combining humans and rice. In Bengal that is also a unity. Rice (*bhat or anna*, most commonly) is both a sign and a symbol of being a healthy and true Bengali. A blemish-free face, preferably moon-shaped and framed with wavy black shiny hair and a youthful appearance is the ideal Bengali portrait. In this poster the rice stock is flaming—it has turned into a kind of torch; a peasant's life is 'going up in smoke', food and other aspects of livelihood are being disturbed. The young boy's face has a tormented expression, and has been marred and maimed to the point of dripping gashes. Everywhere there is blood and destruction. The newspaper photos that are reproduced on the sides of the poster (which do not show up on this touched-up version) are accented with blood as peasants' guts are being torn out. The message indicates that rice and people are being disturbed and tormented. The red of blood and the red of Vietnam link the message together and present a picture of unresolved revolution.

This jatra poster is a kind of key to the play, *Biplopi Vietnam*, but it is more than that. It is also a key to the organisation and hierarchy within the jatra party; the party gives information about the play and the importance of the people and their functions to the readers or seers of the poster—this is a relationship that is made more complete

১৯৭০ সালের শ্রেষ্ঠ পরিচালক কমেন লাহিড়ী রচিত ও পরিচালিত—

★ রাহুমুক্ত রাশিয়া ★

রাশিয়ার বুকে সাড়ে তিনশো বছর ধরে চলে রোমানভ বংশের তথা জারতন্ত্রের শাসন, শোষণ আর অত্যাচার। রাশিয়ার সাধারণ মানুষের জীবন চরম দুর্বিষহ হয়ে ওঠে যখন রাশিয়ার শেষ সম্রাট অপদার্থ জার দ্বিতীয় নিকোলাইয়ের মাথায় চেপে বসেন এক অলৌকিক ক্ষমতাসম্পন্ন সাধুবেশধারী রাশিয়ার কুগ্রহ—মাতাল, লম্পট, ব্যভিচারী রাশিয়ার জীবন্ত রাহু রাজগুরু রাসপুতিন। রাজ্যের ক্ষমতা দখলের লড়াইয়ে রাসপুতিনকে হত্যা, অপদার্থ জার দ্বিতীয় নিকোলাইয়ের ধ্বংস, রাশিয়ার বুকে চিরদিনের মত অত্যাচারী জারতন্ত্রের উচ্ছেদ এবং মহান শ্রমিক নেতা মহানায়ক লেনিনের ডাকে রাশিয়ার মাটীতে মহান অক্টোবর বিপ্লবের বিজয়ের কাহিনী।

সুর—প্রেমাঙ্কুর বিশ্বাস আলোক—অজাতশত্রু

কমলেশ বানার্জী রচিত সামাজিক নাটক—

★ নীচের পৃথিবী ★

সমাজের বুকে স্বার্থান্বেষী একদল মানুষ কেমন করে শোক-দুঃখ, অভাব অভিযোগ-ক্লিষ্ট আর একদল মানুষকে নিঃশেষ করার ফন্দী এঁটে মানবতার মুখোশ পরে নরকের কতখানি নীচে নামতে পারে তারই এক পঙ্কিল পঙ্কিলময় ইতিহাস।

সুর—মহেন্দ্র দত্ত

বহু পুরস্কৃত বলিষ্ঠ নাট্যকার অগ্নিদূত এর নতুন আঙ্গিকের অভিনব নাটক—

★ বর্বর সভ্যতা ★

প্রচলিত রীতির বিরুদ্ধে একটি মর্মন্তুদ সামাজিক ট্র্যাজিডি। যে নাটক সবাইকে বিচলিত করবে, সবাইকে ভাবাবে। যে নাটকে আপনি আমি আমরা সবাই আছি।

সুর—অজিত ঘোষ (বাদুবাবু)

রক্তপিপাসু সাম্রাজ্যবাদী শক্তির সাথে ভিয়েতনামী জনসাধারণের রক্তক্ষয়ী স্বাধীনতা সংগ্রামের এক অবিস্মরণীয় অধ্যায় নিয়ে রচিত দেবেন নাথের অগ্নিগর্ভ নাটক—

★ বিপ্লবী ভিয়েতনাম ★

সম্পাদনা ও নির্দেশনা—কমেন লাহিড়ী • আলোক—অজাতশত্রু

—ঃ ব্রাঞ্চ অফিস ঃ—

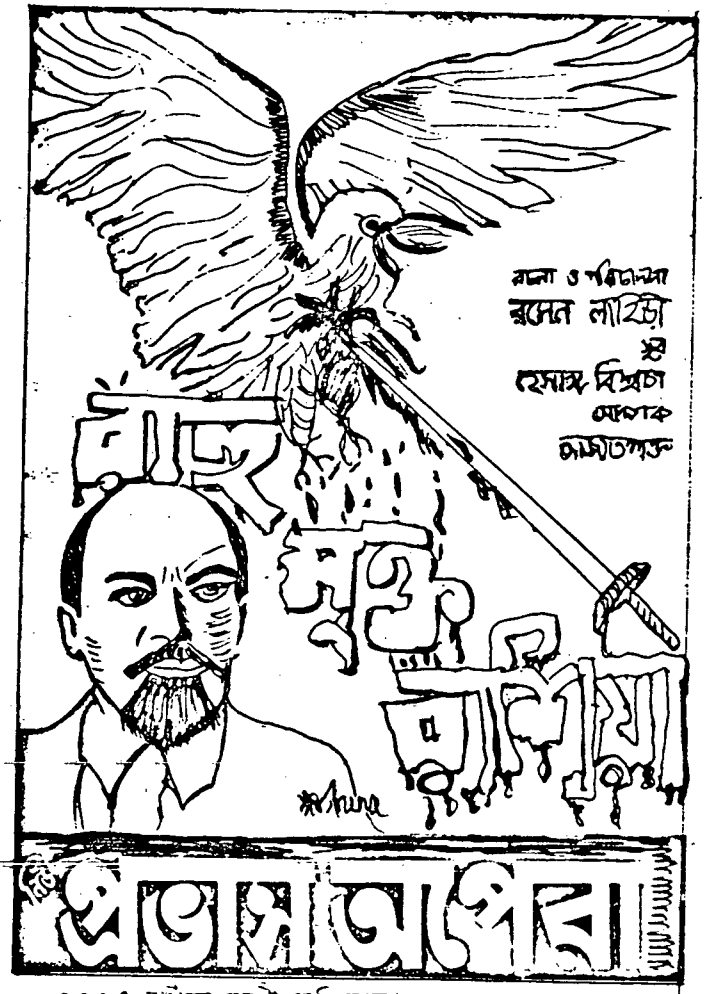
তৃপ্তি বোর্ডিং ★ কুচবিহার হোটেল

জি, টি, রোড, আসানসোল ফোন ঃ কুচবিহার ৩৪৩

আধুনিক শাড়ী ও রেডিমেড পোষাকের প্রাচীনতম বস্ত্র প্রতিষ্ঠান

মেসার্স ভাটী এণ্ড কোং, জি, টি, রোড, আসানসোল ২০১৮

সিনেকো প্রিন্টার্স—৩৩৩এ, রবীন্দ্র সরণী, কলিকাতা-৬ ফোন ঃ ৫৫-৫৭৮৭



৩৩৩এ, রবীন্দ্র সরণী, কলিকাতা-৬ • ফোন ঃ ৫৫-৫৭৮৭

স্বত্বাধিকারী—দীনবন্ধু গুহাইত • পৃষ্ঠপোষক—তিনকড়ি গুহাইত

উপদেষ্টা—কমল চ্যাটার্জী • ভাষ্যে—দিলীপ মৌলিক

পরিচালক—কমেন বসুমল্লিক

রাজকুমার
মৃত্যুঞ্জয় দে
অমূল্য ভট্টাচার্য্য
শশাঙ্ক ভট্টাচার্য্য
মুকুন্দ ঘোষ
মণি রায়
কালীদাস ঘোষ
সাধন দাসগুপ্ত
হীরালাল গাঙ্গুলী
শুকদেব চক্রবর্ত্তী
জয়ন্ত কুমার

সংগীতে—
মুকুন্দ মালী (তুলসী)
সতীশ দাস

: রূপায়ণে :

ননী ভট্ট

অভয় হালদার
রাধারমণ পাল
অনাদি চক্রবর্ত্তী

সহঃ আলোক নিয়ন্ত্রক : তারক প্রসাদ • শব্দ ক্ষেপণে : শ্রীপতি দাস
ম্যানেজার : সনৎ মুখার্জ্জী

কল্যাণী ভট্টাচার্য্য
অরুণা গোস্বামী
রীতা সেন
বিমলরাণী
প্রতিমা ভট্টাচার্য্য

নৃত্যে—
বুলবুল ও পুতুল
বিমল, বাসু, সুষেণ, রাজেন

: আবহ সংগীতে :
হারমোনিয়াম : অদ্বৈত শেঠ
সীতাংশু ধাড়া
কর্ণেট : বীরেন্দ্রনাথ বেরা
ক্লারিয়নেট : হরিদাস নট্ট
আড় বাঁশী : অনিল পাল
ঘড়ী : গৌরচন্দ্র সাউ
সংগতে : হিরণ নন্দী
নৃত্য-পরিকল্পনায় : কেনেথ কুমার

সহঃ ম্যানেজার : মৃত্যুঞ্জয় পাণ্ডা ও বিশ্বনাথ চৌধুরী • কার্য্যাধ্যক্ষ : ভৈরব ওঝা • সাজ-শয্যা : দানী দাসগুপ্ত • আলোক সম্পাতে : শম্ভু ও লক্ষ্মীনারায়ণ • স্মারক : শম্ভু দে

and nearly face to face when the party and the watchers are linked through the jatra performance.

This analysis not only works for other jatra posters, but for jatra brochures as well. Whenever visual and verbal messages are combined in advertisements, it is in ways that can be decoded in a similar fashion. The brochure for the New Prabhash Opera production of *Rahu Mukta Russia* is similar. What a brochure changes is the importance of all the personnel. The inside of the brochure usually ranks the names of all the artists, using bolder and larger type for the main actors, stars and boxes surround the 'stars', and using smaller finer type for the less important. The pictorial or figurative message is constructed in the same way as the jatra poster. In addition there will be a short summary of each of the plays in their repertoire, even though one play is emphasised.

Flyers have primarily a linguistic message, enhanced by type sizes and styles and colour variation only. The message of a flyer is however, more complex than the poster. A brief analysis of the flyer for the Loka Natya will be a good example. First the size of type and the hierarchy of linguistic information (the sample following is reduced 35%):

a) 1/8" type—phone no., functions of the personnel, lists of lesser musicians and staff

b) 3/16" type—names of playwrights and directors, music directors.

c) 1/4" type—name of Utpal Dutta, many artists, some additional functionaries

d) 3/8" type—Owner of the Party and backer of the party, female artists' names

e) 1/2" type—Names of some 'stars' and older plays

f) 3/4" type—Names of the various plays, Name of the party, Names of box artists

The plays are definitely still more important information than the stars'

names, but the stars are clearly an important piece of information here on the flyer as enticement for the potential jatra goer. Added to the rank by size of type on this flyer there are three styles of type used; straight forward type, italics, and imaginative or fanciful type and these are used in various sizes. Play names are in the most fanciful type and the party name is a stylised straight type that they use for all advertisements by name. Colour variation adds again to the hierarchy and theaesthetics of the information. Two colours are used red and blue, and the flyer is printed on a buff coloured paper (this could vary since they do print them on different colours). Red and large type carries the most important information—the play names; Blue and large carries the next most important information—Party name, main stars' names, function terms; Red and slightly smaller is the main female artists' names; and the box star is white with blue outlining.

On this flyer, and on some of the other flyers that I have collected, there is a non-linguistic message as well; here it is a message that I find quite puzzling. The Loka Natya, as a party, has a sign that precedes their name on all advertising of a flyer, brochure or poster form—a woman with two masks. It is conundrum since the jatra is so emphatic in its non-use of masks. Two colours are used on this 'logo'; the face with eyes closed is red, the face with eyes open is blue. After a great deal of pondering I decided, since it fits with so many other intended messages in the jatra jagat as a whole, that the party was showing the lifting of the veil of *maya* that is important to jatra or 'demystifying' the audience as the jatra is supposed to do. If you watch the plays of this party you will have the scales removed from your eyes.

A flyer should give information about the party, the personnel in a party, the plays being performed and the various directing personnel—

রেজিঃ নং—১৯০১ ॥ শ্রীশ্রীরামকৃষ্ণায় নমঃ ॥ ফোন নং—৫৫-৭৫৫২

নিউ রয়েল বীণাপাণি অপেরা

স্বত্বাধিকারী—নারায়ণচন্দ্র ভট্টাচার্য্য ও কালীপদ সরকার

হেড অফিস—১১৭, রবীন্দ্র সরণী ঃ কলিকাতা-৬

❋ যাত্রাজগতে আলোড়ন এনেছে ❋

২৩ খানি সঙ্গীত সমৃদ্ধ ভক্তিরসের অমিয় ধারা

বিষ্ণুপ্রিয়া

রচনা—প্রঃ নরেশ চক্রবর্ত্তী ॥ নির্দ্দেশনা—সন্তোষ সিংহ ॥ সুর—অমিয় ভট্টাচার্য্য

পাক জঙ্গীচক্রের পৈশাচিক অত্যাচারের পটভূমিকায় রচিত শোষাকী নাটক—

☆ বাংলাদেশ ☆

রচনা—ভৈরব গঙ্গোপাধ্যায় : নির্দ্দেশনা—কৃষ্ণকুমার : সুর—সুশীল বানার্জী

আরো আছে— **রাধার নিয়তি ও ঝড়ের দোলা**

—ঃ রূপ দিয়েছেন যাঁরা ঃ—

★ ছবিরাণী ★ মনোরঞ্জন চক্রবর্ত্তী

তারা ভট্টাচার্য্য (হাস্যে) ★ শেফালী দে (মানা) ★ অনিল রায়
পাঁচু মুখার্জী ★ রূপশ্রী মিশ্র ★ বিভূতি পাণ্ডে
নির্ম্মল কুমার ★ শেফালী গাঙ্গুলী ★ মনোজ বিশ্বাস
জনার্দ্দন নন্দী (গানে) ★ সুজলা গাঙ্গুলী (নাচে) ★ ত্রিনাথশংকর (প্রাচ্য নৃত্যে)
কাশীনাথ দত্ত ★ উজ্জ্বলা গাঙ্গুলী ★ হরিশ কুমার
হৃষিকেশ মণ্ডল ★ বিশ্বনাথ রায়চৌধুরী ★ সুকুমার দত্ত

জলদ কুমার (গানে) ★ তারারাণী পাল ★ অজিত সাহা

★ যন্ত্রী সংঘ ★

সঙ্গীত শিক্ষক— অমিয় ভট্টাচার্য্য
হারমোনিয়াম— হরিপদ বারিক
ক্লারিওনেট— যুধিষ্ঠির নন্দী
আড়বাঁশী ও ক্লারিওনেট— জগদীশ ঘোড়ুই
কর্ণেট— পুলিন ঘোড়ুই ও বুদ্ধদেব রায়
ট্যাম্বলিন— পুলিন বেড়া
সঙ্গতে— দুলাল নট্ট
মন্দিরা— অধীর দাশ
স্মারক— গোপাল মিত্র

ম্যানেজার— দুলাল কুমার
কোষাধ্যক্ষ— সত্যেন চক্রবর্ত্তী
কার্য্যাধ্যক্ষ— বটকৃষ্ণ দত্তগুপ্ত ও কানাই মুখার্জী
সহঃ ম্যানেজার— বিমান ঘোষ

কে.পি. আই প্রিন্টিং ওয়ার্কস—১১৭।১, আপার চিৎপুর রোড, কলিকাতা-৬

Without attention to the size and style or colour variations following is a translation of the Loka Natya flyer analysed before.

Phone no. LOKA NATYA Reg. No.

Address of Party

Owner Patron

The coming season proudly presents

DEHLI CHOLO

written and directed by Utpal Dutta Music - Prosanto Bhattacharji

Utpal Dutta's first historical play

SHAMUDRA SHASHAN
written and directed by Utpal Dutta

ACCURSED '76 (Bengali famine of 1769)
written by Satyaprakash Dutta
directed by Panchu Sen

Bhairob Ganguly's
PANCH PAISER PRITHIBI

S H E K A R G A N G U L Y

Firoja Bela

	B	
Sibdas Mukherjee	I	Phoni Ganguly
Protish Roy	J	Pronesh Chaudhuri
Babul Bhattacharya	O	Dilip Mukherjee
Sudharangstho Barik	N	Indra Lahiri
Barish Sarkar	M	Debkumar Banerji
Sunil Shamaddhar	U	Niranjan Ghosh
Boijunath	K	Gokul Debnath
	H	Bani DasGuptaa
	E	Rup Kumari
	R	Kajal Kumari
Nimata Chakroborty	I	
	E	

Joyshree Mukherjee

M O N A R A N J A N C H A K R A B O R T Y

List of Musicians and lists of Branch Office

Manager Production Manager Under Managers Logistics

All the information about the party that should be made public is cleverly placed on a flyer.

all of these pieces of information could potentially influence whether or not a person would choose to go to this jatra party's performances, or whether to go to those of another party (during the height of a jatra season in one of the areas of Bengal, it would be possible to go 10 kilometers away and find a different jatra being performed). Given the primarily linguistic message of the flyer as an advertising form, their audience is going to be a literate Bengali. I have watched literate Bengalis reading the flyers posted to people who could not read them, but that cannot be a jatra party's primary aim. What party officials told me is that literate Bengalis have more prestige and if they spread the word, by mouth, it may reach more people.

Another important form of advertising is also aimed primarily at a literate public; the newspaper, magazine and other publication advertisements. These ads will vary depending on when in the season they are placed, and whether they are intended to announce plays and personnel or whether they are intended to announce an itinerary or places of scheduled performances. The newspapers also carry stories written by the party that contain essentially the plot and the performers' names, and they carry reviews written by newspaper drama critics: both kinds of information are interesting and important to potential jatra goers.

Ads placed at the beginning of the jatra season tend to be ones that emphasise the party, stars, and new plays for the season, whereas ads placed later in the season may indicate plays for the coming season and also use photographs of scenes from the various plays. The ads that announce plays and personnel are larger and more costly than the ads announcing itinerary.

The Tarun Opera used the newspaper ads to announce their winning of the Soviet Desh Award for entertainment furthering the social relations

all about Dramas, Operas

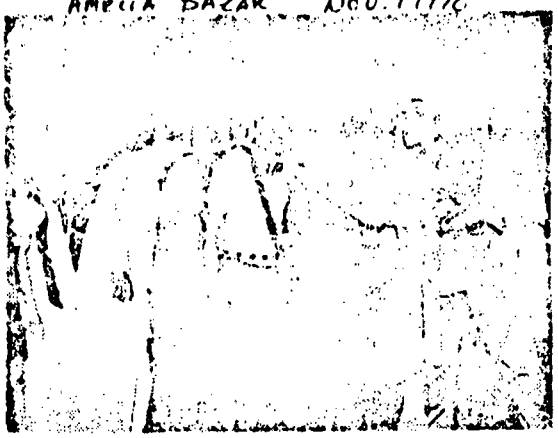
AMRITA BAZAR NOV. 7 1970

Biplabi Vietnam—a bold venture

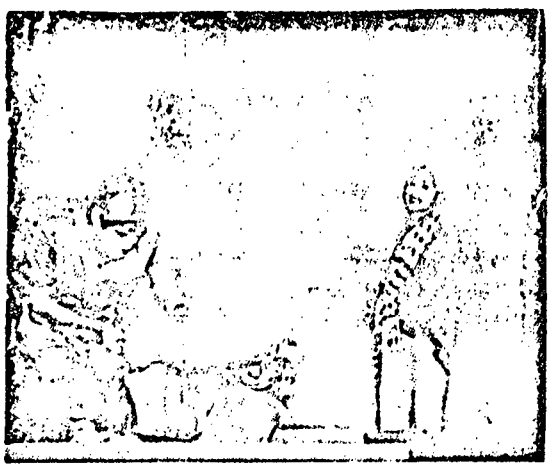
With [illegible] Nanha Biplabi Vietnam' New Prabhash Opera gloriously shaped out one more [illegible] and [illegible] play in the expanding arena of Yatra.

M. Ranjan Lahiri's best direction [illegible] in this was [illegible] and the total production had the radiance of 'Jalia Bagan' a bold production of the previous year.

Portrayals of characters were really commendable and in the period Purnendu Shekhar Bandopadhyay's Ho Chi Minh deserved special mention. Abhoy Haldar once again proved his rare excellence in 'Thacker' while Rita Dutta's 'Moon' was transparent and lively. Anadi Chakraborty did justice to 'Swang' but the characterization of Dr. Hoto lacked vastness. Other participants were Jayantakumar (Yen), Amulya Bhattacharya (Nanha) Mahendra Banerjee (Viet), Robin Chatterjee (Westmore), Biren Debnath, Proulla Banerjee, Nemai Dutta, Subal Samanta, Anil Bhattacharya, Aruna Goswami, Manju Banerjee, Chabi Das.



Abhay Haldar, Jayanta Kumar and others in a tense moment from New Prabhash Opera's Biplabi Vietnam'.



নিউ প্রভাস অপেরার 'বিপ্লবী ভিয়েতনাম'এর একটি দৃশ্যে জয়ন্তকুমার, মঞ্জু ব্যানার্জী, নিমাই দাস ও সুবর্ণ সামন্ত

JUGANTAR NOV. 23rd

নিউ প্রভাস অপেরার বিপ্লবী ভিয়েৎনাম

ভিয়েৎনাম। এই নামটির সঙ্গে পরিচয় নেই এমন মানুষ আজকের দিনে বিরল। এই সেই দেশ, যে দেশের জনসংখ্যা এবং আয়তন ক্ষুদ্র হলেও নিজের দেশকে সাম্রাজ্যবাদী আগ্রাসন থেকে মুক্ত করার জন্য ঐক্যবদ্ধ জীবনপণ লড়াই করেই বৃহৎশক্তি আমেরিকাকে পর্যুদস্ত করেছে। সেই ভিয়েৎনাম ও ভিয়েৎনামীদের আদর্শ, আত্মত্যাগ, বীরত্ব এবং পররাজ্যলিপ্সুর বর্বর ও বীভৎস অত্যাচারের ছবি তুলে ধরেছেন নিউ প্রভাস অপেরা তাদের এ বছরের শ্রেষ্ঠ পালা "বিপ্লবী ভিয়েৎনাম"এ। রাঁচী, টাটা, নদীয়া, খড়গপুর, আসানসোল ও দুর্গাপুরের প্রতিটি আসরে অগণিত দর্শকের অকুণ্ঠ প্রশংসা পেয়েছে "বিপ্লবী ভিয়েৎনাম"। পালাটি রচনা করেছেন দেবেন্দ্রনাথ নাথ। সম্পাদনা ও পরিচালনা করেছেন রমেন লাহিড়ী। এই কাজে তিনি তাঁর নিজস্ব শিল্পচিন্তার স্বাক্ষর রাখতে পেরেছেন—যার ফলে পালাটি হৃদয়গ্রাহী এবং অনুপ্রেরণামূলক হয়ে উঠতে পেরেছে।

সমগ্র পালাটির অভিনয় অঙ্গপাত আকর্ষণীয়। অজ্ঞাতশত্রুর আলোক সম্পাত পালাটিকে আরো আকর্ষণীয় করেছে। এ দলের প্রধান শিল্পী পুলিনবিহারী বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়ের 'হো-চি-মিন' চরিত্র শারীরিক ও মুখমণ্ডলের সাদৃশ্যতায় যেমন বাস্তব রূপ নিতে সক্ষম হয়েছে তেমনি অভিনয়ের গুণে প্রাণবন্ত হয়ে উঠেছে। 'মুয়েন' চরিত্রে রীতা দত্ত প্রতিভার পরিচয় দিতে পেরেছেন। এছাড়া উল্লেখযোগ্য অভয় হালদারের 'থাকার', অরুণা গোস্বামীর 'মাতৃ', অনাদি চক্রবর্তীর 'সোয়াং' রবীন চাটার্জীর 'ওয়েস্টমোর', অমূল্য ভট্টাচার্যের 'নানহা', প্রণব কুমারের 'ডাঃ হতো' এবং জয়ন্ত কুমারের 'ইয়েন'।

JUGANTAR NOV 23rd

টাটা—রাঁচি—খড়গপুর
আসানসোল—দুর্গাপুর
১বার মুখে একটি নাম
ভিয়েতনাম—ভিয়েতনাম
নিউ
প্রভাস
অপেরার
গর্বিত প্রযোজনা
(প্রতিটী যাত্রার আসরে
অগণিত দর্শকের সামনে)
বিপ্লবী
ভিয়েতনাম
তৎসহ
সিরাজের কান্না
পাগল ঠাকুর
শ্রীকৃষ্ণের সংসার
হেড অফিস—৩৩৩এ, রবীন্দ্র সরণী,
কলিকাতা-৬
ব্রাঞ্চ—কুচবিহার হোটেল, ফোন: ৩৪৩
পরিচালনা—রমেন বসুমল্লিক
৩০শে অগ্রহায়ণ ও ১লা পৌষ
শিলিগুড়ি সুভাষ পল্লীতে যাত্রাভিনয়

JUGANTAR NOV. 27

JUGANTAR NOV. 8, 1970

রঙমহলে

Its Praise is sky-high
Calcutta's universally popular
Jatra Unit

TARUN OPERA'S "LENIN"

has been honoured with
'SOVIET DESH' AWARD

To the dramatist, director, artists, technicians and all others in India who have extend their sincerest co-operation to us and have helped its magnificent success with their warmest congratulations, we offer our most grateful thanks

— TARUN OPERA

AMRITA BAZAR - NOV 10

প্রশংসা আকাশ ছুঁয়ে গেছে !

কোলকাতার সর্বজনপ্রিয় যাত্রা সংস্থা

তরুণ অপেরার লেনিন

'সোভিয়েট দেশ' পুরস্কার পেল।

লেনিন পালাটির সঙ্গে সংশ্লিষ্ট নাটককার, পরিচালক, শিল্পী, কলাকুশলী ও ভারতের অন্যান্য যাঁরা আন্তরিকভাবে সহযোগিতা করেছেন ও এ কৃতির অভিনন্দনে পাঠাতে এর বিরাট সার্থকতাকে সুযোগ করে দিয়েছেন তাঁদের সকলকেই অকুণ্ঠ কৃতজ্ঞতা নিবেদন করছে.....

তরুণ অপেরা
কলিকাতা ৭ ॥ ৫৫-৭১২১

JUGANTAR - NOV. 10, 1970

রাশিয়ার ডাক যাত্রার ইতিহাসে এই প্রথম আন্তর্জাতিক পুরস্কার তরুণ অপেরা সোভিয়েত যাত্রার আমন্ত্রণ পেলেন

সারা দেশের অযুত দর্শকের অতি প্রিয়

তরুণ অপেরা। লেনিন

NOV. 15, 1970 JUGANTAR

INDIAN POSTS AND TELEGRAPHS DEPARTMENT

TELEGRAM

299

AMAR GHOSH DIRECTOR TARUN OPERA

113, RABINDRA SARANI CALCUTTA

D 1430 N 147 NEW DELHI 6 7/73

WITH PLEASURE SOVIET LAND NEHRU AWARD COMMITTEE HAS DECIDED TO AWARD YOU PRIZE OF RUPEES EIGHT THOUSAND AND FREE FORTNIGHT TRIP TO SOVIET UNION STOP ACCEPT OUR HEARTIEST CONGRATULATIONS STOP YOU ARE INVITED TO COME TO DELHI TO RECEIVE PRIZE AT AWARD GIVING CEREMONEY ON FIFTEENTH NOVEMBER -

K P S MENON CHAIRMAN V R KULLANDA VICE CHAIRMAN RANA DAKI BAHADUR SINGH SECRETARY GENERAL

আরও তিনটি অসামান্য উপহার

নেপোলিয়ান : রমলা সার্কাস : হিটলার

১১০ রবীন্দ্র সরণী, কলিকাতা-৬। ফোন—৫৫৭১২১

between India and the Soviet Union, and to picture Santi Gopal, the party's lessee and main actor holding the award and announcing his trip to Russia. These advertisements certainly helped to increase the party's popular appeal and recognition.

The jatra advertising system, linking the parties and the audiences, is proven effective or not when the audience gathers. The non-literate Bengali public relies on word-of-mouth advertising, but the information has to get into the system somewhere. If the audiences flood the asara it is successful, if not —it is back to the drawing board and the decisions are discussed again and new tactics and strategies may be devised and tried.

PART THREE:

THE JATRA GOERS

The JATRA GOERS:
The Spectators and the Audience

Before a jatra performance can actually take place, and before the jatra performance system can be fully presented here, there have to be some people who receive the jatra performers' message; there must be a consideration of the people who comprise the jatra audience and spectators. Gaining information on audiences was the most difficult part of my research, since by travelling with jatra parties I was rarely in a village area or urban neighbourhood long enough to get to know it or the people there very well. In addition to the problems created by travelling, there was also a problem of jatra audience size— they vary from about 500 people to one as large as the one I witnessed for the play *Biblopi Vietnam* which was over 14,000 people. A performance audience this large makes contact with very many people on any more than a casual basis nearly impossible. Even the group interviews that I held with audience members after a performance were unsatisfactory in getting information about who the audience members were, since those participating in the group interviews were self-selected; they were never a 'cross-section' of audience members and I never had any control over who might actually appear and take part in the post-performance discussions. My discussion of audiences, consequently, will be confined, for the most part, to a consideration of the audience during a jatra performance; how they relate to the performance, how they behave during a performance, how they show pleasure or displeasure with the performance, and how they receive and interpret the information presented in the performances they witness.

Jatra audiences are, usually, Bengali-speaking, since the plays are performed in the Bengali language; when they travel to perform for Bengalis living in Orissa or Assam, however, the audiences are usually

expanded to include people whose mother-tongue is not Bengali. Partially because anyone can get pleasure and entertainment from watching a jatra performance whether or not they understand the language (as I can personally attest from the beginning of my research when my Bengali was abysmal), but primarily because Oriya and Assamese are closely related languages, anyone who is within travelling distance of the performance area will come to attend the spectacle. Audiences are a mixture of castes, ages, sexes, as well as a mixture of social and economic classes.

Remembering what I said earlier in the section on the travelling theatre, jatra artists and personnel are 'outsiders' to the areas where they perform, and the nature of their interaction with audiences outside the context of the performance is limited and distant. Except for information on what is going on in Calcutta and what are the newest and most popular cinemas, etc., little passes between them. Some of the more prominent local people, like rajas, political leaders or the people of the jatra sponsoring group, may come and give a gift to one of the artists, but even then the conversation is minimal. Once when we were in Jamshedpur, the Raja of Mayurbanj (an area bordering the districts of Bihar and Bengal) came to the green room and presented Jyotsna Dutta (the leading female artist) with a spotted fawn skin because he liked her acting and always came to see her when she was in the area—but he didn't stay for the performance since he was sponsoring another one in his own immediate locale.

One thing that the artists keep in mind when they are confronting a new audience is that it is a 'new' audience— they rarely play to exactly the same audience more than once. Even when they perform in the same area several times a season they know that the audience will be different; they expect different reactions and responses. Each performance

has its own rapport and character; this is felt and commented upon by the jatra artists. Each time they present a play, even if it is the 20th performance of that play that season, they think of it as a new presentation.

The Seating: its physical lay-out and social characteristics

Modern jatra performances are what is known as 'ticket sale jatras'; jatra spectators purchase tickets for admittance to a performance area or *asara*. The seating of the audience is according to 'classes'. Most performances have 'classes' of seats varying from the patron and donor class (spectators who spend from rupees 100 (about $14) to rupees 25 (about $4)) through first class, second class and third class (rupees 5,3,2 or 1) to ground-sitting or standing class (50 paisa or about 6¢). People who buy tickets at the lowest end of the scale rarely can afford higher priced tickets—people who buy first class tickets in many cases could afford donor or patron class tickets but choose not to use their money in that way. Sitting in the donor or patron class section, however, does carry social prestige—being visible there confirms one's position within the village or neighbourhood. Jatra seating usually duplicates social position and hierarchy within the locality; a quick glance around the audience usually reveals a Hindu microcosm.

People will sit with people they know and who are from, say, the same section of the village. Women, while they may sit in the patron, donor or first class section, usually sit in the area roped off and segregated for them. Children, if young, will sit in the women's section, if older will roam around in various sections. Before the performance representatives from the sponsoring group will be stationed around the

asara to make sure that no one sneaks in without paying; after the performance begins they are less concerned about this since they are watching the play and people will crowd around and struggle to see and hear, whether or not they have paid.

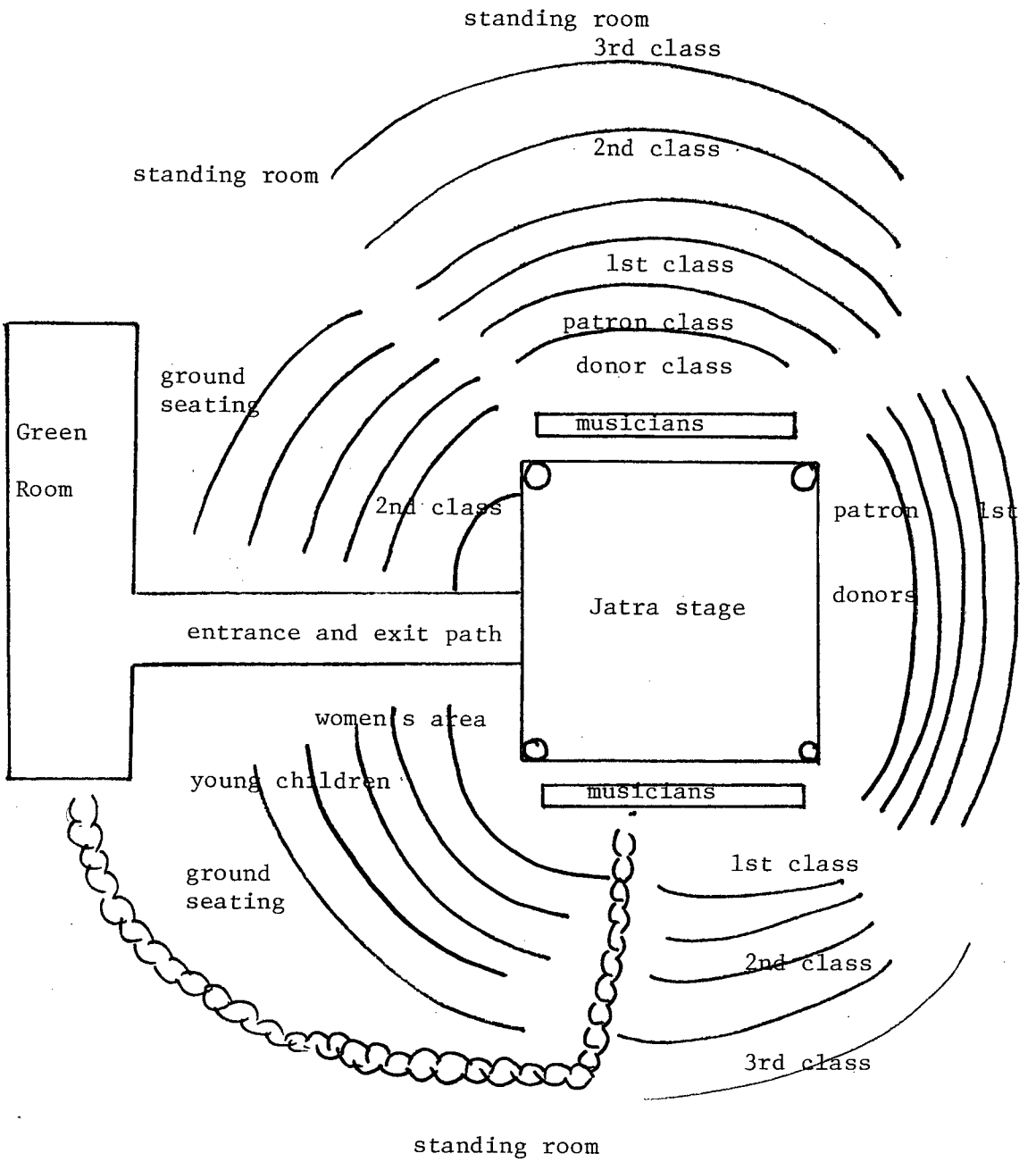
The jatra performance is one of the few entertainment forms that come to a village area, and nearly everyone in the village and surrounding area will attend. Audiences have more males than females in composition, there are nonetheless quite a few women in the audiences.

Depending on the facilities available in the village or urban neighbourhood where a performance is taking place, there will be a presence or absence of what is referred to as *pakka boshak* (particularly good quality seating). Chairs and bleachers may be used, if they are available, for the upper classes of tickets, and standing and ground-sitting areas may be used for the lower classes of tickets. One performance I attended took place inside a factory and there all the seating was on chairs and plank benches, making only those able to sit in front capable of seeing the entire performance without obstruction. If a performance is in an urban theatrical structure, as many of the performances in Calcutta are, all the seats are sold according to the proximity to the stage.

The diagram that follows show the seating arrangements for the Janata Opera's performance of *Fashir Mancho* (The Hanging Platform) as it was performed in the Park Circus Maidan in Calcutta during the first fall puja season jatras I witnessed. Other performance areas in villages or neighbourhoods will vary according to the rural and urban facilities, but most will look very much the same. The jatra asara is usually within a *pandal* (large covered area) or behind a fence that helps to control the orderly entrance and exit of spectators.

Figure 4

A TYPICAL JATRA ASARA



This diagram is fashioned after the Park Circus Maidan Jatra Pandal in Calcutta. Village asaras will vary somewhat, but will contain the same features.

Appreciation of the Performance:

The main intention of the artists and the official personnel of the jatra party is to put on a performance that will 'please', educate, and entertain the audience or spectators (*shraban or drishak*—both words are used to refer to this aggregation of people who watch or hear a jatra performance; the usage depends on the whether the emphasis is being placed on hearing or on seeing the performance). For the most part, they seem to fulfill their intention.

Audience members give two kinds of feedback to the jatra artists, direct and indirect. The direct feedback is done in terms of applause, attention, verbal commentary that is heard on stage, and payments. If an artist's delivery of his/her lines is done well, the audience will utter sounds of approval; *baa, baa* or *chomotkar, chomotkar* (wonderful, wonderful) in intonations that are difficult to describe here but are immediately recognisable to the artist as appreciative, or they clap when the speech is finished. If they do not like an artist they are likely to emit 'cat calls' or generally make a disturbance so that the artist may not be heard over the din. This kind of feedback is usually met with immediate changes by either the artists themselves or by the production manager. If the problem is one of simply not being able to hear the artist or a breakdown in the amplification equipment it is fixed immediately. On occasion an audience member will talk with someone near him/her and comment on the acting, but more often the appreciation of the performance is something that each audience member does alone. Although now-a-days it is less common than in the past, there is another form of direct feedback that audience members give artists; *palla* is the practice of pinning rupees to the sleeve of the performer's costume when they feel that he/she has done a part-

icularly impressive job on a speech or with gestures. Sometimes people throw paisa at the child actors/resses or the dancers as well. An artist could make as much as 10-15 rupees extra if he/she pleases the audience with excellent delivery of lines or songs. One artist told me that in the past he could make as much as 200 rupees a night, just for good delivery. I saw this practice still being used, but more often in amateur performances than in professional ones, when I was doing this research, however. Feedback for a good performance is given nonetheless.

What constitutes a good performance, from the spectators point of view? All audience members I talked with agreed that above all else a good performance demonstrates a clever integration of all elements of the performance (the pre-performance concert, the dance-drama, the musical accompaniment and accentuation of the play, and the play itself) and the teamwork among the performers. Audience members love the 'stars' of the performance, but they are quick to point out that if the stars are great and the rest of the performers are not, then the performance becomes boring or 'bad' when the star is not on stage. Therefore, they look for teamwork and excellence of acting by even the lowest actor and in the smallest role. A good performance also has 'lots of action'; movement in either gestures accompanying lines, entrances and exits, and fight scenes is essential for maintaining audience interest and receiving praise. A jatra play must have continuous action, there should be no perceivable breaks in the flow and continuity of the performance from act to act or from scene to scene—all action must be linked directly to the play itself. Audience members liked to discuss the quality of the 'sword-play' displayed by the actors; some said that it was hard to appreciate a play that did not have a fight scene or did not have some clash on stage. Audiences like the excitement of 'swash-buckling' heroic

actions— the grander the gesture and the louder the accompanying music the better. The same emphasis on movement applies to other stage business as well; the more movement accompanying the verbal execution in the performance the better. This, of course, varies with the play being performed; audiences do not expect to see Lord Chaitanya fighting, but they do expect to see him singing and dancing.

The judgements about 'good' and 'bad' acting can be divided, for heuristic purposes only, into two categories: technical and aesthetic. On the technical side audience members attend to the pronounciation of words, the volume of the voice, the expertise in stage business and the use of gestures. On the aesthetic side they attend to quality of the voice and pathos in delivering lines, physique and its suitability for the role being taken, and the successful presentation of various *rasa*(moods, sentiments, or 'tastes' and flavours). *Rasa*, the sense of artistic appreciation, is at the base of Indian Aesthetic Theory and known to most audience members. For most audience members the technical and the aesthetic sides of their judgement are not separable—even if all the technical things are done correctly or without flaw, if the character does not look the part it will not go over well; or even if the hero, for example, is tall, strong, has the 'moon-shaped' face and wavy dark hair required for the part, he must also have good pronounciation and well-executed gestures. Good acting, as well as good teamwork, can add greatly to the kind of information that is passed around, as indirect feedback, about the party through word-of-mouth.

Behaviour at a Performance:

As opposed to behaving correctly as an audience member in the West, where attentiveness and silence throughout a performance is appropriate, in Bengal, whether watching a jatra performance or a theatrical perform-

ance or concert, constant attention and silence are not expected. A performance area usually is surrounded on the outside with vendors and stalls for selling various kinds of goods: counter-panes, dishes, sweets, religious paraphernalia, etc.. Vendors wander in and out among the audience members as well; it reminds one more of the kind of behaviour and selling witnessed at a Western football game, sports match or the circus.

Since jatra performances are from 3½-4½ hours long, no one expects constant attention—it is common to see audience members sleeping, walking around, or yelling at the people who are. Once when I was sitting with the women during a performance of an historical play, the woman next to me, who was nursing her young child, leaned over to me and asked me to please let her know when the hero came back on if she fell asleep. During songs, even though they are considered the most essential part of the play, people get up and wander around, seeming to stretch their legs and wake up again for a scene with more action.

Amidst all this seeming inattention, audience members do give direct feedback about the quality of the performance (as indicated earlier). It is fairly common for technical difficulties to arise, or a generator to run dry—at which time the audience becomes not only vocal about the disturbance but rowdy and agitated. This requires someone from the party or the sponsoring group to attend to the audience's deportment. In just about every audience there are a few teen-aged boys who seem to take command of the younger children in the area, keeping them in line by yelling and hitting them. On more than one occasion I watched these officious adolescents keep younger children from making themselves a nuisance, only for the adolescents to be a nuisance by their actions.

In general, rules of social interaction of an audience are the same as general social interaction—youngers do not interfere with elders,

inferiors do not interefere with superiors. Women do not interfere with men; they are usually segregated from them as in much of social life. Young children, those still nursing or under the age of 5 or 6 are indulged and allowed to behave pretty much as they wish.

Receiving and Interpreting a Performance:

There is an interesting dialectic between receiving and interpreting the information presented in a jatra performance. Jatra audiences are quite willing to accept new material and themes in jatra plays, as long as they can also see and appreciate the performance of traditional themes as well. The tastes of the audiences are thoughtfully considered when a party puts together its seasonal repertoire of plays—but the playwrights and the party constantly try to push the boundaries of acceptability further and further; as far as they can get away with. The boundaries are defined by what material can be interpreted by a villager with few contacts outside the rural context; what is meaningful cultural information. A play will only be sensible if it relates to either the actual experience or conceivable experience of audience members— it must be interpretable within the range of Bengali symbols and images. Most jatras contain information that 'everybody' already knows.

Traditional themes can be presented in a new way, with new emphases and presentations—for example, Brojenranath De wrote a play reinterpreting the character of Ravanna (the villain from the epic story the Ramayana) that received wide acclaim and popularity. Utpal Dutta, a newcomer to the jatra jagat but well-known in film and theatre, wrote a new historical play interpreting Mahatma Gandhi as an agent of imperialism—this also was a popular play. With the growing practice of present-

ing foreign themes in the modern jatra, however, parties must be more careful in presenting the new material to audiences—particularly if it seems that there are no Bengali reference points for the audience to rally around.

Perhaps one of the best examples I can give to make this point clearer is an account of the performance of the play *Biblopi Vietnam* to a village audience in the 24 Parganas district of West Bengal. Most of the villagers I talked with after the performance told me that they did not know much about Vietnam, where it was, what the people were like, or about the trouble that was going on there before the performance of the play began. A few young school boys and a few adult men knew about it, but only had heard about it on the radio or at the village tea shop. By the end of the performance they understood what was going on there and they had an idea that the Vietnamese peasants were just like them—they were rice farmers, ate fish, and were being subjected to cruel foreign domination (by Americans in this case). They understood what the people of Vietnam were going through, because they had gone through it too when they were trying to get the British to quit India. When I asked them how they came to know and understand all this from the play, several articulate audience members gave me a very interesting account of how the information gets processed.

The play opened with a tape recording filled with information about where Vietnam was and some information about what the people there did for a living and how their lives were carried out. From this information, the audience member said, they were able to know that the people there were just like themselves. Even when they saw the actors dressed differently and made-up to look as Oriental as possible, they

knew that inside they were people just like themselves. They could put themselves in Vietnamese places. Then by the presentation of the American soldiers and the cruelty of people dominating other people, they could remember how the British soldiers and officials had treated them, and they could also see how people's whole lives can get disrupted. They understood the consequences of imperialism. (Photographs 43-46 in the section following show this play; the make-up and actions of the various characters).

After seeing a number of revolutionary plays, I could also tell that they presented foreign dominators in a very stylised way, and that most dominated people were, or displayed the characteristics of, good Bengalis. Vietnamese heros looked and acted like Bengali heros; Americans, British, and Portuguese (in the play exposing the strife between the Angolese and Portuguese, Raktata Afrika) looked and acted a lot alike, using similar tortures and similar information extraction techniques; the conscience *(vivek)* or singers sang songs about similar plights and human dilemmas; and the actresses were understandable Bengali women. Foreign themes were made Bengali enough to be easily understood and interpreted, with minimal instruction. (Photographs 43-50 in the following section are visual examples of these revolutionary and foreign play characterisations).

Audiences are willing to be instructed in new themes, though, and would encourage owners to produce more revolutionary plays, largely by their enthusiastic attendance and response to the ones that were presented. Revolutionary plays always have a lot of action; action is what Bengali audiences want.

PART FOUR:

THE JATRA PERFORMANCE

The Jatra Performance:

A jatra performance is a combination of small, somewhat autonomous elements and the jatra play itself. The performance lasts between 3½-4½ hours and proceeds according to the following sequence:

1) The opening concert
2) The third gong
3) The dance-drama
4) The play
5) The national anthem

Between one half hour and forty-five minutes before the play should begin the musicians take their place on the ½-1' platforms that flank either side of the jātra stage. They are split so that the instruments are separated from the drums; instruments are on the right as you look at the stage from the green room, and drummers are on the left. The music concert party consists of a flute, a clarinet, a cornet, a baritone, a harmonium, a violin and perhaps a sarangi (this instrument, like a violin, is optional in the modern jatra parties), two or three drummers and a cymbals player. The opening concert is a general call to the asara for the audience and a signal for the artists to begin the process of 'making-up'. The music is always rousing, martial-style music, played loudly and heavily punctuated with accents and drums. It can be heard all over the locale where the jatra is playing. About 10-15 minutes into the concert, just as the audience is beginning to gather there is the sound of the 'first gong'. This is a warning to the actors to keep moving with their make-up. When the audience looks about half present, the cymbal player sounds the 'second gong', and after about 30-45 minutes the concert comes to a close with the sounding of the 'third gong'.

The placement of the gongs is dependent on how fast the audience arrives and the time needed by the artists to make-up, but when the third gong is sounded, usually under the direction of the production manager, the performers should be ready and the audience should have assembled. The third gong is then followed by the dance-drama.

Dance-dramas are, characteristically, depictions of mythological struggles between good and evil. It is through the dance-drama that an aesthetic presentation of the struggle present in the play itself is introduced. The subject matter of the dance-drama and the play need not be linked, but symbolically and meaningfully they are. Common themes of the dance-dramas are: the birth of the goddess Kali from the goddess Durga's brow as she fights the demons (such a dance-drama is shown in the photograph 35 which follows); the churning of the oceans and the conquering of the demons; Krishna's slaying of the evil Kangsha; Rama and Laksmana fighting the demon-king Ravana; the tempting of Siva by Parvati; etc.. All these are stories and themes that are common knowledge to Bengali audiences—their sources being either the epics of the *Ramayana* or the *Mahabharata*, or the Puranic literature that is incorporated into village Panchali and Kathkata stories (two forms of village peripatetic performances that are treated in Part Five of this thesis). The dance-drama may take anywhere from 10-20 minutes, depending on the story being enacted and on the pace that the dancers are using during any one performance.

When the dance-drama is finished the concert is resumed for as much as 5 minutes, as the play is about to begin. Once the play itself begins there is continuous action for about 3-3½ hours, piling scene upon scene of information. The stories are categorised into kinds of plays, and within each kind of play there are various themes explored and presented to

the audience. Throughout the play the lines and the actions are accented and interpreted further by musical accompaniment, carefully planned to enhance the meanings intended in the play. When I originally began the research I though that their would be a relationship between the information and the time taken or length of the scene in which it was presented; as with many of our analytic schemes and wishes, there was no systematic relationship between them. Rather, it was common for the music to underscore the import of a sequence of dialogue or a flourish of action. Drums and the other percussion instruments are important in punctuating dialogue and the flutes or violins are important in setting the moods and pathos of a scene.

At the close of the last scene of the play most of the actors/resses will run on the to the stage and the musicians play 'Jai Hind', the Indian National Anthem. Usually the children in the party, if they are still awake, or one of the lower status actors, if they are not, will hold the Indian flag during the playing of the anthem. At that time, between 3½-4½ hours from the time the entire performance began, it is over.

Themes and Stories Presented in the Plays:

The table following this verbal section outlines the various kinds of themes that were presented during the years 1970-72 (two jatra seasons) when this research was conducted. I saw at least one performance of every professional party, and I tried to see what people considered the most popular and important jatra plays in at least two different contexts (rural or urban, open-air or indoors, etc.).

Plays, when they are published or advertised, are classified by the people in the jatra jagat, especially playwrights, owners and publishers. The basis for the classification, however, is at least two-dimensional; it seems to be based on theme (the paramount message) or the source of the ma-

terial (a traditional story, life situation, imagination). People were able to classify plays easily, frequently even agreeing with each other's classifications. It was difficult, however, to refine the dimensions further, since it was not a topic that seemed to hold the slightest interest for either jatra personnel or audiences. Naming something as an instance of or a member of a certain class was enough.

As I mentioned earlier, jatra parties usually have a repertoire of 4 or 5 plays. They try to have each play represent a different category of play, embodying different themes. The repertoire of the Satyamber Opera for one year, as an example, was:

Sepoy Bidraho (Historical, Freedom Movement)
Sati Ekabati (Imaginary, Traditional Story)
Kanna Ghom Rakta (Class Struggle, Social Drama)
Sahore Theke Dure (Social Drama, Rural/Urban Problem)

with

Jalianawallah Bagh (Historical, Freedom Movement)

in reserve.

In general, the most prominent themes were class-struggle, revolutionary and social, during the time that I was in Bengal. The jatra plays were directly linked to the things going on in Bengal and elsewhere in the world at that time. Largely this is due to two reasons: one, the jatra considers itself to be one of the major educating forces in the countryside; and two, the people in the jatra jagat realise and discuss the fact that for a message to get across and be able to be acted upon it has to be related to people's life situations. Jatra playwrights and owners are especially aware of this fact. The translated play that appears in Part Seven is a good example of this direct link. References are made to social life in Calcutta as well as rural Bengal, to Bengali religious heroes,

to the Indian Central Government, and to the Apollo Space Missions, as well as being linked to the importance of the political activities of Bengal. I did not expect the plays to be so contemporary, since I had gone with hopes of seeing religious dramas being enacted. As it turned out I only saw 4 plays that were strictly religious or mythological in theme. The religious plays were either on the lives of religious heroes and saints or stories from the epics; *Maharati Karna* (from the Mahabharata), *Shadak Kamalakanto* (the life of the Bengali Shakta poet and devotee, Kamalakanto), *Bishupriya* (the lives of both Chaitanya and his wife, Bishnupriya), and *Bappa Kepa* (the life of the Shakta visionary, Bappa Kepa). There was one other biographical play that could have been placed in this category, *Lalan Fakir* (the life of the Baul and Pir, Lalan Fakir), but the playwright called it a 'biographical' play rather than a religious one. All these plays dealt with themes and stories that the audience members knew very well—they have been presented in many jatras before, and they are stories generally told often in other 'cultural performance' forms as well.

The historical themes ranged from *Sepoy Bidraho* (the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857), *Nil Rakta* (Blue Blood—life during the oppressive Indigo Plantation era), *Dilli Cholo* (On to Delhi—dealing with getting the British out of India), to *Rahu Mukta Russia* (The October Revolution in Russia) and *Abraham Lincoln* (on the life of the slave-freer from the United States and the Civil War). Again, with the exception of only one or two plays, they were themes and stories that the audience members knew well, or that they could easily interpret from the play itself (see again the section on Receiving and Interpreting Information, previous to this section).

Social dramas, whether dramatisations of Bengali novels or plays created about modern social and political problems in Bengal, were always critical of the social scene. *Kalindi, Chaitraheen, and Bou Thakurani Hat*

(based on novels by Tarashankar Banerjee, Sarat Chandra Chatterjee, and Rabindranath Tagore, respectively) were popular jatras, as were *Gorib Kaeno More* (Why the Poor Die?), *Panch Paiser Prithibi* (The World for Five Paisa-translated later), and *Kanna Ghom Rakta* (Tears, Sweat and Blood), all plays based on social problems and class-struggle in Bengal. These were also easy for a Bengali audience to interpret since they were based on social settings and social practices that are 'common everyday' occurances in Bengal.

Some of the most popular themes were revolutionary plays like, *Lenin, Raktata Afrika, Biplopi Vietnam,* or Gorki's *Mother* and the play *Mao Tse 'Tung*. These, along with some that dealt with the Naxalite movement in Bengal and the life of the Bengali hero Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, were new information placed within an interpretable framework. The play Lenin, performed by the Tarun Opera, was the single most performed play during the two seasons I witnessed.

The photographs that follow the table are visual examples of the jatra performances. The photographs were chosen to demonstrate two main parts of the jatra performance, the dance-drama and the play itself, and to show the various themes of the plays being performed in 1970-72.

A more 'traditional' form of dance-drama is shown in photograph 35. It is unfortunate that it is difficult to find a way of representing the movement and power of a dance-drama in a verbal or visual description: Performances like this one of Kali are as powerful in a 'sound' sense as they are in other senses as well. Kali has a hideous divine resonant laughter, as characteristic of her as any visual image. Photograph 47 shows a more 'modern' dance-drama. This is a presentation of Bengali versions of Angolese natives. This preceded the play *Raktata Afrika* itself a modern revolutionary drama depicting the foreign domination theme (see also photographs

47-50 where other visual examples of this play are shown).

The visual examples of plays themselves are chosen to depict the most prominent themes I witnessed; the social, class-struggle and revolutionary ones. The theme of social criticism and anti-order statements in defiant postures are shown in a number of photographs. Photograph 36 shows Chaitanya, the Bengali religious reformer who not only is the putative founder of the jatra but also a preacher for non-hierarchical social and religious relations. Social criticism is also an important aspect of the plays represented by photographs 39-52, even though the areas of criticism vary from internal social criticism to the criticism of foreign domination of people.

The jatra parties and personnel are very versatile in portraying this wide range of themes and stories. In trying to fulfill their purpose of education as well as entertainment, jatra parties also try to change Bengali tastes and add to the knowledge of the people. Even though this is the case, the presentation of the play through characterisation, costuming, and acting is predictable, typified, and frequently stylised.

Table 2:

JATRA PLAY TYPES SEEN (1970-1972)

TYPE OF PLAY		NUMBER OF DIFFERENT TYPES SEEN	
			(56)
Puranic/Religious			4
Historical			
	Freedom Movement	6	
	Rebellion	3	
	Mughul	3	
	Non-Indian	2	
	Imaginary	2	
			16
Social			
	Class Struggle	12	
	Social Novels	4	
			16
Revolutionary			10
Imaginary			4
Other (includes:Biography, Non-Indian novels, etc..			6

COMMENTS:

1) A total of 81 performances were seen. Some of the plays were seen a number of times, in different contexts. In addition, 7 rehearsals were witnessed. Several non-professional jatras were also seen; they were of the following types: Religious 2, Historical 3, and Social 2.

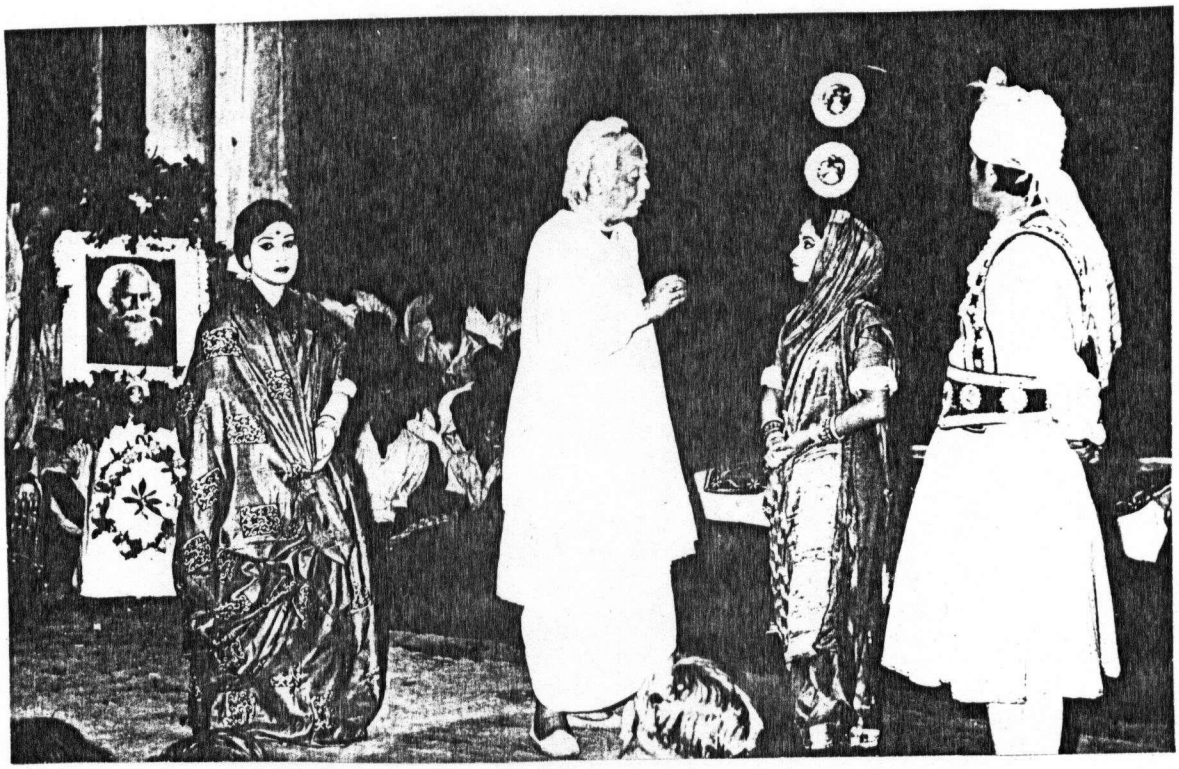
2) The major type classification is the one used by people in the jatra jagat, on the flyers and published plays. The secondary breakdown is my own, based on what I took the main thrust of the content of the play to be.

35 A Traditional Dance-Drama: The Birth of Kali
Performed by Arati of the Natya Bharati Theatrical Jatra

36 Scene from Bishupriya (The Wife of Chaitanya-the putative founder of the jatra) Actors Deb Kumar and Bhola Pal

37 Scene from a Historical Play from the Mughul Period
Shamudra Shasan

38 Scene from a Mythological Play based on The Mahabharata
Tableau formation from Maharati Karna



39 Scene from a Social Drama based on a Novel
Rabindranath Tagore's Bou Thakurani Hat

40 Scene from a Revolutionary Drama of the British Period
Panchu Sen and Jyotsna Dutta in Binoy, Badal, Dinesh

41 Scene from a Social (Class-Struggle) Drama in Modern Period
Markhan Sammadhar as the comic policeman

42 Scene from a Social (Class-Struggle) Drama in Modern Period

43 Scene from a Revolutionary Drama: Biblopi Vietnam
Social Realism in portraying the effects
of Napalm

44 Scene from a Revolutionary Drama: Biblopi Vietnam
Social Realism in portraying Americans

45 Character: Ho Chi Min
Biblopi Vietnam

46 Character: Revolutionary
Woman from Biblopi Vietnam

47 A Modern Dance-Drama: Revolutionary Theme
Dance preceding the revolutionary play entitled
Raktata Afrika

48 Scene from a Revolutionary Play: the Angolese Revolution
Raktata Afrika

49 Scene from Raktata Afrika
Portuguese Dominator and
Angolese servant

50 Scene from Raktata Afrika
Characterisation of the
Portuguese Man and Woman

51 Scene from an Imaginary Drama: Adaptation of the Prisoner of Zenda

52 Scene from an Imaginary Social Drama
Sonai Dighi

The Presentation of the Play:

Characterisation:

The play is the central part of the performance, and I will now consider how the theme is portrayed through the costuming, casting, and acting. Jatra characterisation is a specialised form of acting, different from theatrical acting and stage acting. While there is no 'school' of jatra acting, where training in the specialised techniques of jatra characterisation is carried out, there is a kind of apprentice system (*shiksha nabish padjrati*).

Older jatra actors frequently have proteges, people who they see as potentially good stars in the jatra jagat. If a younger actor is partcularly good-looking, has a strong and expressive voice, and has an agile body, he will usually be selected out for special attention. Actors without these characteristics, while they may be still hired in the jatra party, will rarely get as much coaching and will rarely be promoted into prominent roles. During the rehearsal period the older and more experienced artists will spend time helping younger and less experienced artists with voice projection, expression and facial expression. Gestures and movement, playing to all sides of the jatra stage, and facial pliability are also elements of jatra acting that require much practice. Panchu Sen, a famous jatra actor who died while this research was being carried, shown in the death photograph in Part Two, was an acting *guru* to several protege stars; Swapan Kumar (the highest paid actor in 1972), Bijon Mukherjee (his brother), Jyotsna Dutta (the most reknown jatra actress), Sujit Pathak, to name only a few. As proteges they pay and paid respect and obseisance to Panchbabu, and they still continued to seek his advice, even when they themselves had reached stardom. The kind of attention and care that gurus give their

proteges is beyond the regular direction of a jatra play—it is more like lessons or private tutoring.

While there are many kinship links among people in the acting part of the jatra jagat, it is by no means a family occupation, nor are children of actors encouraged to take it up as a profession; Panchu Sens's children were all university educated and employed in business or government service. The tradition of jatra acting is maintained by selecting the proteges from among the people who come to seek employment within the jatra jagat, or by scouting performers from the amateur productions of jatra in the villages or the productions of neighbourhood urban clubs. Joyshree Mukherjee, the star of the Satyamber Opera whose marriage was reported earlier, told me in her autobiographical sketch written for me, that she had been 'discovered' by Panchu Sen when she was acting in an amateur jatra performance in her neighbourhood of Calcutta; he continued his interest in her ability by helping her to adjust to life in the jatra jagat.

Jatra acting differs from theatrical and film acting in a number of essential ways: actors must be trained to play to all sides of the in-the-round audience, voices must be loud enough to reach the last rows of viewers even though it is outside and there may be no accoustical help, and voice quality must be good enough to carry the heavy entrance and exit speeches that are characteristic of the protagonists and antagonists. In addition, facial expressions must be exaggerated enough to be seen at a far distance, enhanced by make-up that will show even in dim lighting.

Costuming:

The modern jatra is characterised by fairly 'realistic' costuming; they try, as much as possible, to portray a character with authentic costumes (this is quite a change from the traditional jatra where there was

less concern for social realism: Brojen De, the jatra writer, told me that when he was a child costumes were anything that artists had that changed their everyday appearance, and they were not necessarily related to the part being played). Social dramas, revolutionary dramas, historical dramas, and religious dramas, all now use costuming that corresponds to the various roles as correctly as is possible. Plays on foreign themes, or the characters in social dramas who are playing Westernised Bengalis use a more 'stylised' kind of costuming, often less socially accurate.

Jatra costumes, however, are always as colourful as possible. Mughul costumes are full of silver and gold coloured decorations fashioned after paintings and photographs from that period, saris are chosen in bright colours when they need not be white to portray a social status, and Western clothes are things like smoking jackets, tight slinky dresses and or Hawaiian shirts. Again, the costume must be seen in dim lighting, and some of the role identification is made possible through the use of brightly coloured costumes.

People playing particular roles. such as military, police or other uniformed functionaries are realistically dressed, and the stage props they use to accompany the costume portrayal look authentic; guns from the British period look so, shields from the Mughul period look so, etc.. As was seen in the photographs of *Raktata Afrika* (especially photograph 47) just prior to this section, the Angolese shields were hub caps, all Westernised drinkers wear velvet smoking jackets (see photograph 41), and secretaries wear Hawaiian shirts and pants—not too realistic.

The costume must be suited to the role being played, it is part of the role, and care is taken by the people of the jatra jagat to do so.

Jatra Acting:

The older jatra actors are aware of the long tradition of acting

and play production in India. They know about Sanskrit drama and the rules for artistic presentation in that tradition. Surendranath Mukherjee, an 83 year old actor who had been 67 years in the jatra profession when he retired, and who was my jatra acting teacher, had produced his own version of the *Natya Sastra* (Sanskritic text devoted to the explication of theatre and aesthetics) in Bengali. While it bears only some resemblance to the Sanskrit text, that there is a connection in his mind is without doubt. Most of the actors performing today, however, are not very familiar with or pay little attention to the canons of the Sanskritic acting tradition, rather, they believe that they have a tradition of acting all their own, different from other traditions, however influenced by the stage and the cinema. Jatra actors (*abhineta*) and actresses (*abhinetri*) understand acting (*abhinoy*) in the jatra jagat to be composed of two main elements, woven together to correctly portray a character; *golik abhinoy* (voice acting), and *angika abhinoy* (gestural acting).

Voice acting, portraying a character by projection, delivery, intonation and expression, and gestural acting, portraying a character by facial expression, deportment and movement, are judged correct according to the character being played. While there are certainly a large number of different characters in any jatra play, there are a number of 'stock' characters and expected ways of depicting them. Following are summaries of the main characterisations and the ways of presenting them:

The Hashya: Each play has to have at least one comic character; comic relief is essential to keep audience attention and release audience tension. Comic characters usually are chubbier, shorter, and less facially attractive than any of the other characters. An actor playing a comic character must be able to play with the pronounciation of words, slur them, and speak them in variable intonations—all without losing the words themselves or

rendering them incomprehensible. Facial pliability (contortions are common), jerky movements, and obscene hand and body gestures are the *angika* qualities of the comic character. Markhan Shammaddhar, the comic with the Satyamber Opera shown in photograph 41 in a policeman's uniform, has the most pliable face in the jatra jagat. He has been a comic for over 20 years and his stock of gestures is well-known and stylised. Sib Bhattacharji, the actor quoted in the prologue, is the comic character for the Tarun Opera. Sib is well-known for his voice and his ability to make obscene insinuations by voice tones. The comic characters are often drawing cards for a jatra party. In the play that is translated later the comic character is the false Brahmin, Brahmadatta, whose backwards actions and off-colour insinuations are intended to create relief in an otherwise serious play.

The Nayak or Bir: Each play and all jatra parties must have roles and artists who can play heroic characters. Photographs 37 and 38 show a couple of heroic characterisations. Heroes are taller, handsomer, and more commanding in their appearance than any of the other characters. Diction, projection, expression and deep-toned speech are the voice acting requirements. Heroes must be able to show all the emotions facially as well. Swapan Kumar, in the photographs that follow, demonstrates four of the facial expressions that must be in a hero's repertoire. Heroes must also be able to spectacularly sword fight and swash-buckle. These grandiose gestures mark a hero from other slightly less-important male characters. Entrance and exit speeches (an oratory style of speech is used in these) are heroes' stock in trade, and the delivery of these is carefully judged by viewers. The play *Panch Paiser Prithibi* has several examples of heroic characters, especially Anjan and Mahesh.

The Rani: Still present in the jatra jagat today, but more so in the past, are the female characters played by male actors—known as *rani* or queens.

Fear

Amusement or Pleasure

Pathos or Melancholy

Anger

53 Characterisation of Emotions: Swapan Kumar

Males playing these female characters had "the hardest job of all; a man can easily play a man, a woman can easily play a woman, but a man who plays a woman has to be a very good actor indeed", Chapal Rani, of the Satyamber Opera, told me. Even though now-a-days the ranis usually play older women or mother characters since there are few actresses within the party naturally old enough to play these parts, in the past they also played the ingenue characters as well. A rani must have a high voice, but projective, and be able to make it sexually attractive. Ranis should be lithe and walk like a woman. Their gestures should be minimal and their demeaner demure. Most are still excellent actors and convincing in their roles.

The Vivek: Each play has a conscience character. In the past it was the externalisation of the hero's inner dilemmas, but now the vivek is primarily a social critic or the externalisation of a 'collective' dilemma. The development of this character is important enough to devote a large section to it, but for the present purposes these features of the vivek are important. The character is usually a singing character (*gayiak*), and so the actor must have a loud, full and projecting singing voice. As they are portrayed in the modern jatra, the viveks must also look the role of a beggar, Baul or servant. Usually they have few speaking lines and little required movement—they are a concrete externalised conscious conscience. Mohan, in the play translated later, is a good example of a modern vivek.

The Nayaki or Birangi: Every jatra play has a leading female character. She should be 'simple', pretty, shapely, and 'moon-faced with lotus eyes'. Her voice should be sweet and yet carry well-enough for large audiences to hear. She need not be adept in movement, but she must have good facial expression. Many of the leading females are also singers, so they should have a good quality and sweet singing voice as well. They must be versatile enough to occasionally play foreign women or Westernised women, as well

as the traditional Bengali roles; like the characters Ivy and Manjusha in *Panch Paiser Prithibi*.

The Bachcha: There usually is a child artist who has a sweet voice, high-pitched enough to carry back to the farthest section of an audience. They also should be able to move well, perhaps to dance as well, and they should be able to sing well. Loki, the 7 year old child star of the Satyamber Opera, was well-known throughout the jatra jagat for her opening Krishna dance and for her saucy and cheeky portrayal of the young child in *Sepoy Bidraho*. Master Kenneth, shown in the following photograph, was known for singing well and playing the part of Lotus in *Panch Paiser Prithibi*.

The Kalo Nayak or Abir: Just as each play must have a protagonist or hero, each play should also have an antagonist or villain. In all respects, physique, voice and movement they should be both well-matched and balanced. The villains have a harsher edge to their voices than heroes, equally deep in pitch but slightly choppier in delivery. The make-up they wear enhances the 'shadows' or darker features of the face. Movements of villains are more pronounced and they usually carry a whip or sword as character props. The antagonists in modern social dramas usually are masters of deception and duplicity much like the character Kalyan in the translated play. Surendranath Mukherjee (referred to earlier) only reluctantly agreed to act the part of a kalo nayak; the role frightened him for two main reasons, one, that the audiences would not love him as they do the hero, and two, that the power of being the 'dark' character could take him over.

Actors/resses are often type-cast with these 'ideal' character portraits in mind; they usually play the same type of role in whichever play or party they are in. All of these characters and the other lesser characters as well, are rendered even more believable by the use of appro-

54 Nayak Shekar Ganguly and Rani Kanata Rani in a Scene from a Historical Play from Mughul Period

55 Kanata Rani

56 Phoni Rani

57 Barnali Banerjee
Character Actress

58 Swapan Kumar
Sheik Mujib Rahman

59 Gurudas Dhara
Vivek and Gayiak

60 Child Artist

priate make-up. Plays such as Biplopi Vietnam or Lenin required much consideration of make-up; they wanted to show the effects of napalm and they wanted a Bengali to look like Lenin. Plays that are set in modern Bengal require little additional make-up; they use only enough to make facial features visible for long distances. In the section on Green Room behaviour previously given, I indicated what kinds of make-up they use and how it is applied by various actors/resses.

These characterisations, even as 'stereotyped as they are', embody a tremendous amount of cultural information—the spectrum of cultural types and their 'ideal' and recognisible forms and behaviours. Just what these recognisible forms and behaviours are constituted from, of course, varies historically and relates to changes in theme and production style from one era of jatra to another. There is a constant, however, and that is the importance of a concept of recognisible identity; that regardless of characterisation it should be constructed according to Bengali truths. The play *Panch Paiser Prithibi* is a good example of the cultural importance of Identity and of being 'in character' or 'full of character'. Just about every character in that play is given some lines of comment on true character, true nature, or false portrayals. These kinds of characters and their 'ideal' types are interpretable by Bengalis precisely because they are 'of Bengal', and directly related to notions that people have about the social and cultural behaviour and forms in general.

The whole jatra performance, and the social relationships that are created and sustained through the production of it, is indeed a cultural performance. It is cultural production in the most technical and imaginative way—from the social relations of the business through to the social relations of aesthetic judgement and appreciative interpretation; from the cultural practices bound up in the information parties present and re-

present to the audiences. At its most profound points, the jatra performance is the communication of Bengali cultural consciousness; at its most superficial points it is culturally interpretable entertainment. Whichever it is at any point, is equally tied to Bengali social and cultural practice.

The jatra is truly creative cultural practice, not only does it present ideal models of information that people already know, it also pushes the boundaries of cultural information that everyone involved in the whole system has drawn.

PART FIVE:

THE JATRA PERFORMANCE SYSTEM

> I must Create a System, or be enslav'd
> by another Man's;
> I will not Reason and Compare: my business
> is to Create.
>
> (William Blake, Jerusalem f10 L20)

THE JATRA PERFORMANCE SYSTEM:
Its Internal Organisation, Contradictions and External Relations

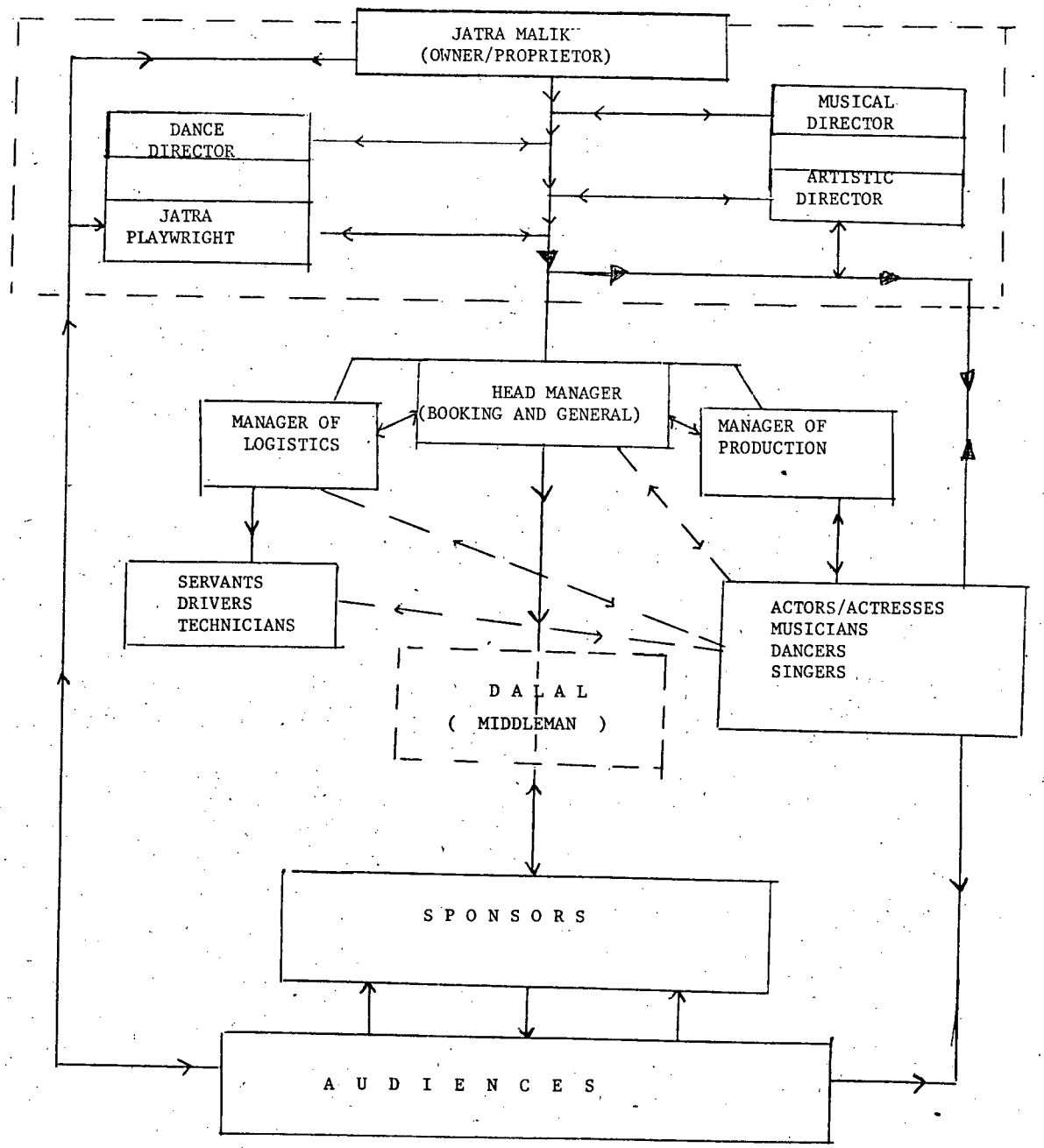
The jatra presents and re-presents 'life' on the stage, but more than that the jatra is a 'way of life' and a concept of life as a journey through illusory yet necessary attachments to Bengali existence. In the previous sections of this thesis I have tried to show how the jatra is thought of, how the business runs, how a performance happens, and how it is interpreted by viewers. Before I go on to look at a single play in more depth I would like to recapitulate by looking at the social relations necessary for a jatra performance to take place, by examining and explicating the contradictions within the jatra at several levels, and by looking at the way the jatra relates to other similar forms of performance within Bengal itself. Systems are interesting creations, since they can expand or contract, exclude or include various amounts of information, and illuminate or obscure important relationships.

The jatra, as a business and as performers, viewers and performances, requires that a number of people be formally and informally, directly and indirectly linked with one another. The owners and managers are contractually connected to party members and to the sponsors and viewers; the travelling party is formally, informally, and directly linked within itself and to the sponsors and audiences; and the middleman is directly linked to owners, managers and sponsors and indirectly linked with performers and spectators.

From inside the system itself, these connections seem to follow naturally from the expected division of labour and the chain of command that is established within a jatra party, and also between the party officials and their creditors and backers. Hierarchical formations, such as the jatra business, have a certain internal logic to them as well as a certain sense of endurance and continuity within them. The connections between the party and the sponsors and viewers, while not as hierarchical, have both a sense of continuity (audiences see many jatra performances over a lifetime; and the information presented is both historically and structurally related to their lives) and a sense of impermanence or specific purposes limited duration--the performance itself. These latter connections and the social relationships that result are definitely as different in quality as they are in quantity, since the performers and the audiences have little to do with each other before or after the performance itself. These two kinds of social relations, hierarchical and internal to the business, and reciprocal and internal to the performance, involve people in the jatra jagat differently; together they unite people into an interlinking system.

The diagram that follows provides a visual summary of the ways in which Bengalis are conjoined through the jatra. A jatra performance can link anywhere from 2,000-15,000 people together through this cultural contract constituted from social relations, language, symbols, images, values and expectations. Although people have differential consciousness, knowledge and control in this system, the direct relationships are carried through with a certain predictability and common understanding. People behave, more often than not, in the typical ways that I have presented; owners know how to own, managers to manage, performers to perform, audiences to audience. They behave as they 'ought to' enough that it can be

Figure 5



THE JATRA PERFORMANCES SYSTEM

recognised as 'normal' and everyday interpretable behaviour. When the abnormal or unusual happens the amount of discussion and energy that is expended to make it 'right' certainly warrants the conclusion that typical behaviour is expected.

Looking at the system from the outside, it becomes apparent, however, that built into this 'business of the production of cultural performances' there are a number of seeming contradictions; those generated from Bengali culture itself and those generated from cultural consciousness and practice in the jatra business formation. While they may be resolved at the cosmological or philosophical levels, they are mainly recognised, contemplated and left as unresolved tensions at a practical level. It is from these unresolved tensions at a day-to-day existence level, whether generated from existential or situational dilemmas, that the jatra creates its profound connection with the ongoing life of the Bengali people as a whole.

Aesthetic businesses, rather than just the aesthetics of business or the art of business, themselves concrete entities, are not engaged in the production of commodities for market exchange, in the usual sense of the terms. The professional jatra, as it exists in modern Bengal (a colonial artifact with a mixture of capitalist and democratic socialist ideologies infused with Hinduism), while it is embedded in the commercial world, does not suffer from the attendent condition of alienated labour. Why not? Is it something about the 'business of the production of cultural performances' that is significantly different?

Jatra performances are end-products of a number of different kinds of labour and interests (the same ones that any Bengali is involved in, be they industrial workers, small businessmen, or rice-producers), yet no one in the productive process of a performance is alienated in any abstract

sense. But above this, the professional jatra is not like any other commodity producing business, its product provides a criticism of both itself and the capitalistic business-like way of life in which it is embedded. It is related to itself by a negative dialectic, a critical stance in a creative posture.

At one cultural level, the semantic universe of production is not separated into mental and manual labour. The Bengali concept of *artha* (political economy and meaning) unifies aspects of living and reflections about making a living (especially as they are presented, re-presented, and personified on the jatra stage). The meaning of the making of a living in 'this world' is what meaning is about. In Bengal, for most Bengalis, even though Western capitalistic practices and contradictions are present they have not permeated completely nor fundamentally altered the view that making or creating and meaning are not in opposition to one another--particularly for the people whose labour is to make meaning on the stage or in the jatra play. One word that is used, in Bengali, to talk about production in either an abstract or concrete sense is *utpanno or utpadan* which means creation, origination, generation, and production. This nexus is meaningfully united in Bengali social and cultural practice.

At another cultural level the philosophical universe of social life--its creation and destruction--is cyclical and transitory. Permanence is a sort of cultural fiction; attachments and social relations are the most important and serious cultural fictions. The play as life;life as play metaphor in Western culture posits that social life is 'unreal' when it is played on the stage--this sets up a dilemma or a contradiction. For Bengalis, on the other hand, the nature of social life and its re-presentation in the jatra is the reverse of the Western contradiction--'real' social life is only an illusory necessary attachment and only when it is

demystified and presented in the jatra journey does it become 'really real', potentially interpretable and meaningful. The play that is translated here points out how the jatra playwrights, performers, and audiences view the relationship between social life and dramatic life, Bengali truths and falsity, and Western influences and Bengali understandings.

Where the contradictions continue to create tensions and generate new courses of action for people inside the jatra jagat, is in their everyday social practice, the practice involved in the production of a jatra performance. As I pointed out, the jatra is a very hierarchical formation, but the plays being performed by the modern professional jatra parties are dedicated to the exploration of the 'evils' of such organisations. Actors, who are dominated by those higher than they in the party, are on stage 'fomenting' revolutions. Owners, who are themselves making profits often by exploiting others, select plays that focus on the evils of capitalist exploitation. Servants, who wait on actors/resses, watch a play in which the servants talk about and often rebel. Yet, life in the jatra party continues--the plays may criticise the jatra world as well as the Bengali world--but it persists. People are conscious of the contradictions--these cultural conundrums--but they do not render people catatonic or unwilling to explore these themes and present them to audiences for contemplation. Audiences, themselves composed of people from various castes and classes, watch plays that expose the nature of social relations, the cultural fictions to which they are necessarily attached. This is a very powerful and creative time for Bengali cultural life.

Between the presentation of meaning and making a living, and the meaning of making a living, the jatra people are also externally related to other 'folk' peripatetic performance forms, and to other urban and Westernised entertainment forms. If we return, for the moment, to a semiotic

system again, it will be clearer how the peripatetic performances in general 'mean' as a system, how the jatra is a pivotal form within this system and another system, the social performance entertainment system.

The Peripatetic Performance System:

The jatra, since it is so bound up with Bengali cultural life, is also related to other educational and performance forms that are found in Bengal. In fact, it occupies a central position among other forms if we choose to look at them all as a single system.

The Meaning of Peripatetic Forms and Performers:

At one level of interpretation, all Bengali itinerant performers (those that I have chosen to discuss anyway) are demonstrators of Bengali Truths. Their life-style, their mode of making a living, their philosophy and their form of expression, all gyrate within a fundamental world of *artha and maya*(meaning, political economy and attachedness). Their message, however, is that they make their living by being 'virtual' journeyers, travellers, unattached persons--unattached to the things that demonstrate Bengali being in the world--attachments to land and statuses. They are living contradictions of and to most Bengali peasants, their spectators, who work the land subjected to the merciless and life-giving rivers of Bengal and the various rulers and dominators, both of the past and present in Bengal. They are even living contradictions to rural Bengali service jatis, who are attached to peasants and rulers by an intricate web of traditional rights and obligations. They are even living contradictions to landless labourers, who would be attached to land and statuses if their life chances allowed it.

The forms through which the performers meet, present their message, and are interpreted by their spectators, form an interrelated and inter-

referring system, as I see it anyway. The meaning of these peripatetic forms can be interpreted by outlining and understanding their interrelationships and their interreferral. Each form (remember the gloss I gave before for the word *rupa*) has a meaning created by its internal consistency; its internal relations; its essential message. In this case, the outward appearances are in harmony with the inside intentions--whatever that intention is-- in this sense each of the forms that will be presented is 'virtual'. Each form also can be seen to have a meaning in relation to the other forms in the interreferring system. In effect, there is a vertical and horizontal dimension to, an internal consistency and external relatedness of, and an exploration of the dimensions of Bengali Truths in, this system. What I will do is to draw a verbal sketch of how each form in the system means, in itself, and then how each form in the system means in relation to the other forms in the system--hopefully ending with how the system means to the Bengali spectator. There are five forms in this system (this is also the fifth part of this thesis), which I will treat in more or less detail; the Bauls (mendicant singers); the Kirtan Parties (ambulatory praisers of Krishna in song and dance); the Jatra Parties (folk or popular theatrical opera parties); the Kathakata and Panchali Readers (storytellers); and the Kabi Parties (dueling poets in song and verse). In my experience, all of these forms still exist in rural West Bengal, but are in varying popularity at present. The performances I had the fortune to witness most frequently (while I did see performances of all types) were predominantly those performed by Bauls, Kabi Parties, and most extensively and intensively the Jatra Parties.

The Forms: The Performers, the Performance, the Information:

The Bauls:

Shashibhusan DasGupta, a Bengali scholar of religious texts and

practices, has summed up the feelings held among the Bengali literary elite about the Bauls:

> an order of singers, still extant--an institution of immense literary and religious interest; for, the songs of these bards are as much noted for their naivete and spontaneity of expression as for the spiritual intensity of their content. The 'unpremeditated art' of their 'first fine careless raptures' lifts us to a level of experience where the aesthetic and religious work together for a unique spiritual transport.
> (DasGupta 1969:157)

Bauls tend to repudiate philosophers and academics, particularly when the latter presume to interpret their songs and meanings in an academic fashion. Academics (like myself) who assign meanings without attention to feelings and demeanors and the profound mystical overtones, from an experiential base, miss what the Bauls intend to be and 'mean'. Perhaps a couple of songs composed by Bauls would better state their intention and position than I am able to do:

> The man is here
> In his form without form
> To adorn the hamlet of limbs,
> And the sky above
> Is the globe of his feelings--
> The platform of spontaneous matter.
> Anon. (Bhattacharya 1969:39)

and

> Nothing has happened
> and nothing will happen.
> What is there, is there.
>
> I became a king
> in my dream
> and my subjects
> occupied the entire earth.
> I sat on the throne
> ruling like a lion,
> living a happy life.
> The world obeyed me.

As I turned in my bed,
all was clear:
I was not a lion
but a lion's uncle,
a jackass,
the village idiot...
Anon. (Bhattacharya 1969:43-44)

and

That enchanting river
Reflects the very form
Of the formless one.
Sense the essence of the matter,
My discerning heart,
And feel the taste
On your tongue.

You see only
a little ditch of life
And remain involved with it
In a drunken stupor...
Gopal (Bhattacharya 1969:61)

The Baul philosophy is more an anti-philosophy: it is essential that understanding and awareness is achieved by means that are opposite to what is considered 'normal' (Mohanmadan Baul; personal experience with a few Bauls in 1971-2). DasGupta says, " They refuse to be guided by any cannon or convention, social or religious...inclinations of the mind are not restrained by social institutions.... They proceed in a direction opposite to that followed by the general run of people....It is for this reason that the Bauls would call their path *ulta*(i.e. the reverse)..."(1969:162-3).

The word Baul, in Bengali, has about three different etymologies--all of which, of course, are related and help to form an image of the Baul. One set suggests (DasGupta 1969:161) its origin in Sanskrit words meaning wind-disease (craziness), impatiently eager, and Arabic words meaning near or devotee. I suppose all of those could be correct, but I would rather look into the Bengali sound system for an understanding of this word; this is not to deny the suggested historical connections. The *ba* sound is associated with meanings of either/or, possibly, alternatively,

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or things that suggest questioning; the *u* sound means expressing or impatience, the *la* sound implies taking or carrying away. Put together, then, the word Baul could mean expressing or being carried away by alternatives or possibilities. For most Bengali peasants, this sense would mean that Bauls show being carried away by possibilities and alternatives of one half of the main Bengali existential dilemma--the desire and realisation of transcendence.

Mohanmadan Baul, who I met at the village of Bholpur in West Bengal, described the Baul as a 'crazy beggar, dressed in a pathwork coat, always wandering from place to place, carrying all his things on his back, living under trees, smoking ganja, being free, feeling songs and dances move him, using the voice and simple instruments to live contrary to the others." By examining these statements more closely in terms of performance of the Baul, and the information of the Baul phenomenon, it will be clearer how Baul 'virtualness', internal formal consistency, is achieved, and what appearances and realities are presented to the village spectator to interpret (as well as the academic anthropologist).

One of the main ways the Baul singers make their living is to wander into a village, stop in front of a residential compound or in the village market area, and begin to play on their *ektara* (a one-stringed instrument) or their *dotara* (two-stringed instrument) and sing and dance to their own sounds, tunes and rhythms. The appreciative spectators and listeners will give them money and/or occasionally food. When they finish singing and chatting with those brave enough to engage these strange passers-through, they continue on their way to another village, or go to their preferred banyan tree to discuss with other passing Bauls.

The songs they sing have a definite form, a definite style, and varying content. The ones I quoted earlier were chosen for their 'essential'

qualities, but the themes they cover range from references to machines, airplanes, trains, Bangladesh, etc., to mystical union, animals, humans, etc.,-- anything that effects the Bengal countryside. Their essential message is embedded in a particular metrical form. Bhattacharya refers to this as the 4 4 4 2 meter, known as *dhamali*, frequently used by the Vaisnava poets. This particular form has evenness at its core--but the Bauls only strictly follow this evenness in the first stanza. In either the second half of the first stanza or the second stanza, the Baul singer will characteristically take his liberty with the verse and the rhythm. They do this primarily by adding syllables and dancing. Form, shape, appearance, for the Bauls, must be broken, even if it is in fairly predictable ways.

At all levels of this peripatetic performance form, the message is that by recognition of oppositions and 'illusions' one can be free of them and their consequences. They wander into the villages, playing simple instruments, singing songs in images and languages that everyone (for whom it is 'common sense') knows and can interpret, wearing their only clothes, carrying all their possessions, telling all the spectators that the effects of rivers and rulers can be reversed by active feeling for and understanding of the world one is travelling through.

The Kirtan Parties:

S.K. De, a Bengali scholar of the Vaisnava literature and faith, describes the importance of the Kirtan parties to a devotional style that is important both currently and historically to Bengalis in the following way:

> One of his (Chaitanya, an important Bengali religious revivalist) first and most important acts was the stimulation if not the introduction, of

> an emotional and unritualistic mode of musical worship, known as Kirtana, in the daily devotional meetings which were held in the courtyard of Srivasa's house. At first these meetings were private...but the increasing fervour displayed in the Kirtana parties proved contagious by creating a highly emotionalised atmosphere. This method of congregated devotional excitement by means of enthusiastic chorus singing to the accompaniment of peculiar drums and cymbals, along with rhythmical bodily movements ending in the ecstatic in utilizing group-emotion, and soon became a lively feature of the faith.
>
> (De 1961:79-80)

At the village level, even at the present, the kirtan parties are of two kinds--those that are formed of people of Vaisnava devotion from within a specific village, and those who achieve some prominence for their excellence and are invited to perform around a particular village festival. For the most part, however, kirtan parties are from among the people who interpret them, literally--they are other villagers. At certain times of the year, especially in the spring, they form a group, take up their instruments (the ektara or dotara, the *juri* or small finger cymbals, and the *khol* or double-headed drum), and walk around the village singing songs in praise of Krishna and Radha, or Chaitanya--emphasising elements of ecstatic group transcendence through Krishna consciousness. For this short time, or at any rate for a specific time apart from everyday time, the kirtan party members are not bound to time, place or status. This form, "chanting aloud...the blessed name...is said to be the most powerful means of effecting a devotional attitude; and not being subject (or <u>ruled</u>--my interpretation) to the restrictions of time, place or person, it is the only efficacious method which should be universally adopted in the present decadent Kali Age" (De 1961:370).

Again, I would like to look at the word kirtan, and its internal composition for an important clue to the meaning of the form of performance of kirtan. The sound *ki* is a questioning sound (in fact, it means

what? as well as merely expressing how much of something); the *ra* also means process; the *ta* means again inquiry, doubt, uncertainty; and the *na* is another negating sound (often as literally NO). Kirtan, then, is a way of negating questioning or uncertainty—the form, by singing the name of Krishna and coambulating with people at the same time, makes a moment of transcendence certain—through ecstatic communal devotion (an act that could also be seen as momentarily defying the caste rules as well).

Kirtan singers wear everyday dress, only distinguishing themselves from everyone else by the application of painted religious signs on their foreheads. They come from the village, for the village to participate in a non-ordinary form of transcendence. Most kirtan singers make their living as agriculturists or service caste occupations—their everyday artha is totally involved with the rivers and rulers. Occasionally they break the routine and also realise that for most people, most of the time, transcendence is momentary and fleeting.

The songs themselves are tied directly to Vaisnava poetry—in both meter and content. Ecstatic evenness in the 4 4 4 2 meter, and themes of love in separation (Dimock 1966) flood this form.

The 'virtualness' of this form is ordinary Bengali human momentary transcendence.

The Jatra Parties:

According to Hemendra DasGupta, jatra is the 'life-blood' of Bengal (DasGupta 1939). According to me, jatra is the very essence of being and being in the Bengali world. Since jatra parties are the groups of performers with whom I spent most of the time I was in India, my view of Bengal and Bengali meaning are necessarily most consonant with theirs.

This form was instrumental in shaping my feeling for and knowledge about the meaning of performance forms in Bengal. To the jatra people is my most profound debt, and my most profound exasperation. They are players: they play with cosmological knowledge of the joke of Krishna and Kali--they raise and lower the curtain of maya; they play with the social relationships so important to Bengali life--by being itinerant and by poking fun at the high statuses through their portrayals of lecherous Brahmins and heinous colonial despots; they play with the senses of 'everyday normality'. At the same time, in a constant internal hermeneutic, they are serious in their purpose--educationing Bengalis--and incredibly tied to a life-style of nomadism. They are walking, talking and working contradictions in performing through singing, dancing and play-acting. What all this means is one of the subjects treated in this thesis and a couple of previous articles, but for the purposes of explicating the system I am asserting and how it 'means', in this section, the jatra can be interpreted as follows:

The jatra parties are made up of groups of people, including singers, dancers, actors/resses, managers, technicians, musicians, and menials. They arrive, as a group, in a village either by bus or by bullock cart. They come on a vehicle, not by foot as the Bauls and Kirtan singers do, nonetheless they are grounded in Bengali 'tradition' and are subject to the weather (since they perform in an open-air arena) and rulers (their patron have usually been large landowners or factory owners, even though now they are obtained through contracts). These forming and performing outsiders set up the show in a fixed spot-- a four-cornered mud or wooden stage surrounded by seats.

The performance has a definite structure that weaves music, song,

dance, and drama together in a 3½-4½ hour show. It begins with a concert, designed to call the spectators to the space, moves on to a short dance/drama usually depicting a cosmological struggle, or at least a profoundly existential struggle. From this the central drama emerges, a five-act play on a variety of themes ranging from religious, historical, imaginary, social, to revolutionary concerns. The play itself has a definite form--five-acts, each with a specific function and intention. The playwrights, who are discussed at length in the next section, with whom I spent a great deal of time learning how to write a jatra play, talk about the play using an organic metaphor. The play is a living thing; its first act is the seed, its second act the budding, its third act--the climax--the trunk, its fourth act the bloom, and its fifth act is the full, over-ripe fruit or flower that prepares and generates the new seed. Within each act each scene has the job of playing with various *rasa* (emotions, moods, tastes). Through this form, the spectators are presented with re-presentations of Bengali existence, and Bengali contradictions of artha and maya.

The word jatra or jatragan, as the form is sometimes called, has an interesting internal meaning: the *ja* sound means movement and the *tra* indicates process and deliverance. The jatra, then, is at the same time a procession, a journey, and a theatrical form--leading people through life. The word in combination with others gives further insight into the jatra's attachment to Bengali everyday life; your jatra can be any journey you undertake, a pilgrimage or a tour; *jibon*(life) jatra means both your livelihood and your biography; *agusta* jatra means your death. One actor told me, "You cannot use masks while performing the jatra because it is about life, and unmasking (I choose here to insert, demystifying) the masks of maya"--attachments. He then laughed and said, "I'm really attached to the jatra party."

In the past jatra performers made their living through performing plays under the sponsorship of a *jamindar*, *raja*, or coal-field or plantation owner; being paid in money and food. Currently they make their living by selling themselves through contracts—binding themselves to villagers who sponsor them using carefully worded contracts—subject to Calcutta High Court jurisdiction. The spectators interpret them as exciting outsiders, who are links to the world outside their place and time.

Through all levels of this form—its performers' life-style, its performance and its information—the message seems to be the 'Catch-22iness' built into the world of *artha*(meaning and political economy) that is infused with the contradictory unity of *moksha* (freedom or release) and *maya* (attachments—illusory and necessary as they may be). The jatra parties are groups of Bengalis, cultural nomads who perform from place to place; tied to each place and its residents through contracts and common images and language. The 'virtualness' of this form and these performers is the depiction and portrayal of the Bengali existential dilemma—whether it is 'on stage' or 'in making a living'.

With this form, and in the following two forms, there is an important switch in the internal structure of the message—there is a movement from a message based on fours and squares (Hindu sacred spaces being primarily defined by a four cornered puja platform, and Hindu religious messages being primarily constructed on oppositional complementarity) to a message based on fives and spirals of *life* and death, moving on a central, pivotal point with oppositions and complements inter-referring with the centre. Also with this form, and in the following two forms, there is a switch from monistic trancendental 'virtualness' to a dualistic dynamic/static grounded 'virtualness'.

The Kathakata and Panchali Readers:

There are very few descriptions of the Kathakata and Panchali performances and performers available, and I only saw this form 3 times in the 2 years I was engaged in research in Bengal. Bengali writers, like S.K. De and H. DasGupta, indicate that this form was on the wane as early as the turn of the century. I am able, nonetheless, to put together a sketch of comparable information about this form.

Panchali and Kathakata performers (I will refer only to Panchali from here on, since the Kathakata is considered by some authors to be a part of a panchali performance anyway, De 1962:396) were, for the most part, as with the Kirtan singers, of the people. They would make part of their living as agriculturists and part of their living as performers. They are sort of half-tied to the land. The spectators and listeners of this form will give money and food to panchali readers, if the rhymes and images are 'cleverly' woven together.

The panchali performance consists of two parties of from 2-4 people, presenting mytho-historical or social themes. Ahead of time the two parties choose the theme, and during the performance they explore this theme through a five element structure. The five elements necessary in a panchali performance are singing (*gan*), music (*saj-bajano*), recitation or narrative (*chhada-kathana*), poetical rivalry (*ganer lorai*) and dancing (*nautch*). Basically the spectators watch and listen to a performance centred around oppositions in the past (mytho-historical themes) or oppositions in the present (social themes, and domestic themes that are presented in a critical way). After the performance, the panchali readers may go to perform in another village, but usually they would resume their position among other Bengali village-dwellers.

The word Panchali, in Bengali, has different etmymologies attributed

to it. According to De (1962:395-6), "The origin of Panchali songs of the modern type cannot be definitely traced." He goes on to say that there are many imaginative and creative accounts given all the way from Panchali being named for its place of origin, for its relations to other forms of medieval Bengali literature for its performance mode with the leader making his points by strolling in front of his audience, to Panchali being named for a combination of *nachadi*(a dance form) and a five *(panch)* element performance style. Whatever these historical and conjectural meanings may be, I will look into the internal construction of the word again, to see if that gives us a further clue to the form. *Panch* means five, but *panch kora* means a lot of talking on many and varied topics; *chali* means movement. or wielding, or exercising; the word then could mean the movement or the exercise of talking about a lot of subjects. But what to do with the troublesome 5? Five, in Bengali discourse, is frequently used to mean everything—five things can be all things, five acts can depict the whole of life, etc.. Talking about a lot of things a lot, and talking about a lot of subjects is very human and very grounding. The centre-pivotal point of this form is words and meanings, words that describe themes that are related directly to Bengali peasant everyday life—puranic/historic themes and social themes such as widow remarriage and *sati*(widow self-emolation). The 'virtualness' of these performers and performances is their concern with discourse, albeit in poetry and accompanied by singing and dancing; the laying out of the substance of Bengali cultural life.

Kabi Parties:

The most complete source of written information about this form (in English, anyway) is a substantial section of S.K. De's book, *Bengali Literature in the Nineteenth Century*, however, bits and pieces exist in a number of English and Bengali sources written by Bengalis. Of the Kabiwalas

(trafficers in poetry) De says:

> These Kabis were not, properly speaking leisured and accomplished men of letters, cultivating literature for its own sake, and their products were not deliberate literary compositions meant for a critical audience. Their very name...indicates perhaps the peculiar way in which they extemporised their songs, standing like a rhapsodist before a motley assembly...
> (De 1962:275)

The impression I get from the literature is a group of highly combatative would-be poets, intent on entertaining their audience through the use of traditional Vaisnava and Dualistic Sakta themes and images, intent on making their living solely through poetic entertainment.

Kabi performers certainly come from all backgrounds, ethnic and caste. One famous Kabiwala, Anthony Feringi (a poet of Portuguese or French background who was converted to Hinduism and married a Brahmin Bengali woman), formed a kabi party that became reknown as a symbol of foreign acceptance of traditional Bengali culture. DasGupta (1939) says of him:

> Anthony learned excellent Bengali. Having fallen in love, Anthony lost his vocation next all his property by forming an amateur party, but after forming a professional party of Kabi after bitter experience, he succeeded in earning a lot of money.
> (DasGupta 1939:146-7)

Feringi, as were a host of other kabiwalas, was very quick with repartee. His ability, as a foreigner, to work and play in Bengali themes and images provided an important challenge to Bengali kabiwalas; this resulted in a flourish of Kabi performances. An example of his spontaneous abilities can be seen in this delicious exchange with one of his favourite rivals:

> On one occasion Ram Basu said to Anthony:—
> Tell me, O Anthony!
> I want to hear that to-day
> having come to this country
> Why have you taken this dress
> And why there is no black coat on your person?

Anthony replied:—
I am quite comfortable in the Bengali dress
And being the son-in-law of the father
of Thakur Singhi
Have given up black coat.
(DasGupta 1939:147)

All this in proper kabi meter. It is perhaps redundant, but yet important, to point out that Feringi was one of the 'rulers' but renounced his position by total identification with Bengalis.

The kabi performance, the way the kabiwalas make their living, is formally and verbally a duel about dualities. The kabiwalas I talked with, and the performances I saw were conscious of this fact. A kabi I talked with when I visited the town to Dubrajpur was in a tuberculosis sanitorium. He was pleased to tell me about his life and his 'art'; he called himself a 'singer of poems about this and thats of Bengali life', who uses stock rhymes to extemporaneously explore the themes of Radha/Krishna, Siva/Sakti, Deshi/Bideshi, purusha/prakriti, etc.. What happens in a performance is the pitting of two kabi parties (of from 4-6 members) against each other to debate a topic in singing poetry. This topic is announced just before they begin the performance. Each party has at least one kabi, a drummer (they use a drum called a *dak* which is played by beating is with <u>two</u> sticks), and two or three choral singers who double on the juri (cymbals). Each kabi sings a series of verses, punctuated by the drum and choral affirmations from his own party, for about 15-20 minutes. Then the other kabi does the same. As in a Western-style debate, there are a number of rebuttals, and the audience decides the winner.

While the kabi party is 'from a specific locality' they rarely perform in their own locality—they usually move from place to place to perform—based, of course, on their reputation and status within the form. They usually arrive by vehicle and leave just after the performance. They are

semi-nomadic outsiders, rather than permanently nomadic outsiders (the Bauls), or semi-nomadic insiders (the Kirtan singers).

The meter of their performance is a series of five end-rhymes of the following kind:

> ...the whole musical gamut of each song is arranged in ascending and descending order into several divisions, bound to each other by a peculiar system of rhyme ending. These divisions, and their succession in each complete song are: *chitan, parichitan, phuka, melta, mahada, saoyari...khad*, and then the second *phuka* and the second *melta* and lastly *antara*...Now as to the system of rhyme-ending, the *chitan* and *parichitan* rhyme together. The *phuka* has a different rhyme ending; so also *melta*, which, however, rhymes in its turn with the *mahada* and *khad*. The second *phuka* has an independent rhyme, but the second *melta* rhymes again with the *mahada*, while the *antara* closes with a different rhyme-ending, altogether.
> (De 1962:307)

There are eight (two fours) divisions in the complete song, that are turned cleverly into five rhyme-endings. These are : *Chitan, Parichitan—aa; Phuka—b; Melta, Mahada, Saoyari, Khad—cccc; Phuka—d; Melta— c;* and last *Antara—e*. So the end-rhymes are *aa b cccc d c e*; the first and last are different, and only partially tied to the whole—but the centre, pivotal parts are consciously inter-referring and tied to the whole. Through this form and exploration of dualities and attachments is presented to the spectators and interpreters of Bengali cultural traditions.

The word kabi has its internal significance, just as the other forms have had. The *ka* sound is associated with considerations of measurement and amount; the *bi* sound is associated with opposition and negation. the kabi, then, is a consideration of a number or an amount of oppositions and negations. Kabi is rhyming words, rhyming images and rhyming oppositions, another contradictory expression of Bengali life.

At all levels of this form, the performance style, the performers life-style, and the information, the message of the kabi is that the recognition of opposites is a necessary human dilemma. They oscillate in the dual world of maya; they do not depart from or attempt to transcend this world, rather they play in it. They are of the Bengali rural life, bouncing between rivers and rulers in language, images, structural ties, and subjugation. Their 'virtualness' lies in their contestation of Bengali cultural dilemmas.

By now it must be apparent that I have chosen five forms to discuss as parts (as well as wholes) of an inter-relating and inter-referring system of performances. Of course, it is not an accident that the Bengali jatra form has five acts, with the climax in the middle; the kabi form has five rhyme-endings with the central rhyme the busiest; my system has five parts and the jatra form is in the central-pivotal position. But if I have grasped the 'virtualness' of the essence of these forms, it could not be otherwise. Clearly, if you can accept the argument so far, there is no better structure in which to place my interpretation, and no better form in which to place the central-pivotal point. The conscious recognition of the importance of these forms of fours and fives, is my own—to my knowledge it is not consciously discussed among Bengali performers (although the jatra playwrights that are discussed in the next section are aware of their dogma of five acts in a jatra play). No one told me, "watch you fours and fives"—however, it is beneath and underneath what they did tell me. All these peripatetic forms, (after Sapir), are 'genuine' cultural forms—viable, creative and symbolic.

The System of Forms: Inter-relations, Confluences and Inter-referrals

It is not my intention to reduce actively creative Bengali cultural expression to 'forms'. To do so would negate the entire 'virtual message'

of each of the forms discussed. It is also not my intention to reduce dynamic peripatetic forms to a 'system'. To do so would be yet another in a long series of appropriations that these forms have endured. My intention in this section, rather, is to sketch and explore how this system could mean, when taking into account various differently placed people: the foreign dominators, the Bengali literary and political elite, the performers the rural spectators, myself, and hopefully the readers of this interpretation. The argument presented here is grounded in Bengali language, speech, and experience; primary social practice. The ineluctable problem always is, however, how to talk about parts and wholes, their integrity and their relationships, without saying everything first and continuously. In writing about a system like Bengali culture, where there is a unity of meaning and political economy, and an understanding of the human necessity of attachments and dualities, the Gordian knot is very dense, indeed. What I will do, consequently, is outline what the system of peripatetic performances could mean and have meant to these differently based groups of people.

The Outside (bideshi) Rulers: then and now:

As I pointed out earlier, Bengal has had a long history of domination, of imposition—imposed rule. With the different rulers there have been different feelings about the 'local' or indigenous social and religious performances. The Pala kings in the 12th century, apparently had little concern about the practices of other religious groups. They did not appear to impose Buddhism on their subjects, at least to the extent that local practices were abolished (De 1961:8-9). The short rule of the South Indian Vaisnava Sena kings seems to have been a fertile time for a flourescence of Bengali Vaisnava themes and images. Jayadeva, the composer of the reknowned *Gita Govinda*, a seminal work for the popular Vaisnavism of Bengal, was a court poet, musician for Laksmana Sena, the ruler. Bhakti (fervent devotional-

ism in song and dance) was a movement against the social hierarchy of Brahmanical law and restricted access to the God-head, Bhagavan. Even though there were many Brahmans and scholars engaged in producing written doctrine for the Vaisnava devotees, the personal and social direct involvment in this religious movement was little affected. The *Gita Govinda*, the Vaisnava Padaboli lyrics, and the Vaisnava erotic peotry continued to speak to the Bengali rural population (it continues to speak with them today).

With the Muslim rule, in the 14th centruy to the 18th centruy, came a number of profound changes in the Bengal countryside. Even a sketch of them would run into pages of description. I will run the risk of selecting just a few crucial changes for discussion. Drawing on the work of Bengali scholars of this period (Raychaurdhuri 1969:145-253; Roy 1968:459-99; Chatterjee 1967:199-243; De 1961, 1962) and on Inden (1976), it seems that on the one hand *jati* (community) rules became more stringent, and on the other hand anti-jati expression among the people became more energetic and varied. With the Mughuls the court language changed to Persian, the taxes were increased, and forced conversions were common. During this period, however, Chaitanya (the paramount Bengali Vaisnava Saint, thought by some Bengalis to be Krishna himself) and his followers gained ascendence. Vaisnava and Tantric (another religious expression, see Bharati 1969) influences were seen in all the social and religious practices of the people. The forms of peripatetic performance under consideration in this paper were left pretty much to themselves--and they prospered and multiplied. All the forms were used by the people as expressions of Bengali cultural defiance of the foreign rulers. This is not to deny that, especially for the Baul singers and nascent kabiwalas, Islamic influences, particularly Sufi poetry, duels, and mendicant singing, can be easily discerned in these forms. The meaning

of these forms to most of the Bengali populus was anti-orthodox life.

During the latter part of the Mughul rule in Bengal other foreigners arrived, and made their presence felt among the people--the Dutch, French, and Portuguese. Settlements were established for these ethnic groups, and alliances were made between some of the Bengali peasants and landlords and the foreigners. (I made reference earlier to a kabiwala named Anthony Feringi, who married in Bengal and adopted Hinduism.)

The arrival of and the control exercised by the British was equally as profound as the Mughuls, especially for the Bengali landlord and his peasants. Sinha (1967) and Seal (1968) outline the consequences of British and elite Bengali collaboration and clash. In the initial stages of the contact the educated Bengali elite was taken by the attention and the opportunity given them by the British. The period is frequently referred to as the Bengal Renaissance. That it was a renaissance, economically and politically for the Bengalis as a whole, could indeed be argued, but that it was a cultural renaissance, is indeed apparent. Printing presses, schools, and education in general took one giant step forward. But with the latter stages of the 19th century and the early 20th century and the rise of Indian Nationalism, these peripatetic forms suffered. Those people interested in ending colonial rule within Bengal used peripatetic forms as critical protest vehicles, resulting in the Dramatic Performance Act of 1869. This act expressly forbade performances of jatra, and kabi--calling them seditious and dangerous (the act was repealed in Bengal after Independence). Parties of performers would frequently perform and take refuge in the French settlement at Chandanagur, in order to escape the clutches and consequences of the British law. For the British rulers the meaning of these forms was trouble--they were popular and drew large crowds. It was not so much the form that was troublesome, rather it was the informa-

tion. Anti-British themes, and the assertion of Bengali cultural integrity was problematic. For the Foreign intellectuals and missionaries these forms meant backsliding and debasement. For the Bengali collaborating elite these forms meant trouble and a demonstration of their lack of 'real' control in the Bengal countryside. For the Bengali revolutionary forces, these forms meant access to the people of the countryside. And for the Bengali rural population these forms meant ties with the continuous past, the expression of their existential dilemma, and escape from the present in entertainment.

In the 20th century, as the Nationalist movement took a more powerful hold among the Bengali elite, and as a search was being made for *Swadeshi Samaj* (our own land's cultural community) these forms took on new meanings. All the forms of peripatetic performance, as well as other religious forms became 'symbols' for the Bengali elite: Aurobindo, Tagore, Bankim Chandra, and the literary scholars, De, etc. It is this group of rulers to which I now turn.

The inside (deshi) Rulers: then and now:

Tracing the relationship between the Bengali elite and peasantry throughout the ages, is clearly outside the scope of this interpretive essay. What I want to do, nonetheless, is to demonstrate how the Bengali elite appropriated and felt about these peripatetic forms of performance, and about rural life in general.

Rabindranath Tagore, well-known, noted and honoured figure of the Bengali elite, gave a moving speech in 1904, in which he "spoke for the cultural integrity of Bengal and advocated a comprehensive programme for the reorganisation of rural Bengal on the basis of self-help. Tagore attempted in his own family estates to organize a society according to the proposals in his lecture, and drafted a set of <u>rules</u> (emphasis mine) for the guidance

of its members" (Chakravarty 1961:181-2). Also in this speech he emphasized the importance of the *mela* (fair, festivity) and these forms:

> Our countrymen are mainly villagers, and whenever they have desired to feel in their own veins the throbbing life of the outside world, they have done so through the mela, an invitation from the village for the world to enter its cottage home. ...These melas are a natural growth in our country. We should make a list of these times and places, and then take the trouble to make the acquaintance of our own people.
>
> If the leaders of the country will abjure empty politics, and make it their business to give new life and objective to these melas...and then confer about the real wants of the people--schools, roads, water, reservoirs, grazing commons and the like--then the country will soon awaken.
>
> It is my belief that if a band of workers go from district to district, organising these Bengal melas, and furnishing them with new compositions by way of *jatra*, *kirtans*, recitations, bioscope and lantern shows, gymnastics, legerdemain, then the money (emphasis mine--remember *artha*) question will take care of itself.

And even more interesting is what he goes on to say:

> In fact, if they undertake to pay the *zamindars* their usual fees, on being allowed to make collections, they will stand to make a considerable profit, and if this profit is used for national work it would result in uniting the organizers of the mela with the people, and would enable them to get acquainted with every detail of the country life.
>
> ...These days, for one reason or another, the *zamindars* have been drawn to the metropolis, and the festivities at the time of weddings are limited to the dinners and *nautches* (dances) given for their rich town-friends, the poor tenants often being called upon to pay extra impositions (emphasis mine) for this purpose.
>
> (Chakravarty 1961:202-3)

For Tagore, himself primarily a city-dwelling estate owner, this meant that the fun and festivity had gone out of Bengali life, that the peasants needed

their life spiced up by the elite. His quote fails to point out, however, that even when they were not turned to National purposes, the peasants continued to have their fairs and festivals. The mela is a persistent cultural event--despite the rulers. Even when the potential of these forms was realised by people like Tagore, and appropriated to the national cause by revolutionary leaders, there was still in the 20th century, a very patronising attitude on the part of the Bengali literary elite toward these forms. S.K. De, an excellent Bengali scholar whose study of *Bengali Literature in the Nineteenth Century* was first published in 1919 refers to all these forms of peripatetic performance in one delectable paragraph:

> Leaving aside the new prose--writing, the period of Bengali literature between 1760-1830 (this is the early British period) may not unfitly be described as a lyrical interval in which a multitude of productions, varied grave and gay ditties, *kabi*, *yatra* (jatra), *panchali*, ...*kirtan*, *baul*, devotional songs and exquisite bits of love songs, were pouring upon the literary world of delicious harmony. There is, no doubt, a sprinkling of narrative and descriptive verse of the more serious type, but barring this, every poet was a natural vocalist and never there was a time when little songs were more abundant. Although carelessly fashioned, these charming little things possess all the attributes of a successful song and seem to be alive in the energy of music.
> (De 1962:350)

De has, however, devoted a substantial portion of his publishing career to researching and writing about these 'ditties' and 'charming little things'. That he gives attention to them at all is worth noting, since many of the other literary writers of the time did not see that they merited attention at all. For many of the Bengali elite, then, these forms were definitely bound in *artha* (meaning and money); whether used by Tagore in raising funds for the National cause, or by De for his publishing career. (Not that scholars make much money off their publications, especially in India.)

In the 1950's all these peripatetic forms had a very difficult time. They were not needed by the elite any longer, Independence had been granted, and attention was directed to building a nation. It was fortunate for me that the 50's was in living memories, because these forms disappeared from print for about ten years. Performers in all these forms told me, however, that they had to reassess their position -- by a few there was a move to go 'commercial' and to get into the media. Recording companies and All India Radio became one way of getting extra money. His Master's Voice, with studios in DumDum, Bengal, recorded Baul songs, Kirtan operas, Jatra plays, Panchali, and Kabi songs toward the end of the 50's. This was treated by the performers in much the same way as Native North Americans treat welfare -- certainly a mixed blessing. All India Radio instituted rural programming, and this kept the forms somewhat alive. In the countryside they did not die, they did not even fade away.

The 1960's and 1970's brought a new appropriation to many of these forms; especially the theatrical form jatra. With the political struggle raging in Bengal -- Marxist parties versus central congress parties versus Bengali parties -- the tie these forms have with the Bengali countryside was again recognised. The West Bengal Committee to Eradicate Illiteracy formally requested playwrights to write specific themes into their plays. These certainly had an effect.

This was the period I witnessed.

Confluences and Inter-Referrals

I would like to refer here, again, to the importance of the rural *mela* (fair, festival). This cultural event is one way through which these performers and peripatetic forms assert their 'virtualness' to themselves and to their spectators. When they meet at the mela, whether it is a usual village mela or the large melas instituted by Tagore at Shantiniketan (Tagore's

open-air university) or at the Kheduli Mela commemorating the birth of Jayadeva (the court poet mentioned earlier), they exchange information, language, images, and conversation. They watch each other, and criticise each other.

Mela atmosphere, for most Bengali rural people, is definitely liminal. It is a bustle of sounds, sights, tastes, smells and people -- a veritable sensory banquet. Information and life fills the event to overflowing. The peripatetic performers are the central, pivotal point in this feast. Their presence is distinct, yet they flow in and out of each other's sounds and movements.

The central, pivotal form in this system of peripatetic forms is the jatra form. This form constantly refers to the other forms, its content, its information. Within the repertoire of the 20-22 professional jatra parties from 1970-72, there were plays about each of these forms. Lalan Fakir, one of Bengal's most famous Bauls and Anthony Feringi, one of Bengal's most famous kabiwalas, each had a jatra play about their lives. Chaitanya, the Vaisnava revivalist and putative founder of the form of jatra, was represented through a jatra play. Panchali singers and kirtan singers both figured prominently in plays. In addition, the history of domination was represented during the plays of 1970-2. There were plays on the following themes: Jayadeva's relationship with Laksmana Sena; Mughul rulers in their courts; the Mughul court underlings and their relationship to the Bengali peasantry; Gandhi's sell-out to the British; the plight of the Indigo plantation workers under British domination; the lives of Bengali elites (interestingly Tagore is not portrayed)-Raja Ramohan Roy, Vidyasagar, and Bankim Chandra; the Indus Valley civilisation; and the domination of workers by factory owners, barristers, and Bengali government employees. Also, under Marxist influence there were plays about the life of Lenin, the

revolution in South Vietnam, and the revolution in Angola. Through the jatra form, the spectators are given a tightly inter-referring system to watch and contemplate.

How the System of Forms Means : a further reaction

If I am correct in interpreting the Bengali cultural dilemma to be the relationship of freedom and attachment, within a world of meanings and making a living, then these forms, taken together as a system, demonstrate Bengali Truths.

As Tagore said in a discussion with Einstein in 1930 about the nature of reality:

> Truth, which is one with the universal being, must be essentially human, otherwise whatever we individuals realize as true can never be called Truth—at least the truth which is described as scientific and can only be reached through the process of logic; in other words by an organ of thoughts which is human. According to Indian philosophy there is Brahman the absolute truth, which cannot be conceived by the isolation of the individual mind or described by words, but can only be realized by completely merging the individual in its infinity. But such a truth cannot belong to science. The nature of truth which we are discussing is not an appearance—that is to say what appears to be true to the human mind *maya*, or part illusion.
> (Chakravarty 1961:111)

To the Bengali performer and spectator these forms as a system present Truth and Appearance. The Baul, who sings and dances of mystic transcendence—whether using Vaisnava themes or Sheik Mujib Rahman— is one limit of the system. The Kabi, who sings and rhymes the duel of duality and being tied inside a mindful matter of oppositions, is the other limit of the system. The Jatra players, who sing, dance and enact the demystification and then the recollection of social relationships, are the pivotal centre of the system. Taken as a whole, these peripatetic performers and performances form one half of the dialectic of freedom and attachment—

Figure 6

THE PERIPATETIC PERFORMANCE SYSTEM

MESSAGE LEVELS	FORMS				
	BAULS	KIRTAN PARTIES	JATRA PARTIES	PANCHALI	KABI PARTIES
Arr/Dept. Village Performance Venue	on foot - 1-2 people in front of compound in village market	within the village moving around the village	by vehicle - party fixed stage mud or wooden platform	on foot - 2-4 per. leader moves supporters stat.	by vehicle - party on stage. Much like panchali
Costume	patchwork, rags simple instruments all goods in hand	white dhoti/kurtha Vaisnava markings	Intentional dress to subject matter of play	Everyday dress dhoti/kurtha	Everyday dress dhoti/kurtha
Performance Structure	Singing songs at gate or market - intended to be little structure	Wandering through the village singing songs	Combination Music, Dance/Drama, Drama including singing	Combination singing recitation, it has a storyline	Supporters set mood first Kabi sings, then second supporters and second Kabi
Message Structure	4 4 4 2 rhyme metre first fixed, then soaring and unpredictable	kirtan songs - straight 4 4 4 2 metre, Vaisnava	5 act drama, climax in 3rd act	5 part combination of music, recitation, poetic rivalry, dancing	5 rhyme-ending verse aa b cccc d c e
Message Content (information)	Transcendence of opposition/whether East/West Bengal or unity of soul	Love and devotion physical and metaphysical	Religious, political, social, historical, imaginary plays	Epics and Puranas, domestic social themes	The necessary oppositions of being in this world
MEANING	One limit of the rural system: the desire for freedom, and the supposed enactment of it/ yet they are in this world	Devotion and union with the metaphysical momentarily	Existential Bengali cultural dilemma being bound and unbound/ socially and hierarchically	Historical and social awareness, in talk and singing	Working out the entrapment in maya defining the other limit of rural system; they exploring the effect of opposition in life

With these five forms the Bengali peasant and rural dweller is presented with re-presentations of the boundaries and activity of the dilemma of Bengali existence. The *artha* - meaning of life and making a living - subject to the constraints of rivers and rulers.

the spectators form the other half. Yet, the performers and spectators know that they are confined to this world, a world that is bounded by rivers and rulers.

Other Entertainment Forms

If the jatra is the pivotal form within the system of peripatetic performance forms, then the jatra can also be viewed as the mediating form between a traditional Bengali performance system and a modern Western-influenced performance system. The jatra, in its changing content and performance style, has incorporated many features of the Bengali cinema and Bengali theatre. At the district town level, the jatra and the cinema are the two main forms of entertainment; at the urban level, the jatra, the theatre, and the cinema all co-exist as entertainment forms.

The jatra has adopted elements from these other two forms, bringing their knowledge and performance to a rural audience. These elements are what make them a mediator between the rural and urban performance systems. The Bengali theatre is known for its use of lighting and stage design, sound systems and voice projection equipment -- the jatra has adopted lighting and sound projection, primarily by using people's skills who are part of both the theatrical world in Calcutta and the jatra jagat. The Bengali cinema is known for its excellence, both in India and abroad, and the jatra is now, because of its lucrative business, drawing actors who have been in Bengali cinema.

Both the theatre and the cinema have portrayed jatra performances within the story line pursued by their own plots. The theatre and the cinema may also use other peripatetic forms in their content, but less frequently and consistently. It is without doubt that the jatra is a central performance form -- the central cultural performance.

From a consideration of its system, I will now turn to a deeper consideration of its content -- the jatra play, and its creator the jatra playwright.

PART SIX:

THE JATRA PLAYWRIGHT AND THE PLAY

PORTRAIT OF A JATRA PLAYWRIGHT: BROJENRANATH DE

The jatra jagat is filled with jatra playwrights—there is no shortage of performable material written yearly. As in any other literary tradition, however, some playwrights are considered better and are more sought for their productions. Of the five or six most popular jatra playwrights when this research was conducted, none has been as prolific, influential, consistently innovative, or in the profession as long, as Brojendranath Kumar De, a retired high school teacher at the Northland High School in Ichapur, West Bengal. When I was working with him (1970-1972) he had been associated with the professional jatra jagat for forty years, and had written over 100 performed plays. He enjoyed writing jatra plays, and spent most of his non-employed hours reading or thinking about, and writing jatra plays.

At 65 years of age, with cataracts and failing eyesight, he patiently instructed me in the structure of jatra plays, the message intended in his jatra plays, and the history of his involvement and innovations in the jatra performance. He was born in 1907, into the family of H.K. De, a moderately educated bookkeeper. His father wanted far better for his son, and so he worked at giving him a higher education. As a child Brojenbabu was fascinated with jatra, liked to watch plays and began to read published jatra plays. The jatra playwright, Aghorchandra Kabyatirtha, was his favourite, especially his play *Harishchandra*. But the jatra he recalled from his youth was different from the jatra I knew and witnessed; in his youth jatra began in the evening and ended in the morning being 10-12 hours long. People attentively listened to a performance this long—"it was not boring to us, even if it lasted within 12 hours". Staging was simple, since people were more interested in "matter" than in "manner", audience

concerns that are reversed at present. In the past the audiences did not mind errors, as long as the words and the stories were part of the generally known repertoire.

From this youthful fascination, when he was only 15 years old he began writing plays. Since writing jatra plays was not considered a prestigious pastime in either the world of literature or the Bengali countryside, he kept his initial attempts at writing, and his initial successes a secret. Only when his plays became in demand was he willing to be known as a jatra playwright. Most of the popular plays in the 1920's and 1930's were mythological themes (some of them with definite political intentions and overtones but nonetheless themes from the epics and religious texts), as were the earliest plays of Brojenbabu. His vision was wider, however, and he soon began to write historical plays--set primarily within the period of Mughul rule in India. These were so popular that other playwrights began to follow his lead, and a rash of historical plays emerged.

During this same period he tried another innovation that was equally popular; he began to write historical plays that were based on imagined events, or were invented from his own imagination, called *kalpanik natäk* (imaginary plays). The sources for these plays were frequently the legends from various districts of Bengal, adapted with certain literary licence into stories that could be portrayed on the jatra stage. It was only a brief step to another of his innovations, the imaginary jatra with the intention of getting a particular idea across. In the late 1940's when the communal riots between Muslim and Hindi Bengalis were particularly vicious, when newspapers were filled with the reports of Bengali killing Bengali, he decided to make-up characters for

a play in which the 'idea' of Bengali unity would predominate. This play, known as *Bengalee*, was successful and audiences developed a taste for believable but imaginary characters. With this type of play he, with the help of the actor Panchu Sen, began a new form of dialogue as well; a style of dialogue that more closely resembled everyday speech--where the characters spoke short sentences in colloquial Bengali.

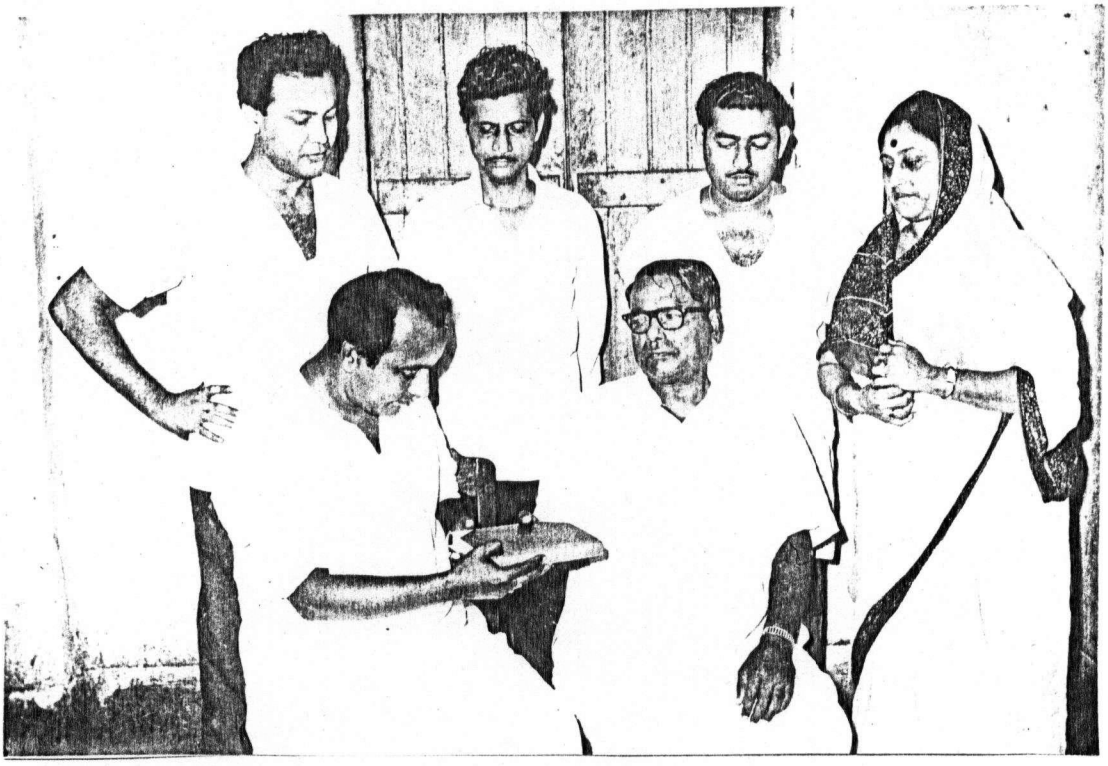
This also proved to be acceptable to jatra audiences, and going another bold step further, Brojenbabu, began, in the late 1950's, to write *samajik natak* (social dramas). His decision to write social dramas was formed from a desire to widen the scope of material that jatra audiences were exposed to, and from a realisation that the social problems of Bengal were vast enough to be explored and examined within this theatrical form which was so closely tied to the people of Bengal. At present most of the plays written are a result of the directions and concerns that Brojenbabu recognised and lead towards.

During the Bangladesh crisis in 1972, Brojenbabu even tried to become revolutionary and topical in his plays. This seemed the least successful of his attempts--I believe because he was following in this attempt rather than leading. When he set his mind to innovating and creatively changing the nature of the jatra he had a very powerful pen, indeed,--when he saw the direction and followed his writing suffered. His health as well as the times of Bengal have both taken their toll in his creative life.

He is, still, a model for younger playwrights to emulate. When I was visiting his home and talking with him it was not uncommon for one of two younger playwrights from Calcutta to make the journey to Ichapur, about 20 minutes by commuter train, to consult and talk with Brojenbabu.

He usually graciously answered their questions and listened to their words (he had a hard time reading with his eyes) as they read out their latest work. When he writes now his youngest son will copy over any illegible parts and occasionally take dictation.

He is the father of three children and currently a widower. His daughter, who never intends to marry, is a school teacher, one of his sons



Brojenbabu handing over a play to Panna Chakraborty
of the Janata Opera

who seems to have inherited his father's ability to write and has written over 25 theatrical plays, is a doctor in Serampore, West Bengal, and his younger son is a student in honours physics at the RamaKrishna Mission College at Naradhrapur, West Bengal. Although he likes his daughter's independence, he is concerned that she is not planning to marry; despite his innovations and concerns to change Bengali consciousness, he is a very

traditional man.

Brojenbabu's school master, the late Jogesh Chaudhury, inspired him to write for jatra, not for the stage, since Jogeshbabu thought that jatra should be made more "refined and civilised"--an inspiration that has not waned even after writing for the jatra stage for over 40 years. He has developed a definite style and range of characterisations throughout his writing career and he was very open and helpful in making me understand them.

Writing a jatra play:

Of course, there is always a difference between the rules people say they live by and whether they acutally employ them in their living, and the same is true for the canons of jatra play writing and their relationship to jatra playwrights. No one playwright could give me all the 'rules' and no two playwrights listed the same rules, but when I constructed a minimal set of rules and discussed them with some of the playwrights they agreed with the outline of the enterprise.

Although two plays on foreign themes broke this rule during the time I was conducting this research--there is a dogma that a jatra play have five acts. The climax of the play--usually referred to as its trunk or its full development--is in the third act, even though each act has a small climactic scene. Each jatra play must have songs that serve different dramatic functions, depending on where they are placed in the play itself. A jatra play must also have certain types of characters; a comic, a conscience *(viveka)*, although the function of this character has changed, a hero *(nayak)* and an antagonist *(kalo nayak)*, a heroine, and secondary characters that add to the plot. The acting should be accented musically, and the actors should exhibit various emotions, moods or states of mind

(rasa, bhava) in each act and play.

On the above points writers agree, but each jatra playwright has his own way of achieving the structure and content of his creation. Brojenbabu spent many hours instructing me in his ideal structure of a jatra play--although he did not always follow his own teachings in his plays that I followed through. At first it is important to understand that a jatra play is called a *pala*. The translation of pala as 'play' is not entirely accurate--a pala is a part, a section, a branch, a measure of something. A jatra pala is, then, a section or branch of a journey; a 'slice of life's journeys'. The jatra playwright is referred to as the *palakar* or maker of the slice of life. In any one pala, an aspect of, a scene in, or an event from human life, usually Bengali life, is followed through from its seed to its decay.

As Brojenbabu said "a jatra pala is living, it is like a tree". Organic analogies abound in Bengal, and here is another important one. Each act in a jatra pala relates to a growth stage: the first act, called the seed *(bichi* or *bij)* is the preparation and introduction of all the characters; the second act, called the shape or form *(akar)* is the incomplete development of the chosen story; the third act, called the body, trunk, or main incident *(kanda)* is the complete development of the story building to its climax; the fourth act, called the blossom *(mukul)* is the results and reactions of the characters in the main incident; and the fifth and final act, called the ripe fruit ready to seed again *(phul)*, is the consequences and outcome of the action, suggesting the new seed to begin again. It is both linear and circular at the same time.

Every act should be divided into three or four scenes, except the last act--it can be one scene. Each scene *(drishak)* should have an incident that contributes to the story as a whole, and should have a song,

also relating to the story as a whole. After the climax of the play, however, there should be fewer songs and more rapid and accelerating dialogue—as Brojenbabu says "when the play is coming to a close they don't want to hear songs they want to see the end of the drama." Each act should be a definite length, each scene should be a definite length and a play should be able to be performed within 3-3½hours.

For both Brojenbabu and Bhairob Ganguly (a jatra playwright whose play *Panch Paiser Prithibi* is translated and annotated in full in the next section) the third act is the longest and the last act is the shortest. The length breaks down as follows: first act—40-45 minutes; second act—40-45 minutes; third act—50-60 minutes; fourth act—30-35 minutes; and fifth act—10-15 minutes. Even scenes are thought of in terms of time: first scenes are about 10 minutes; second scenes are about 12 minutes; third scenes are about 8 minutes: and fourth scenes are about 10 minutes. Brojenbabu, for whom writing jatra plays is almost formulaic, even has it measured further: He said; "I make it a point not to write any scene less than 10 pages of a no. 4 exercise book." An exercise book, a book of blank pages used in class rooms for rote and writing practices, of the no. 4 size has 64 pages in it, and Brojenbabu uses 4 such exercise books per play. Most jatra playwrights take their cue from this.

Plays are written in red and blue ink—the red being for emphatic lines and songs and the blue being for the short dialogue and lesser songs. While this colour coding is not essential, most playwrights follow the scheme because actors/resses are used to this format. When a party accepts and purchases a play their own scribes (often a bookkeeper) are in charge of making multiple copies of the play—for the prompter and for rehearsal.

With this as an outline, it is interesting to follow through the thought sequence and actions of a playwright writing a jatra play.

He begins with an idea that he wants to 'leave with the audience after the play is finished' that he encases in a story *(golpo)*. He then decides what incidents *(kanda)* he needs to build or nurture the story along. He next decides which characters to create, keeping in mind that he needs a comic *(hashya)*, a hero *(bir* or *nayak)*, a heroine *(nayaki)*, and a singer who plays conscience *(gayak viveka)*. He then decides which moods or feelings *(rasa)* he wishes to match with the various incidents. After thinking about it for a while, he decides the order and sequence of feelings and incidents and his play has form *(rupa)*. The rupa (a word meaning form, metaphor, grace, appearance, folk-tale, allegory, etc.) and the play become one.

The sources of stories for a jatra pala vary greatly: a consieration of these sources leads nicely to the beginnings of a thematic analysis of jatra plays. The oldest source of stories are the two Indian epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata; next in time come incidents and heroic talks of Indian and Bengali history, the Mughuls, the Marathas, the Nawabs, etc; also important at this time come stories from the lives of Indian and Bengali religious and social leaders, Chaitanya, Ramakrishna, Shivaji, etc.; imaginary stories with historical settings; reinterpretations of colonial history; social concerns and problems in modern Bengal; class-struggle and revolutionary concerns in urban India; peasant struggles elsewhere in the world; and incidents in world history. In short, human life in general and Bengali life in particular, the things that affect and constrain it, are the domain of jatra stories. When a playwright decides on a story he may refer to books and texts written on the subject, both to remind him of the incidents and for

inspiration. He may also read earlier jatra plays on the same topic, if he can gain access to them.

Looking at the book shelves of some of the jatra playwrights, copies of *Brihat Bango* (Stories of Bengal in 2 Vols.), Kritivasa's *Ramayana* (Bengali version), the *Mahabharata*, *Akbar the Great*, *Shivaji*, Bengali novels by Sarat Chandra Chatterjee, Tarashankar Bannerjee, Manik Bandopadhyaya, etc., Lenin, etc. can be seen. They do read a lot, but most do not actually do research. Historical accuracy is not a paramount concern. When looking at these same shelves, copies of their own written and published works are conspicuously absent--most do not have copies of the plays they have written, and it is evident that they don't see these works as 'private property' in any way nor do they retain copyright themselves or receive royalties in any substantial amount.

Another jatra writer of some prominence, Sourendra Mohan Chatterjee, does do some research before embarking on a new play; his book shelves, in his Baruipur village house in 24-Parganas, West Bengal, are filled with history books, including Elphinstone's *History of India*, Prasad's *A Short History of Muslim Rule*, and R. C. Majumdar's *History of Bengal*, novels by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, a translation of Tolstoi's children's stories, etc. Again, however, his own plays are distinctively missing. Sourenbabu bemoans the fact that he had been drawn to jatra writing because of the money, but he received little money except for the play itself--no royalties, no additional money when a play was put on the radio, and no extra money for rewriting necessary sections.

Within the incidents that get combined into a story for a jatra play, there is embedded a moral *(upadesh)* or didactic message which the playwright wishes to 'leave with the audience' to contemplate. These moral

lessons are usually closely related with the playwright's view of human nature. Most jatra writers agree that "man is not basically bad or good, but circumstances can make him a demon". What a jatra play should do is provide enough incidents so that 'true' character can be understood, not just the 'illusion' or the 'outer reality' of a character. Brojen De gave me good examples of how a jatra playwright tries to get behind the 'illusions' and get to the 'reality' of characters. With regard to a mythological theme, for example in his play *Purushottam*, he explores the character of Ravanna (the demon-king from the Ramayana), by looking into his family background and the way he was treated since "Ravanna was the son of a Brahmin but he didn't get the recognition and rights of a Brahmin". Ravanna's father had three sons and he became a hermit. Ravanna, the oldest, was a great hero, but due to some of his activities he acted in "a misguided way", Brojenbabu said, "and for that reason he was not given obesiance. His mind was sharp, so sharp that he could be compared with 10 men at once (that is why he is shown with 10 heads), but he for not getting recognition became misguided." Brojenbabu wanted his audience to understand what would happen if people were not treated correctly.

With regard to Brojenbabu's social dramas, he says they have a central and similar message: "things are not what they seem. In almost all my plays this is the same thing proved, man is not a born criminal nor a born beggar, everyone has a history behind him." Brojen wrote the first social drama, *Nisiddher Phul* (The Forbidden Fruit) with the social message that certain kinds of marriages are bad, they will not bring peace and happiness. A discussion of this play taught me about various types of marriages and what happens with inter-caste matches. In this play a Brahmin girl marries a Sudra boy, and their children turn out to be "cruel,

dangerous, and treacherous", because it was an unequal match. Brojen's play *Plaban* (The Flood) carried the message that "some of the young men who we despise in society are useful people--they are at heart not so bad as we think--these are the *mastans* (hooligans, officious para protectors, *gundas* much like the character Babul in the play that follows) or undesireables. Some are really good, useful members of society--they want to reform society...mastans render service to people--in this play the victims of the famine and flood...these people are called undesireables by conservative people but the progressive sector of society recognise them as an indispensible factor of civilisation...they may have a horrible exterior but they are basically good." Social plays in general like to have at least one character that is a kind of 'Robin Hood'--someone who is differently valued by different sections of society.

Once the story line, the message, and the main kinds of characters is decided, the main writing begins. This writing is constrained by a number of factors: the actors/actresses in the party for whom the play is being written; the time available for completing the manuscript; the techniques of staging a jatra play; and the political and social climate that is involved in the shaping of people's tastes.

First the constraint of the party personnel. Many jatra playwrights described this constraint as a constant frustration. Most jatra writers do not like the current 'star' system of jatra acting--"they are too demanding and want too many lines". 'Stars' want their "entrance and exit lines to be long and powerful" and a jatra playwright "can't write his play totally according to his own idea and experience...he is sometimes compelled to defer to artists in spite of bitter objections and

and disgustment." When a playwright begins the play he sketches out who the characters and performers are—then he writes dialogue that will suit the person playing the character as well as the character. The jatra playwrights become very knowledgeable about the strengths and weaknesses of many jatra artists, and take these into account when writing. Brojenbabu also takes the position of the various artists within the party into account when he is writing and creating his characters. The women in his plays are strong characters placed prominently in the story—frequently a play will revolve around the heroine. He does this because women are not treated fairly in the jatra party, " they get paid less than men and have a harder time", so " I give them an important role to play."

Occasionally an owner will commission a jatra play just before the season is about to open (usually because one play has not gone well in rehearsal or the public demands something new). The jatra playwright then writes a play in a phenomenally short amount of time, and complains about the pressures.

Jatra plays use no scenery (except a chair or bench and once in awhile a bed or a desk) and they are performed in the open-air, in-the-round; these realities also place constraints on the jatra playwright. Dialogue must be written so that it is essentially repeated 2 or 3 times but yet interesting enough so that if people are in 'good seats' they are not bored by the repetition necessary for audiences placed on the periphery. Not only does the dialogue have to be played to all sides, but it also must carry, bound up in the choice of words, all necessary scene-setting and mood describing effects. This becomes more and more difficult with the introduction of foreign, revolutionary and class-struggle themes. Brojenbabu explained that some of these 'externals' can be carried through by the actions on stage, but usually he must search his mind for the right

words, with the proper meanings and nuances—yet keeping the language simple enough for even the least educated peasant to be able to understand the play.

Jatra playwrights feel that the audiences are sometimes fickle, but predictable, if they keep their eyes open to what is going on in Bengal. Most writers do 'character research' by intensely watching people as they travel about in Calcutta or the Bengal countryside, and by listening to what people talk about and what is on their minds, they feel that they can capture in their plays what 'life in Bengal is all about.' They would rather, in many cases, however, write up characters from their imagination, who are 'ideal types' created for 'plot' purposes.

Juggling all these literary and social constraints, jatra playwrights manage to be both productive and successfully employed. It should not be forgotten that most are writing because they want to and like to, but they are also making a living, or the better part of a living, by doing it. Many writers do so because at present the jatra business is a lucrative one; the popularity of the jatra contributes to their way of being meaningful Bengali—for the playwright who creates meaning and makes his money that way, *artha* is a unitary concept. Mahesh, the playwright in the translated play which follows, refers to this position of the playwright constantly; consider him an 'ideal type' example of a playwright.

In the following tables and list of Brojenbabu's playwrighting accomplishments, it will become apparent that his career is a good example of the trends in jatra. The first table shows the number and classification of plays that I collected while in Bengal; the second table shows the number and classification of the plays that Brojenbabu has written during his long career. Following these tables there is a list of the plays he has written; this is intended to show both the length and breadth of his work.

Table 3:

JATRA PLAYS COLLECTED

TYPE OF PLAY	PLAYS (WRITTEN 1919-1969)[1] TOTAL (182)	BEFORE 1960 (86)	AFTER 1959 (106)
Puranic	55	43	12
Krishna Jatras	20	20	-
VidyaSundar Jatras	15	15	-
Historical	58	3	55
Imaginary	15	3	12
Social	14	-	14
Patriotic	3	-	3
Other (includes Biography revolutionary, etc.	12	2	10

COMMENTS:

1) Plays written from 1919-1969 are the plays that are published from 1921-1971. There is a two year delay from writing to print.

2) Around 1950 there seems to be a turning point; Puranic/Religious plays seem to be replaced by Historical ones.

3) After 1962-3 as a jatra season, there seems to be the appearance of historical plays dealing with the Freedom Movement; prior to this the historical plays seem to have dealt only with history up to the Battle of Plassey.

4) This list of plays is not to be seen as a representative sample. The plays I was able to collect were often the ones that a jatra publishers still happened to have around. Some old jatra plays are available in the National Library of India, but much of this literature, unfortunately, has been lost (or destroyed). People, both inside and outside the jatra jagat, would suggest plays I should try to acquire, plays they deemed important. Whenever it was possible I tried to act on their advice. This sample should rather be seen as an opportunistic sample—those plays I had an opportunity and fortune to collect.

Table 4:

BROJENDRANATH DE'S COLLECTED PLAYS

TYPE OF PLAY	PLAYS WRITTEN 1930-1971			
	TOTAL (110)	BEFORE 1940 (10)	1940-1960 (32)	AFTER 1960 (68)
Puranic(epic)	23	9	8	6
Historical	36	-	14	22
Imaginary	26	1	9	16
Social	14	-	-	14
Religious(including Biography)	7	-	-	7
Other	4	-	1	3

COMMENTS:

1) Brojendranath's literary career shows the same trend that jatra plays in general exhibit — largely because he was one of the most influential playwrights in the jatra jagat.

2) There are 110 plays included on the table, rather than using all the plays that are on the following list; some of the later plays have not been published, and there were a few plays that I found difficult to classify--they were listed with two classifications.

3) Brojenbabu prefers to write plays on either social or mythological themes. He prefers as well to use his imagination as much as possible in writing any play.

JATRA PALAGULI written by Shri Brojendranath De from 1919-1972.

The first five plays listed here have been lost, and to my knowledge were never published. The other plays were not all in Sri Brojenbabu's library, since most Bengali playwrights do not keep copies of their own dramatic creations, but he had a few and his son was able to reconstruct, from his records of his father's writing, a list. I supplemented the list with materials I collected from various jatra publishers and party records.

FIVE LOST PLAYS

1) Chandrashekar(1919)
2) Subarnashatadal (1920)
3) Pandar Gourab (1921)
4) Raja Ganesh (1922)
5) Parikshiter Brahmah Shap (1923)

PLAYS WRITTEN FOR AND PERFORMED BY AMATEUR JATRA PARTIES

1) Swarnalanka (1925) first performed by the Bani Natya Samaj of Beliaghata of Calcutta in 1926. Later published by the Diamond Library.

2) Bhaktadhin (1926) first performed by the Bani Natya Samaj of Beliaghata of Calcutta in 1927.

PLAYS WRITTEN FOR AND PERFORMED BY PROFESSIONAL JATRA PARTIES

1) Bajranara(1931) first performed by the GANESH OPERA in 1932. Later published by the Swarnalata Library (1932).

2) Prabiranjan (1932) first performed by the GANESH OPERA in 1933. Later published by the Diamond Library (1934)

3) Niyati(1933) first performed by the ROYAL BINAPANI OPERA of Calcutta in 1934. Later published by the Diamond Library.

4) Lilabhasan (1934) first performed by the GANESH OPERA of Calcutta in 1934. Published by the Diamond Library.

5) Bir puja(1935) first performed by the ARYA OPERA of Calcutta in 1935. Published by the Diamond Library.

6) Bangya Bir(1936) first performed by the GANESH OPERA of Calcutta in 1936. Published by the Diamond Library.

7) Chander Meye (1936) first performed by the NATYA COMPANY JATRA PARTY of Barishal in 1938. Published by the Diamond Library.

8) Pajarshi (1937) first performed by the BHOLANATH OPERA of East Bengal in 1938. Published later as Danabir, by the Diamond Library.

9) Chashar Chhele (1938) first performed by the NATYA COMPANY JATRA PARTY of Barishal in 1939. Published later as Manik mala by Diamond Library.

10) Raj-Lakshmi (1939) first performed by the GANESH OPERA of Calcutta 1939. Published by the Diamond Library.

11) Rakta Tilak(1940) first performed by the NATYA COMPANY JATRA PARTY of Barishal in 1940. Published by the Diamond Library.

12) Chanda Mukul(1940) first performed by the NATYA COMPANY JATRA PARTY of Barishal in 1941. Published by the Sulabh Calcutta Library.

13) Bansher Banshee (1941) first performed by the RANJAN OPERA of Calcutta in 1942. Published by Diamond Library.

14) Gita Govinda (1942) first performed by the NATYA COMPANY JATRA PARTY of Barishal in 1943. This play was also famous under two additional titles; Raja Laksman Sen and Bhaktikabi Jayadev.Published by Diamond Library.

15) Raj-Nandinee (1943) first performed by the RANJAN OPERA of Calcutta in 1944. Published by the Diamond Library.

16) Akaler Desh(1945) first performed by the NATYA COMPANY JATRA PARTY of Barishal in 1945. Published by the Sulabh Calcutta Library.

17) Samajer Bali (1945) first performed by the NATYA COMPANY JATRA PARTY of Barishal in 1945. Published by the Diamond Library.

18) Mayer Dak (1946) first performed by the NATYA COMPANY JATRA PARTY of Barishal and the PRAVASH OPERA of Calcutta in 1947. Published by the Diamond Library.

19) Debata Gras(1947) first performed by the NATYA COMPANY JATRA PARTY of Barishal in 1947. Published by the Diamond Library.

20) Raj-Sanyasee (1947) first performed by the BILWAGRAM NATYA COMPANY of East Bengal in 1947. Published by the Diamond Library.

21) Prati Shodh(1948) first performed by the CHANDI OPERA of Calcutta and the NATYA COMPNAY JATRA PARTY of Barishal in 1948. Published by the Diamond Library.

22) Bharat Tirtha(1948) first performed by the NATYA COMPANY JATRA PARTY of Barishal in 1948. Published by the Diamond Library.

23) Dhara Debata (1948) first performed by the NEW GANESH OPERA of Calcutta in 1948. Published by the Diamond Library.

24) Bangalee (1948) first performed by the ARYA OPERA of Calcutta in 1949. (This was recorded on His Majesty'd Voice records, 78r.p.m.) This play was also famous under the title Shesh Namaj. Published by the Calcutta Town Library.

25) Dasiputra(1949) first performed by the ARYA OPERA of Calcutta in 1950. Published by Tarachand Das and Sons.

26) Swamir Ghar(1950) first performed by the PRAVASH OPERA of Calcutta in 1950 Published by Diamond Library.

27) Shesh Arati(1951) first performed by the NATYA COMPANY JATRA PARTY of Calcutta in 1951. Published by the Calcutta Town Library.

28) Gandharber Meye(1951) first performed by the NATYA COMPANY JATRA PARTY of Calcutta in 1951. Published by the Diamond Library.

29) Kohinoor (1952) first performed by the NATYA COMPANY JATRA PARTY of Calcutta in 1952. Published by the Calcutta Town Library.

30) Dharmer Hall(1952) first performed by the RANJAN OPERA of Calcutta in 1952. Published by the Calcutta Town Library.

31) Ganyer Meye (1952) first performed by SATYANARAYAN OPERA of Calcutta in 1952. Published by the Diamond Library.

32) Satya shrayee(1953) first performed by the NATYA COMPANY JATRA PARTY of Calcutta in 1953. Published by the Diamond Library.

33) Bicharak (1953) first performd by the NATYA COMPANY JATRA PARTY of Calcutta in 1953. Published by the Diamond Library.

34) Satir Pati(1954) first performed by the RANJAN OPERA of Calcutta and the SATYNARAYAN OPERA of Calcutta in 1954. Published by Laksminarayana Library.

35) Purushottam (1954) first performed by the PRAVASH OPERA of Calcutta in 1955. Published by the Diamond Library.

36) Sabar Debata (1955) first performed by the NEW CHANDI OPERA of Calcutta in 1956. Published by the Diamond Library.

37) Sarathi (1955) first performed by the NEW GANESH OPERA of Calcutta in 1956. Published by the Diamond Library.

38) Rahu Gras(1957) first performed by the NEW GANESH OPERA of Calcutta in 1957. Published by the Diamond Library.

39) Kurukshetrer Age (1957) first performed by the NATYA COMPANY JATRA PARTY of Calcutta in 1957. Published by the Diamond Library.

40) Bhakter Dak (1958) first performed by the NEW GANESH OPERA of Calcutta in 1958. Published by the Diamond Library.

41) Parashmani (1958) first performed by the NATYA COMPANY JATRA PARTY of Calcutta in 1958. Published by the Calcutta Town Library.

42) Bhagyer Bali (1958) first performed by the NEW ROYAL BINAPANI OPERA of Calcutta in 1959. Published by the Diamond Library.

43) Lohar Tal (1959) first performed by the NATYA COMPANY JATRA PARTY of Calcutta in 1959. Published by the Diamond Library.

44) Dharmer Bali (1959) first performed by the ARYA OPERA of Calcutta in 1959. Published by the Diamond Library.

45) Dhanser Dak(1960) first performed by the NEW ROYAL BINAPANI OPERA of Calcutta in 1960. Also known by the name Balir Bandh.

46) Bargee Elo Deshe (1960) first performed by the NABARANJAN OPERA of Calcutta in 1960. Published by Diamond Library.

47) Raja Debidas (1960) first performed by the NATYA COMPANY JATRA PARTY of Calcutta in 1960. Published by the Calcutta Town Library.

48) Nishiddha Phul (1960 October) first performed by the Dhritishree Natya Shilpam of Bihar; performed by the JANATA OPERA of Calcutta in 1960 as ' Dhoshee Ke?'; performed by the AMBIKA NATYA COMPANY of Calcutta in 1960 as ' Bidrohee'. Published by the General Library.

49) Bangalir Meye (1961) first performed Sanjher Asara of Howrah in 1961. Also performed by the NATYA COMPANY JATRA PARTY of Calcutta in 1969 as "Banglir Desh".

50) Ram rajya (1961) first performed by the Dhritishree Natya Shilpam of Bihar in 1961. Published by the Diamond Library as Jiban Yagya.

51) Sohrab Rustam (1961) first performed by the AMBIKA NATYA COMPANY of Calcutta in 1961. Published by the Calcutta Town Library.

52) Chandi Mangal (1961) first performed by the NABARANJAN OPERA of Calcutta in 1961. Published by the Diamond Library.

53) Sonai Dighi (1961) first performed by the SATYAMBER OPERA of Calcutta in 1961. (Also recorded on His Master's Voice records). Published by the Calcutta Town Library.

54) Satir Ghat (1961) first performed by the AMBIKA NATYA COMPANY of Calcutta in 1961. Published by the Diamond Library.

55) Kabi Chandrabatee (1961) first performed by the NEW ROYAL BINAPANI OPERA of Calcutta in 1961. Published by the Calcutta Town Library.

56) Rakta Alpana(1962) first performed by the ARYA OPERA of Calcutta in 1962. Published by the Diamond Library.

57) Yadir Dekhe Na Keo (1962) first performed by the NABARANJAN OPERA of Calcutta in 1962. Published by the Calcutta Town Library.

58) Bir Abhinaya (1962) first performed by the NEW ROYAL BINAPANI OPERA of Calcutta in 1962. Published by the Calcutta Town Library.

59) Plaban (1962) first performed by the NATYA COMPANY JATRA PARTY of Calcutta in 1962. Published by the Calcutta Town Library.

60) DhularSwarga (1962) first performed by the SATYAMBER OPERA of Calcutta in 1962. Published by the Calcutta Town Library.

61) Mahua (1962) first performed by the SATYAMBER OPERA of Calcutta in 1962. Published by the Diamond Library.

62) Upenshita (1962) first performed by the NATYA BHARATI OPERA of Calcutta in 1962. Published by the Calcutta Town Library.

63) Patiter Bhagawan (1962) first performed by the NATYA COMPANY JATRA PARTY of Calcutta in 1962. Published by the General Library.

64) Nastik (1963) first performed by the NABARANJAN OPERA of Calcutta in 1963. Published by the Diamond Library and also published by the Nirmal Sahitya Mandir as ' Sangram o Shanti '.

65) Chitor Lakshi (1963) first performed by the NATYA COMPANY JATRA PARTY of Calcutta in 1963. Published by the Calcutta Town Library.

66) Samrat-Jahangir- Shah (1963) first performed by the NATYA COMPANY JATRA PARTY of Calcutta in 1963. Published by the Diamond Library.

67) Chhinnatar (1963) first performed by the AMBIKA NATYA COMPANY of Calcutta in 1963. Published by the Calcutta Town Library.

68) Shayataner Char (1963) first performed by the AMBIKA NATYA COMPANY of Calcutta in 1963. Published by the Calcutta Town Library.

69) Udayer Ma (1963) first performed by the JANATA OPERA of Calcutta in 1963. Also performed by THE NEW ARYA OPERA of Calcutta in 1963 as Dhatri Panna. Published by the Calcutta Town Library.

70) Durgadas (1964) first performed by the NABARANJAN OPERA of Calcutta in 1964. Published by the Diamond Library.

71) Sonar Bharat (1964) first performed by the NATYA COMPANY JATRA PARTY of Calcutta in 1964. Published by the Diamond Library.

72) Ite Atit Katha Kao (1964) first performed by the NATYA BHARATI OPERA of Calcutta in 1964. Also known as 'Rajyashree'. Published by the Nirmal Sahitya Mandir.

73) Rakhi Bhai (1964) first performed by the AMBIKA NATYA COMPANY of Calcutta in 1964. Published by the Calcutta Town Library.

74) Rakta Nesha (1965) first performed by the TARUN OPERA of Calcutta in 1965. Published by the General Library.

75) Chand bibi (1965) first performed by the NATYA COMPANY JATRA PARTY of Calcutta in 1965. Also performed by the Boikuntho Jatra Samaj of Calcutta as ' Chand Sultana '. Published by the Calcutta Town Library.

76) Bilwa mangal (1965) first performed by the NATYA COMPANY JATRA PARTY of Calcutta in 1965. Published by the Calcutta Town Library.

77) Jahansir Rani (1965) first performed by the AMBIKA NATYA COMPANY of Calcutta in 1965. Published by the Diamond Library.

78) Janatar Mukut (1965) first performed by the AMBIKA NATYA COMPANY of Calcutta in 1965. Also performed by the Shree Radha Natya Company of Calcutta. Published by the Diamond Library.

79) Bhairaber Dak (1965) first performed by the BHARATI OPERA of Calcutta in 1965. Published by the Diamond Library.

80) Shesh Anjanti (1966) first performed by the TARUN OPERA of Calcutta in 1966. Published by the Calcutta Town Library.

81) Ashoka balaya(1966) first performed by the Dhritishree Natya Shilpam of Bihar and also by the TARUN OPERA of Calcutta in 1966 as ' Rakta Nadir Dheu '.

82) Nekrher Thaba (1966) first performed by the NABARANJAN OPERA of Calcutta in 1966. Published by the Diamond Library.

83) Mayur Sirhasan (1966) first performed by the NATYA COMPANY JATRA PARTY of Calcutta in 1966. Published by the Calcutta Town Library.

84) Rajadhrohee (1966) first performed by the JANATA OPERA of Calcutta in 1966. Published by the Calcutta Town Library.

85) Bharat Biday (1966) first performed by the NATYA COMPANY JATRA PARTY of Calcutta in 1966. Also performed as 'Mahaiyasee Kaikeree'. Published by the Nirmal Sahitya Mandir.

86) Meghe Dhaka Raki (1966) first performed by the TARUN OPERA of Calcutta in 1966.

87) Desher Dak (1966) first performed by the NEW ROYAL BINAPANI OPERA of Calcutta in 1966. Published by the Calcutta Town LIbrary.

88) Sulatana Rijiya(1967) first performed by the NATYA COMPANY JATRA PARTY of Calcutta in 1967. Published by Calcutta Town Library.

89) Murkher Panchali (1967) first performed by the NEW ROYAL BINAPANI OPERA of Calcutta in 1967. Published by the Calcutta Town Library.

90) Akul Ganger Magh (1967) first performed by the BHARATI OPERA of Calcutta in 1967. Published by the Nirmal Sahitya Mandir.

91) Matir Kanna (1967) first performed by the JANATA OPERA of Calcutta in 1967. Published by the Calcutta Town Library.

92) Dudhsayaree Deshe(1967) first performed by the NATYA COMPANY JATRA PARTY of Calcutta in 1967.

93) Lohar Prachir (1967) first performed by the BHARATI OPERA of Calcutta in 1967. Published by the Diamond Library.

94) Jaharerh Dola (1968) first performed by the NEW ROYAL BINAPANI OPERA of Calcutta in 1968. Published by the Shree Book Syndicate.

95) Samrat Karkobad (1968) first performed by the Shree Radha Natya Company of Calcutta in 1968.

96) Paper Phasal (1968) first performed by the BHARATI OPERA of Calcutta in 1968. Published by the Calcutta Town Library.

97) Karuna sindhu Vidyasagar (1968) first performed by the NATYA COMPANY JATRA PARTY of Calcutta in 1968. Also performed by the Boikuntho Jatra Samaj in 1969. Published by Mandal and Sons.

98) Candidas (1968)

99) Bindhur Chhele(1969) first performed by the NATYA COMPANY JATRA PARTY of Calcutta in 1969.

100) Patishatinee Sati (1969) first performed by the Boikuntho Jatra Samaj in 1969. Published by Mandal and Sons.

101) Shree Ramakrishina Saradamani (1969) first performed by the NATYA COMPANY JATRA PARTY of Calcutta in 1969.

102) Kalapravash(1969) first performed by AMBIKA NATYA COMPANY in 1969. Published by Mandal and Sons.

103) Mrityunjoy Surya Sen(1969) first performed by BHARATI OPERA of Calcutta in 1969.

104) Sher-L-Tughlok (1969)

105) Louhamanab (1970) first performed by AMBIKA NATYA COMPANY of Calcutta in 1970.

106) Jighansa (1970) first performed by the AMBIKA NATYA COMPANY of Calcutta in 1970. Also known as 'Mager Mulluk'.

107) Abul Hasan (1970) first performed by the BHARATI ORERA of Calcutta in 1970.

108) Shankhabalaya (1970)

109) Debatar Abhinshap (1970) first performed by the AMBIKA NATYA COMPANY of Calcutta in 1970.

110) Jawab Chai (1970)

111) Sonai Dighi Pore (1970) Published by Akshaya Library.

112) Subhada (1971) first performed by the BHARATI OPERA of Calcutta in 1971.

113) Nawab Hussen Shah (1971) first performed by the JANATA OPERA of Calcutta in 1971.

114) ShreeKrishna-Sakuni (1971)

115) Mujiber Dak (1972)

PLAY WRITTEN FOR THEATRICAL PERFORMANCE

1) Lalpranja (1952) first performed in the Rungmahal Theatre in Calcutta in 1953.

PLAYS AND PLAYLETS WRITTEN FOR CLUBS, SCHOOLS, RADIO, ETC..

1) Maharudher Bali(1943) first performed by Kartikpur Boy's Club of East Bengal in 1943.

2) Bishuphal (1935) published by the Sublabh Calcutta Library.

3) Ujanir Char (1945) first performed by the Students of Northland High School in 1935. Published by Sulabh Calcutta Library.

4) Tipu Sultan(1948) published by Tarachand Das and Sons.

5) Sirajer Swapna(1948) published by Tarachand Das and Sons.

6) Chandrasekhar(1949) published by Tarachand Das and Sons.

7) Jahansir Ranee(1949) published by Tarachand Das and Sons.

8) Kedar Roy(1949) published by Tarachand Das and Sons.

9) Pratapaditya(1949) published by Tarachand Das and Sons.

10) Alamgir(1949) published by Tarachand Das and Sons.

11) Chandragupta(1949) published by Tarachand Das and Sons.

12) Siraj-Uddullan(1949) published by Tarachand Das and Sons.

13) Anandamath(1950) published by Tarachand Das and Sons.

14) Devi Chaudurani (1950) published by Tarachand Das and Sons.

15) Vijoysinha(1950)--this book has been lost.

16) Maharaja Nandakumar(1950) published by Tarachand Das and Sons.

17) Pratidan(1956) published by the Calcutta Town Library.

18) Sneher Jaya(1956) published by the Calcutta Town Library.

19) Kripaner Dhan(1956) published by the Calcutta Town Library.

20) Mukh Debata(1957) published by the Calcutta Town Library.

21) Matir Khudha(1963) published by the Calcutta Town Library.

22) Sonar Bangla(1964) published by the Calcutta Town Library.

23) Vikshuk(1965) first performed by the students of Northland High School. Published by the Calcutta Town Library.

24) Rajputbir(1966) published by the Calcutta Town Library.

25) Natin Master(1969) Published by the Calcutta Town Library.

26) Agachha(1969) published by the Calcutta Town Library.

27) Overtime(1969) published by the Calcutta Town Library.

28) Nimai Sanyasee(1963) first performed by the students of Northland High School in 1963. Published by the Calcutta Town Library.

29) Police(1971) published by the Calcutta Town Library.

30) Foolish(1971) published by the Calcutta Town Library.

31) Shahan Bandher Dak(1971)

32) Mastan(1971) published by the Calcutta Town Library.

33) Ankhi Malo(1971) submitted to the Calcutta Town Library.

The Jatra Playwright and the Jatra Party:

Some jatra playwrights get very involved with the parties they write for, but most keep fairly clear of the internal political and social hassles that a jatra party inevitably gets into. Brojenbabu rarely goes to a rehearsal, and not just because of his health; he "even isn't consulted about changes and cuts that the party makes" to his plays. Sometimes he will be asked to write a new scene, but any minor changes and any interpretation of characters is left to the party.

Some of the artists, especially those he has written a great deal for, will come to visit him and seek his advice with playing a character. Brojenbabu proudly tells of his relationship with the jatra artist Panchu Sen—together they developed new jatra techniques from short dialogue to comic elements in heroic roles. Other jatra artists, like Jyotsna Dutta (a leading jatra heroine), collaborated with him on making women playing women's roles believable on the jatra stage.

He rarely comes to the jatra para, however, and he maintains his household and family life quite apart from the presence of the jatra people or his jatra occupation. This is in direct contrast to Bhairob Ganguly, the writer whose life and work provides a better example of the link between the writer and the party, the business and the performance, and the performance and the central part of it—the jatra play. Bhairob writes primarily social and class-struggle dramas, but has, on occasion, written plays based on Bengali folk-tales and historical events. He, during his time of writing a play, stays in the jatra para, lives in a jatra office, and has his social life circumscribed by the people within the jatra jagat. He goes home to his village rarely and his household and family life are sporadically attended to directly. He is a landlord and landowner in his village, but because of his political leanings and activities he is often

persona non grata in his rural locale. People from his village come to visit him in Calcutta, he keeps in touch by letter, and he sometimes goes to the district town to catch news of what is happening in his village.

SKETCH OF THE JATRA PLAYWRIGHT: BHAIROB GANGULY

At 43, Bhairob Ganguly is a relative newcomer to the jatra jagat; he has been writing jatra plays since 1964 when his play *Nautch Mahal* (The Dance Hall) was first successfully performed. Ever since then about two

Bhairob Ganguly: Thinking and Writing

plays have been performed per year, making him one of the most popular playwrights in the current jatra jagat. During the two years that I conducted this research, the following plays of his were performed: *Panch Paiser Prithibi* (The World for Five Paisa, translated in full in the next section); *Agami Prithibi* (The Next World, a social drama); *Aekti Paisa* (One Paisa, a class-struggle drama); *Kanna Ghom Rakta* (Tears, Sweat and

Blood, a class-struggle drama); *Sati Ekabati* (The Chaste Eka, an imaginary drama based on tale from his village area); *Begum Ashmantara* (The Mughul Queen, a historical drama based on the life of a Mughul woman); and he was engaged in writing a new 'symbolic drama' called *Manus Ke?* (Who is Man?). People frequently refer to Bhairob as the writer with the 'powerful pen' or the 'class-struggle writer.'

The new play, Who is Man?, is a good introduction to the questions and concerns that Bhairob has and wants to share with the Bengali public. His main concern is with 'appearance' and 'reality', with 'necessary and unnecessary illusions', or with the questions of the nature of 'human nature in modern Bengali society.' Through his exploration of Bengali cultural existence and its abstractions he hopes to make plain the "backwards and reversed world of modern Bengal" where people have their values and expectations "the wrong-way around." He hopes to 'lift the veil of *maya* that people have' by laying bare the nature of their attachments and the evils of Westernisation and the values Westernised Bengalis cling to. Take the names of the characters in his new (uncompleted when I was there) play:

Manus (man) —the leading male character
Sundor (beauty) — his pure, chaste, wife
Sneho (pretty and affectionate) — his sister
Mamata (mother) — his mother
Bhakti (devotion) — the conscience, vivek, singer
Ahongkar (conceited and arrogant) —Western missionary
Labh (profit or gain) —the antagonist
Maya (attachment and illusion) —his girl friend
Kamana (desire) —another girl friend

As Bhairob said, "In this play man will be first and last, and human mistakes and errors will be exposed." This reminds one of the Medieval morality play Everyman.

Rupak (symbolic or metaphoric) dramas is the new wave that Bhairob wants to introduce into the jatra jagat. These plays, through the piling

of incident upon incident in a concrete story line, will explore the Bengali existential dilemma and the social problems that Western influence and values cause for modern West Bengal—whether urban or rural. This seems a predictable movement for Bhairob, given his past work and the changing political and social climate in Bengal in the early 1970's. He felt that after the election of 1972, when the Congress Party won in the State of West Bengal, that perhaps people wanted 'peace' and his political message would have to take on a new form (*rupa*). His 'mission' will not change, only its form will.

Jatra playwrights in general, and Bhairob in particular, usually seem to have a character in their plays that acts as a 'mouthpiece.' Bhairob's mouthpieces are invariably litterateurs—either a poet, a novelist, a school master who also writes, or a dramatist. These characters express Bhairob's thoughts and sentiments, and they are always intended to be the character who 'demystifies' the social problems and cultural dilemmas that are the 'stuff' of most of his plays in general. In addition, he also always has a singer *vivek* who is poverty-stricken or a wandering religious mendicant; a revolutionary youth who is bent on reforming or transforming society; a representative of Bengali traditional values who defends them adamantly; a representative of Westernised Bengalis who have embraced Western values of capitalism and imperialism; and women who are a contrastive set of Westernised and Bengali ideals.

Bhairobda frequently sets his plays in urban industrialised Bengal, where the contrast between classes is evident. The behaviour and activities, to a certain extent however, are based on his experience of life in the jatra para and the jatra jagat. His knowledge of the Western life he portrays is informed by Western cinema and novels, rather than on direct experience with it. Nonetheless, a reading of one of his plays is both a

good social commentary on Bengali life and Bengali future, and a commentary and description of life in the jatra jagat.

The play that follows here is of just this type. I chose the play for inclusion in this document because it so appropriately presents the various points I have been trying to make throughout the thesis: it intertwines Bengali life and acting, cultural values and social life in modern Bengal, political issues and dogmas, and the theme of 'illusions' and 'realities' as expressed through the struggles and dilemmas of the characters who are confronting a changing Bengal. Some of the examples are pointed out in the introduction to the play, while some of the examples are elaborated in the annotations which follow the play. Between these statements, the play presents what should be grasped as a Bengali cultural practice and symbolic statement.

PART SEVEN:

THE PLAY

PANCH PAISER PRITHIBI

The Play

TRANSLATION OF

PANCH PAISER PRITHIBI

(THE WORLD OF FIVE PAISA)

by

SHRI BHAIROB GANGULY

with

Introduction and Explanatory Notes

" I shall tell daddy and write an article tomorrow."

Performed by

LOKA NATYA JATRA PARTY

INTRODUCTION

Keeping in mind that,

> Artistic creation in all its various forms can never be reduced to our present-day understanding of it nor to certain elements which are arbitrarily chosen from periods of the past. To be more precise, we cannot separate the imagination from the general influences active at the time when the work of art was created, because it is impossible to detach the imagination from social reality. We can only establish the extent to which a particular artistic expression is rooted in society by analysing all the social symbols which are crystallized in it and which it in turn crystallizes in its development.
>
> (Duvignaud 1972: 64)

what I am presenting in this part of the thesis by using a translation and annotation of one of the jatra plays that was popular during the time this research was carried out is an example of certain themes and contradictions as they were re-presented on the jatra stage by people living the jatra life-style explicated in the earlier parts of the thesis. I have tried to translate the play and annotate it considering the reality I experienced in Bengal in the early 1970's; here I refer the readers back to the statement on the Ethnographic Present given at the beginning of this document. Hence, not only the playwright's, actor's/ressés and audience's imaginations are considered, but my own as well.

This thesis has, through its metaphoric journey so far, attempted to reveal the importance of the jatra journey and exploration of Bengali cultural and existential dilemmas. The play *Panch Paiser Prithibi* provides vivid examples of playing with these dilemmas, contradictions and themes: Among the themes presented in this play are those of illusion and reality, the relationship between life and drama, being truly Bengali and the problems of Western influence and domination, truth and duplicity, and

conservative traditional forces and revolutionary ones. This play also is a good example of the way the world gets to be and is presented as reversed, upside-down, and mirrored, how dreams reveal and go awry, and how social criticism affects social practice, change, and meaning.

The author, Bhairob Ganguly (who was introduced in more detail in the previous section) is considered to be a 'powerful writer', and this play, a social drama, is one of the better examples of his art. He is skilled in weaving many themes and contradictions into his plays in several different ways—through language and dialogue, the linguistic elements, through character presentation and opposition, and through plot development. By pitting characters representing opposite qualities using various kinds of language and puns against each other both within and between scenes, Bhairob is able to take us on two journeys; one that begins with the contemplation of the relationship between life and drama, and the second one that begins with the contemplation of the results of the relationship between life and drama.

The play is framed or bounded by the rehearsal and re-enactment of the jatra play *Panch Paiser Prithibi*(The World for Five Paisa) that has been written by Bhairob's mouthpiece, the litterateur Mahesh Bhattacharya. The jatra play explores the consequences of both Mahesh's writing of the play within the play and his bringing together a group of people to perform the play—the social relationships created through the play. A litterateur has a tremendously important responsibility and is responsible for bringing about changes in people's lives and relationships (whether the author is Bhairob himself or his mouthpiece Mahesh). As early as Act I, Scene I, Mahesh states, ironically we learn later in the play, that " had it(the play) not been written by me, you would have not

performed it and no marriage between Kalyan and Manjusha would have taken place. My play not only brought pleasure to many, but blessing to many lives." Later in the play, when the duplistic behaviour of Kalyan has been revealed, Mahesh bemoans the activities of the 'plot creators', those who by writing scripts for people's lives actually affect them. We are reminded in each Act of this five-act drama that the characters are linked through the play within a play, just as the actors/resses are linked through the organisation of the jatra party, and people are linked through their social ties. Bhairob has created a play that emphasises the nature of the *maya* and *artha* of Bengali life by presenting the social ties, economic distinctions, and the consequences of both these in the connections between characters in the play in the same way that both jatra performers and owners are connected through the performance and the party, and spectators' lives are connected by being caught within the social and cultural world of modern Bengal.

The play is set in modern Bengal with frequent reminders of that fact and the relationships between Bengal and the Central Government and other outside more foreign influences. The character Brahmadatta, a person who plays with and comments on 'truth and false identity', sells a charm called the Apollo IX Charm in Act II, Scene Iv, and refers to the moon shots of the Americans and their Bengali contemplation and meaning, since they were current news when this play was written. The same character, when commenting on how the world has now become upside-down again, refers to the Central Government in the following way: "What about the mother goddess Kali, standing over the prostrate god, Shiva, her spouse—and what about Morarji Desai being defeated by Indira Gandhi?" Champa, the cabaret dancer and image of a too-Westernised woman, explains her lateness in terms of the processions that constantly stopped traffic

and movement within the city of Calcutta at that time. The characters in the play, the jatra actors/resses, and members of the audiences are not allowed to forget their mutual 'reality'.

The various themes, illusion vs. reality, truth vs. falsity, Bengäli values vs. Western ones, conservative forces vs. revolutionary ones, etc., are constantly interwoven and made metaphors for one another on many occasions, usually set within a frame of social criticism and commentary on Bengali life. A good example of how entangled the ideas become follows: Manimala and Mahesh (a Bengali married couple that feels the strains and tensions of living in modern Bengal) are discussing their relationship to the world and Manimala begins:

Manimala- Everything is going down, I say,— sinking.

Mahesh- What is going down?

Manimala- Our prestige, good name, respectability, everything.

Mahesh- This is the truth which makes me write, Mani.

Manimala- What are you writing?

Mahesh- Before the alm-houses of the 20th century stand millions of men and women, in long queues. They have lost their prestige, their caste and creed, nationality; for them life is dead a long time ago, with no trace. Yet they are standing. Expecting that the supermen of the high places will meet all their demands, will drive away all their wants, their poverty. Oh no—— you spineless fools. You don't get anything by begging. You unite, you be prepared, break the iron-gates of those high places by kicking hard, and take by force, the rights of your lives, of your livelihood.

Mahesh is pointing out the 'illusions' and 'realities' of the problems of the poor, those dominated by people who have lost their sense of Bengali truths and values, while at the same time pointing out the errors of the traditional responses to such people and problems. Later in Act II, Scene II, Mahesh again intertwines all themes. He says, "I not only want

to say the truth you know, I want to write about it. I will sit down and write, after coming back from the bazaar. Do you know who imported this fashion? From Britain, America, France, the captains of capitalism— they want to stop socialism and communism by infesting the whole world with the poison of fashion, luxury." He and Anjan, Bhairob's truly good Bengali revolutionary and social critic, agree that they must put aside the truth and stick only to that which is false— since the world runs backwards, upside-down and reversed. The play is filled with such concatenations of themes.

Mahesh also points out the contradictions of writing in a capitalist world where the writer must write what sells and what the publishers want to sell. Bhairob expressed to me on several occasions that he feels the constraints of writing within a certain genre, national setting and state governmental control, and a world he sees becoming too dominated by Western influences, as well as the constraints of writing for certain jatra owners, performers and audiences: Mahesh again voices many of these constraints, he says, " this time my writing is going to be acceptable stuff— is going to be highly readable. I am going to write love stories. Cheap love. The heroine will say ' I want money. Money can buy minds...'."

Panch Paiser Prithibi presents an exploration of the themes mentioned before through characterisation as well. Each of the female characters stands in opposition to the other female characters on several dimensions. Ivy, the too-Westernised daughter of the rich barrister, and Manjusha, the embodiment of Bengali feminine ideal behaviour and attitudes, are both fond of and associated with Anjan, the truly good Bengali revolutionary; revolution stands in the middle, between Bengali and Western values. Ivy and Manjusha also both have 'love' relationships

with Kalyan, the epitome of duplicity and false identity; here falsity stands in the middle between Bengali truths and Western influences. Ivy and Manjusha contrast also in their attachments and their family position and lives; Ivy is the daughter of a rich man and has good relations with her father, brothers and grandfather— not to mention a number of other male characters, whereas Manjusha is the daughter of a poor deceased second wife and has tense relations with her only living relative, a stepsister, Manimala. Manimala and Manjusha are opposed over making money and becoming rich: Manimala wants Manjusha to 'sell' herself to theatre and films; Manusha does not want to always 'act' but her 'life' chances force her to do so. It seems as though the female characters in the play can be seen as forming a continuum on the dimensions of more to less Bengali and less to more Western. Manjusha embodies all the Bengali important values, Manimala is a 'typical' Bengali urban housewife but she has become tainted by a wish for 'money' and Western things, Ivy is a Westernised girl from a family of means, and Champa is the most Westernised achieving her status by 'selling' herself— making her body a commodity.

The male characters similarly contrast with one another (as I pointed out above with regard to Kalyan and Anjan), but the interrelationships are more complex. Panasar, the traditional Brahmin, is Bengali conservative truth while Brahmadatta, the false astrologer and empty box salesperson, exposes the relationship between truth and falsity, between true identity and false disguise. Kalyan, Babul, and Projesh are embodiments of duplicity and disguise while Anjan, Panasar, Nigar, Mahesh, and Lotus are re-presentations of true Bengali characters. Sankar, the rich barrister who uses the law to free criminals, is a Westernised Bengali elite manipulator of lives while Mahesh, Bhairob's mouthpiece and litterateur, is a truly Bengali manipulator of lives. Anjan, Mahesh, and Panasar

(an interesting trio that unites revolutionary, literary and conservative forces) engage in social criticism while Kalyan, Sankar, Projesh and Malay engage in upholding the values of Westernising trends in Bengali society. There are many more combinations, oppositions, and contrasts that could be shown. but the detailed annotations that follow the translation of the play point these out in a systematic way.

The songs, strategically placed within the play, also point out the themes being explored throughout the play. There are songs about the lives of the proletariat, about the nature of truth and false identity, about the importance of 'magic', about modern love, and about the importance of correcting social ills. The singers of the songs are, for the most part, 'true, good, and Bengali' characters.

The choice of language and dialogue also demonstrates the various themes and contradictions discussed earlier. The dialogue given to various characters frequently makes explicit the contrast between truth and everything else, between Bengali-ness and everything else, and between 'reality'/ 'illusion' and everything else. For example, the exchange between Mahesh and Anjan that follows:

Mahesh- Not only you, my dear Salababu. The people of whole country have extended their necks to the slaughter house of falsehood. No one talks freely, and open-mindedly to others. All talk is false, all smiles are artificial.

Anjan- It has got to be so, Jamaibabu. It is due to the unbalanced society, that the royal gate of truth has been closed to every mind. Fathers, mothers, teachers, students, and even husbands and wives are keeping each other's company—with a large gap in between. This has created *a dangerous gap*, in social life.

Code switching (as shown in the previous line) between Bengali and English is very important. English is used to indicate both 'modernity' and

'falsity and domination'; each of these is meant to point out Western influence and opposition to Bengali traditions and truths, and Bengali cultural freedom. Code switching effectively demonstrates the forces that are at odds with one another; it is used by practically all characters for similar purposes. Bhairob is also a master punster, creating puns that bridge the various themes; he puns on commercial capitalism by using the sound similarity of the Bengali word *lābh* (profit) and the English word 'love', and he puns on tradition's authoritarianism by pointing out the sound similarity between the Bengali word for traditional law and the word for mirror (both of these examples are elaborated in the annotations that follow the translation).

The importance of both the opposition and dialectic between themes, characterisations, and language usages in dialogue is also demonstrated in the sequencing of scenes and acts. Each act of the play places contrasting images in sequential scenes; a scene in Mahesh's house and domain of exposing the relationships between characters and Bengali realities is followed by a scene in Sankar's house and domain of attachment to false Western values. Also, frequently, a scene involving Manjusha and Anjan is followed by a scene involving Ivy and Anjan. The introduction to the annotations for each scene points out the themes as they are manifested through the play in the manner explicated in the section on writing a jatra play.

With this as a general introduction to the play and the subtleties contained within it, I remind the reader that the annotations that follow the translation are detailed and make reference not only to things I have pointed out here, but also to things that are specific to a scene or set of dialogue. It is hoped that through reading the translation and the annotations that the relationship of the jatra to Bengali social and cultural life, as I have presented it through this thesis, is made even clearer.

PLAY TITLE PAGE

PANCH PAISER PRITHIBI

THE WORLD OF FIVE PAISE

SOCIAL DRAMA (*SAMAJIK NATAK*)

by

BHAIROB GANGOPADHYAYA

Performed with credit by the Famous Calcutta Troupe :

LOKA NATYA

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DRAMATIC PERSONNEL

MALES:

Panasar Chatterjee	A Devout Brahmin
Shankar Chatterjee	His son, a barrister
Projesh Chatterjee	Elder son of Shankar
Lotus Chatterjee	Younger son of Shankar
Anjan Bannerjee	Son of a friend of Shankar
Kalyan Majumdar	Friend of Anjan
Babul Das	Associate of Kalyan
Mahesh Bhattacharya	A Litterateur
Malay	A Drama Director
Mohan Das	A Musician
Nigar Hosan	A Gypsy
Brahmadatta	An Astrologer

FEMALES:

Ivy Chatterjee	Daughter of Shankar
Manjusha	Sister-in-law (WiSi) of Mahesh
Manimala	Wife of Mahesh
Sania	Granddaughter of Nigar Hosan

COMMENTS:

1) Anjan has additional important designations; he is in cousin and elder brother relationship with Manjusha and Manimala.

2) Babul Das is also a former student of Mahesh's.

3) The characters of the Play within the Play are: Kalyan= Joyanta Chaudhury; Manjusha=Manika; Mohan=Palash, the baul; and their is reference to Manika's son.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE MAKE-UP OF CHARACTERS

1) PANASAR CHATTERJEE- Aged seventy or more--Serene looking, good-natured, deeply religious, conservative, dressed in a dhoti-Panjabi with Chaddar (typical Bengali elderly dress).

2) SHANKAR CHATTERJEE- Aged about fifty--Handsome, hot-tempered, very modernist in everything, wears European dress (suit, coat, trousers, shirt, necktie, etc.) and at home a dressing gown, sometimes wears a dhoti and Panjabi.

3) PROJESH CHATTERJEE- Aged about 25 years--Handsome, agressively modern, his lust for women is very acute, wears a suit or Panjabi and Pyjamas(common dress for even modern Bengali young men).

4) LOTUS CHATTERJEE-Aged about 10 years--Good-looking, sweet-natured, dresses sometimes in shorts and half-sleeved shirts, sometimes in a suit.

5) IVY CHATTERJEE- About 18 years--A beautiful girl, a restless girl rather agressive in her ways, too much of a modernist, much too eager for male company, dresses in bell-bottomed trousers, top-less* gowns, sarwar and Panjabi.

6) ANJAN BANNERJEE- Aged about 25 years--good-looking, good-natured, benevolent and loyal to friends, social worker, dresses in dhoti and Panjabi or pyjamas.

7) KALYAN MAJUMDAR- About 30 years--Handsome, licentious, a veritable liar, agressively modern, lusts after women, dresses sometimes in panjabi and pyjamas, sometimes in a suit.

8) BABUL DAS- Aged about 25 years--Good-looking, restless, liar, expert at being in disguise, wears suit, pants and shirts, and sometimes panjabi-pyjamas.

9) MAHESH BHATTACHARYA-Aged about 40 years-- Good-looking, good-natured, outspoken, emotional, dresses in panjabi-pyjamas or suit.

10) MALAY-Aged about 30 years-- Good---looking, fond of acting, licentious, liar, dresses in a suit or panjabi/pyjamas.

11) MOHAN- Aged about 30 years--Middling-looking, fond of music, sweet-spoken, wears a dhoti with a shirt.

12) BRAHMADATTA- Aged about 50 years--Ugly-looking, liar, clever-talker, dresses in dhoti, chaddar and panjabi, sometimes uses a scarf on which the name of Hari(Krishna) is printed,called Namaboli.

* Note:- Bhairob does not mean literally top-less here, rather he has picked up the useage from the Calcutta caberets and Western cinemas. He assumed that it meant with too much skin showing, not nude.

13) NIGAR HOSAN-Aged about 50 years-Good-looking, bearded, good-natured, outspoken, courageous, dressed like a Gypsy.

14) MANIMALA-Aged about 30 years-Middling-looking, wicked-natured, ambitious, liar, sharp-tongued, dresses in sari, blouse and uses slippers as her foot-wear.

15) SANIA- Aged about 20 years-beautiful girl, very youthful, restless, full of fun and a good sport, capable of loving intensely, dresses like a Gypsy-girl.

16) MANJUSHA- Aged about 17 years-beautiful girl, sweet-natured, capable of deep love, fond of the art of acting, usual dress of a sweet Bengali girl, sari and blouse and chappals(sandals).

THE PLAY

P.1. ACT I, SCENE I -- The Club-room of the Sabuj Samiti*

Aftering entering, Manjusha is rehearsing the character she is playing in the play enacted by the club-she is Manika.

MANJUSHA- world worth five paisa only. This five-paisa-worth which is nothing but this slum, which is represented by this slum...as I am a slum-girl, so I have been thrown away and left by him like a leaf-plate[1], used. In answer to my questions, questions flooded by my tears, he only said this...this dirty slum of yours is to me.....

Enter Mohan, playing the part of a baul, mendicant singer, singing.

The Song

MOHAN-

A World Worth Five Paisa..
Here, there is neither any light or good.
And all the pictures it paints are dark.
Like dogs they lick the used leaf-plates
left in the drains.
And they are such people whose life-story remains
unmentioned by any history.
They are people of whom no account is taken, they
are the proletariat[2].
Who are denied claim to anything.

P.2 (When Mohan is about to leave, Manjusha calls to him)

MANJUSHA- Listen!

MOHAN- Who is there? You Manika? Why are you standing here?

MANJUSHA- I have got to do something, so I am here.

MOHAN- What kind of a job are you to perform?

MANJUSHA- I shall tell you afterwards.

MOHAN- But why are you standing alone in the evening's darkness?

MANJUSHA- Tell me Palashda[3] what to do, do I murder somebody?

MOHAN- Murder---are you---

MANJUSHA- You mean to say--mad--is it not, Palashda? (laughs loudly) Maybe I have gone mad.

MOHAN- Didn't I tell you, then, not to have any faith in the progeny of any rich man? They are capable of any and every sort of desiring.
(Exits)

MANJUSHA- They are capable of everthing and anything. But are we not capable of doing something? Am I not capable of doing something? There comes Joyanta Chaudhury, the lecherous fellow. I am going to teach him a lesson today.

Enters Kalyan Majumdar, dressed very modernly.

KALYAN- What lesson do you intend to teach me, Manika?

MANJUSHA- Stop, hold your tongue! Don't you dare to address me by my name.[4]

KALYAN- *What! Do you think me a coward?* Do you think me a coward?

MANJUSHA- You are not only a coward, but also a beast.

P.3 KALYAN- Manika!

MANJUSHA- No, I am no longer Manika, I am now a witch (daini).

KALYAN- A witch!

MANJUSHA- It was you who turned me into a witch. It was due to you that I lost everything. After sucking the honey of my mind[5] and making my mind run dry, you only laughed at me and said...this dirty slum of yours is not worth

more than five paisa (Manjusha suddenly tries to stick a dagger into Kalyan's breast, but she can't do it and stops)

Enters Anjan Bannerjee (Bhairob makes an error here as Chatterjee, but he must mean Bannerjee)

ANJAN- Drive the dagger home--strike in the middle of the breast.

MANJUSHA-[6] Oh, I can't do it.

ANJAN- Why?

MANJUSHA- I am feeling terribly afraid.

KALYAN- Feeling afraid!

MANJUSHA- Don't I feel afraid? What if the dagger really cut through your breast?

KALYAN
ANJAN - (both laugh loudly)

MANJUSHA- Oh, my, my! Both of you are laughing so much! Listen Anjan, I am not going to strike any dagger on anyone's breast! Better change this part of the scene-striking the dagger.

ANJAN- You silly girl. This is the same as adding *beauty*[7] to the play "Panch Paiser Prithibi".

MANJUSHA- God save me, Anjanda. Let me do without that *beauty*.

P.4 ANJAN- My goodness! But this is nothing but acting. If you are to be overpowered by fear or shame while acting--

MANJUSHA- The character you are playing can't come out with *success*.

KALYAN- *That's a fact*. You are doing everything wonderfully, now if you can make *prominent* this incident of the dagger-striking in the first scene, everything will be a *hundred percent success*.

MANJUSHA- But---

ANJAN- No buts, Manjusha. The show is only a few days ahead. Now don't you create any trouble and let us down, when everything's prepared.

KALYAN- Listen Anjan! You better make her understand well the character she is playing, that of Manika.

MANJUSHA- I now perfectly well understand the character of Manika. But about the character of Joyanta Chaudhury---

ANJAN- Don't you understand that Joyanta Chaudhury is a dangerous character?

Manjusha says with coquettish laughter

MANJUSHA- Listen to what he is saying about you (addressing Kalyan). After inviting you to come here from Calcutta, now he is (meaning Anjan) making most unkind remarks about you.

ANJAN - Jokes apart, Manjusha--now listen carefully---

MANJUSHA- I am listening.

ANJAN- Joyanta Chaudhury is not a good fellow. If he comes across a beautiful girl---

MANJUSHA- He loses his head--is it not? (she laughs)

ANJAN- Please, no more jokes.

KALYAN- Can't help it[8], I think. She is young.

MANJUSHA- Stop, please, you venerable gentleman. Go ahead, Anjan, and tell me! This time I am going to listen very carefully. As you were saying about Joyanta Chaudhury---

P.5 ANJAN- At the very first sight of Manika, he was charmed.

MANJUSHA- As I am playing the part of Manika---

ANJAN- So you are now Manika.

MANJUSHA- Well I accept the fact that I am Manika.

KALYAN- I, in the role of Joyanta Chaudhury, began to plan how to seduce you.

MANJUSHA- And so you began to send to me, saris and blouses and and scented hair-oils, etc. through Mithua[9].

ANJAN- And you also did not refuse any of those things.

MANJUSHA- How could I do so? At that time I failed to understand his design.

ANJAN- Therein lies the fun---

KALYAN- And I, as Joyanta Chaudhury, was under the impression--

MANJUSHA- That I was dying for your love.

KALYAN- Exactly. And then taking the opportunity, I seduced you with sweet words and lined the palm of your uncle[10] with money.

ANJAN- And you got married to him.

KALYAN- Just after a year you--I mean--

ANJAN- You, I mean--

MANJUSHA-(Heaving with laughter) Don't you try to elaborate, Anjanda--better stop--No more need for your *direction*. I understand perfectly what you were driving at.

ANJAN- Tell me, what have you understood?

MANJUSHA- That I became a mother. As soon as the son was born to me, then he (Joyanta) left me in the lurch, and ran away.

ANJAN- And you went mad, pining for your husband.

P.6 MANJUSHA- Has got to be so!--Afterall, he was my husband.

KALYAN- OK OK Now you can---

MANJUSHA- Now I will not hesitate (or have nay fear about) to stick a dagger into my unfaithful husband.

KALYAN
ANJAN- Manjusha![11]

MANJUSHA- On the night of the performance, you will see that I, after pushing the dagger nicely into the breast of this disloyal Joyanta Chaudhury, will say--You, after robbing me of my mind's honey, told me laughingly--This dirty world is to you not worth more than five paisa.
(Exits)

KALYAN- All right--Anjan, is she aware of the fact?

ANJAN- No, I have not yet told her yet. I think I shall tell her today.

Enters Maheshbabu

MAHESH- There is no need for taking the trouble my brother-in-law.[12]

ANJAN- What do you mean?

MAHESH- I, myself, have told Manjusha.

ANJAN
KALYAN- When?

MAHESH- Just now.

ANJAN- My goodness!--

MAHESH- Well Salababu[12]. Auspicious acts should not be delayed. I have decided.

P.7 ANJAN- What have you decided?

MAHESH- That the auspicious act must be finished tomorrow[13].

ANJAN- Do you mean to say that the marriage ceremony will take place tomorrow?

MAHESH- Yes. Tomorrow is a very auspicious day. Now, if Kalyan-babu has no objection---

ANJAN- Kalyan---

KALYAN- No, I have not any objection, Maheshbabu.

ANJAN- OK. OK. Jamaibabu[14] --you get prepared. Now I am going to see Maladi[15], and tell her to blow the conch-shell[16]. Tomorrow is Manjusha going to be married to Kalyan.

KALYAN- Please do stop, Anjan.

ANJAN- Why should I stop? Don't you know how happy I am feeling? Manjusha, going to marry a rich man like you-- You, immensely rich-- Believe me, Kalyan, I could not even imagine that.

MAHESH- Anjan, you are a man interested in *science*--but me? I, in my stories and novels, have married innumerable girls to innumerable boys in innummerable ways. But the marriage of Manjusha to Kalyanbabu is more wonderful than all of them.

ANJAN- Manjusha is really very lucky. Due to her good luck she is going to be married to a boy like Kalyan.

KALYAN- You are making too much of me, Anjan. Am I a prince?

ANJAN- Not a prince, yet----

MAHESH- Certainly the son of a minister.

P.8 ANJAN- Yes, Jamaibabu. His family has a very big mansion. They have at least three cars-- and Kalyan himself does not know how much money is invested in businesses. Even his uncle loses account of the vast sum.

KALYAN- Don't be silly! Go Maheshbabu, you then---

MAHESH- Yes, let me take care of the necessary jobs. But yet do you know Salababu what happened to my play "Panch Paiser Prithibi?"[17] Had it not been written by me, you would not have performed it and no marriage between Kalyan and Manjusha would have taken place. My play not only brought pleasure to many, but blessing to many lives.

(exits)

ANJAN- What are you thinking, Kalyan?

KALYAN- Thinking that I should better go to Calcutta at once.

ANJAN- Why?

KALYAN- Need some hard cash, don't you know.

ANJAN- Nothing more to say?

KALYAN- I have got something to say.

ANJAN- What?

KALYAN- Accept my heart-felt congratulations, my friend, at this time of the evening on such an auspicious day. (Shakes hands and then goes away)

ANJAN- What a good, simple young man is this Kalyan Majumdar.
P.9 Manjusha is really lucky. Otherwise why should he see and admire and choose Manjusha, when he came here to rehearse for the play "Panch Paiser Prithibi"? But would Manjusha play the part of Manika after getting married?[18] Let the marriage be solemnised first. About Manika--

Manjusha enters again

MANJUSHA- About Manika we can bother later.

ANJAN- Manju!

MANJUSHA- What I have heard from Jamaibabu, is there any truth in it?

ANJAN- Yes, it is true. Do you know, Manju, Kalyan is an excellent boy.

MANJUSHA- On what date is the marriage to take place?

ANJAN- Tomorrow.

MANJUSHA- Strange! You have made all the arrangements, almost to the finish rather secretively. You have brought my didi here, yet I was the one who was left in the dark.

ANJAN- Manju, I did not want to tell you deliberately, as I wanted to spring a surprise on you. I thought that you would happy at the news.

MANJUSHA- Anjanda!

ANJAN- Of course, I did not know that the marriage would take place tomorrow.

MANJUSHA- You do not know many things, Anjanda!

ANJAN- Manju!

MANJUSHA- You fail to observe many things.

P.10 ANJAN- What do you mean?

MANJUSHA- You are sort of blind.

ANJAN- What are you talking about?

MANJUSHA- You have made a big mistake.

ANJAN- Made a mistake---the---no, Manju, no. I made no mistake. I did the right thing.

MANJUSHA- Did the right thing?

ANJAN- Look here, Manju. Your father, on his death bed[19] wanted to meet me and when I saw him he said, "Anjan look after my Manju, whom I am leaving behind." I have not forgotten his last words, Manju. I am now obeying the order of that late uncle of mine, by arranging a marriage between Kalyan and you.

MANJUSHA- Anjanda!

ANJAN- I don't know what you really want, Manju. But I want you to be happy, Manju. And I firmly believe that by the blessings of my late uncle and aunt, you will be happy, by having a husband like Kalyan. You will really be happy.
(Exits)

MANJUSHA- I do not know what happiness is. But I have come to know what sorrow is again. I thought that Anjanda had come to know what was within my innermost mind, the unspoken words there by his own mind, mentally within himself. But what---am I to do now? Now, at this moment of doom, how can I tell him, "Anjanda you never cared to know that it was you whom I loved."
(Exits)

P.11 ACT I, SCENE II -- The House of Maheshbabu*

Malay enters, reading a book.

MALAY- I loved, but the person who I loved could never know it (shuts the book).[1] Holy father! What kind of love is this?

Manimala enters, carrying a small bundle.

MALA- A kind of 'retail' love.[2]

MALAY- You, Malaboudi[3].

MALA- Yes, Malay Thakurpo[4]. Love is of two kinds--one retail, the other wholesale.[5]

MALAY- But what are you carrying in your hand?

MALA- I really don't know what it contains. I found it laying on the street and I picked it up.

MALAY- Not a bundle carrying banknotes, I presume?

MALA- Better let us open it and see what it contains.

Enter the astrologer Brahmandatta.

BRAHMA- Don't you touch another man's property--if you do doom will visit you overnight.

MALAY- What are you driving at?

MALA- Maybe he is quoting from the utterances of Khana[6].

BRAHMA- Excuse me---this is my own utterance(saying).

MALA
MALAY- May we know who you are?

BRAHMA- I am Jyotishyunabe Tantracharya Brahmadatta Vidyabagish.[7]

MALAY- And then your name in *short-cut* is...

MALA- Brahmadaitya.[8]

BRAHMA- I beg to be excused--I am not Brahmadaitya, but rather am Brahmadatta.

MALAY- Now, what brings you here?

BRAHMA- Well, *sir*, to take away something...

MALA- What is the thing?

BRAHMA- That bundle. That is mine. It fell on the street.

MALAY- How could you know that we had picked it up?

BRAHMA- By making astrological calculations.

MALA- Astrological calculations!

BRAHMA- Yes. I made calculations and could know that it was you who had picked it up.

MALA- Thakurpo, listen to what he says--what kind of a person is he?

MALAY- Clearly a 420[9].

BRAHMA- No, No, sir listen, I am---

MALAY- Please, do stop. Can you provide us with any proof to show that the bundle really belongs to you?

MALA- Is there any proof?

BRAHMA- Yes, there is. You will see my name written on it.

MALAY- But how are we to verify that you are truely[10] the person called Brahmadatta?

BRAHMA- There is verification at my house.

P.13 MALA- In your house--where is it situated?

BRAHMA- In the locality where I live.

MALAY- But--what locality?

BRAHMA- The locality where I have my ashram[11] (hermitage).

MALA- Ashram--what kind of ashram?

BRAHMA- It is called 'DashaKarma'[12] Ashram.

MALA
MALAY_ DashaKarma!

BRAHMA- Yes, it is so. Now, listen to what is done there--Fortune-telling, reading the horoscope according to the diagram of the relative positions of planets and signs of the zodiac at a specific time, the foretelling about a person's life in every year, foretelling of the political and other situations on earth every year, foretelling about the prospect of rain in the crops, making a list of auspicious days, pacifying the evil planets, specifying what kind of amulets are to be used for specific aims, reading of the palm, lastly, foretelling about whether one can win prizes of state lotteries.

MALA- Malay Thakurpo! Give him back his bundle, quickly. I want to have my palm read by him.

MALAY- Here--take your bundle.

BRAHMA- Thank God! Remember the saying--when Tuesday night ends and the dawn of Wednesday begins--that is the most auspicious moment.[13]

MALA- Please read my palm.

BRAHMA- But don't forget to pay for my services.

MALA- Certainly, I will pay. But read my palm before.

All of a sudden Brahmadatta catches hold of Mala's right hand--and he begins by saying....

BRAHMA-[14] At the moment of birth the mark was that of Cancer, the Crab.. then the influence of Rakshasha Gana...The present stage of life which is past the eighteenth stage in the light of astrology indicates the influence of Saturn, and in the twentieth stage the influence of the Sun is indicated. The moment of death is unauspicious and on the lunar day called Jogani, when the moon is found in the north-east corner of the sky---

P.14 MALA-
MALAY- What are you talking about?

BRAHMA- A person born under the Zodiac sign of Cancer, is physically influenced by the eighth planet, Rahu[15] ... If totally influenced by Saturn, misfortune is indicated. Many ailments, like pains, tooth ache, head ache are indicated. If married, the spouse may suffer from bad health.

MALA- Tell me about money.

BRAHMA- I am going to tell you--to tell you. Well--Mars is looking favourably on you from afar, but due to the presence of the eighth planet, Rahu, cannot come nearer and have more influence. Yet, there will be money coming.

MALA- Is it so? money coming?

MALAY- From which side is it coming?

BRAHMA- From underneath.

MALAY- From the nether world--crushing the earth above, is it not so?

MALA- Don't be joking Thakurpo, he is telling the truth.

BRAHMA- Ha! Ha! Ha! (laughs) I, not telling the truth?-- It simply can't be--what I tell comes to be true-My name is Jyotishyunabe Tantracharya Mahamohapadhyaya Brahmadatta Vidyabagish[16].

MALAY- You think that you can bluff safely--you fellow?

BRAHMA- What do you mean?

MALAY- Remember you are reading the palm of a lady--but you are not aware which hand you are reading the palm from--

MALA- My goodness, how is that! You have read the right hand.

BRAHMA- Yes, reading the right hand palm.

MALA- But that is not the custom--is it not?

P.15 BRAHMA- But at present it is allowed. The modern age is an age when everything must be done the other way around[17]. At present females are dominating males.

MALAY- You hypocrite--this is no place for playing your tricks. Reading the right hand palm of a lady and saying that the health of your Patni[18] will not be good-- how is that?

BRAHMA- As I have told you--at present everything is topsy-turvy.

MALAY- Now clear away----At present everything is upside down? Females dominating males?

BRAHMA- Do you want any proof?

MALA-
MALAY- Yes we do.

BRAHMA- What about the mother goddess, Kali, standing over the prostrate god, Shiva, her spouse--and what about Morarji Desai being defeated by Indira Gandhi?[19]
(Exits)

Enters, Maheshbabu

MAHESH- Manimala!

MALA- Why Manimala? Didn't I tell you the other day to address me simply as Mani?

MAHESH- Well, I will try to do so.

MALA- Don't you say-you will try. You do it, because to shorten your name is the fashion of the day.[20] You should also change your name.

P.16 MAHESH- Change my name?

MALA- Yes...Publish an affidavit in the newspaper declaring that you have changed your name. What do you suggest Thakurpo?

MAHESH- Well!

MALAY- What is the matter Maheshda?

MAHESH- I am thinking.

MALA- Thinking of what?

MAHESH- Do one thing, Manimala. Don't simply have my name changed--change me for someone else.

MALAY- (laughs)

MALA- Did I ever mean that? All right, I will never ask you again. I promise, and if I do---

MAHESH- Listen--I have something to say.

MALA- Something to say!

MAHESH- Yes, I mean I have some news.

MALA- What news?

MAHESH- Bad news.

MALAY- Maheshda!

MAHESH- No bad news for you, Malay.

MALA- Then, for whom?

MAHESH- Bad news, regarding Manju

MALA- What happened to her? Is her son alright?[21]

MALAY- Good gracious--a son by this time!

MALA- Why not? They are (meaning here Manju and Kalyan) are a boy and girl of the modern type[22]...Besides that---

P.17 MAHESH- Leave aside all the small talk. Listen carefully. The identity given by Kalyan Majumdar is entirely false.[23]

MALAY-
MALA- How is that?

MAHESH- Yes. Not to speak of having a house and a car--even the name given by him was not his real name.

MALA- Who gave you the news?

MAHESH- Anjan.

MALA- That young man is the cause of the ruin of Manju.

MALAY- Even the other day, Anjanbabu told us that Kalyanbabu is the son of a very rich man--car--house--big business-

MAHESH- The real news leaked out only yesterday.

MALA- Oh that explains why Jamaibabu never cared to take Manju to Calcutta. What a shame, what a shame! What difficulties for us. The wretched girl has been making my life miserable. With what luck I was born--now I have to suffer a lot for the sake of my step-sister. What can I say about my father? He at the old age---

MAHESH- Oh, no! I can't stand elders being insulted.

MALAY- That is true--after all he was your father.

MALA- Father--enemy of a father. [24]

MAHESH- Listen Manimala! The responsibility of Manju---

MALAY- You mean to say--it is your(Mahesh) responsibility and she(Manimala) should not worry.

MALA- If I don't, then who should? tell me!

P.18 MALAY- Why, Maheshda?

MALA- As my ill luck would have it--as if he is capable of doing so--

MAHESH- Manimala!

MALA- Had the play, "Panch Paiser Prithibi"[25] not been written by you, and your fancy for such things, then this shameless thing would not have happened. I had the idea that it was Anjan who would marry Manju, Everything was upset by your "Panch Paiser Prithibi".

MAHESH- What harm could "Panch Paiser Prithibi" bring to you?

MALA- Nothing. Only it has placed on my head a burden weighing about 5 kilograms. To hell with the poor girl, now give me.....

MAHESH- Give you what?

MALA- Money, money. Today is the day to draw our ration of rice[26]. Don't you remember?

MALAY- Oh yes-- this reminds me, boudi (about to leave)

MAHESH- Listen Malay!

MALAY- I have not even five paisa on my person, Maheshda.

MAHESH- I will repay you tomorrow, Malay.

MALAY- Do you know Maheshda, how much money you have borrowed from me---saying you would pay it back the next day?

MAHESH- Of course, I have kept an account.

MALAY- Those who do not take account of their lives--how could they keep account of anything?

P.19 MAHESH- You are mistaken, Malay! If you do not lose account of your own life you cannot keep account of others.[27]

MALA- Do please stop--don't indulge in literary flourishes every now and then.

MALAY- Yes Maheshda. I really do not care much for literature and I fail to appreciate yours.

MALA- Better not try to understand it. Now please lend me some money.

MALAY- I beg to be pardoned, boudi, I am unable to lend you money. I think from tomorrow, I should stop coming to your place.

MALA- Will you stop coming here for the sake of a handful of money?

MALAY- Boudi, you do not know the world, do you? We are very practical--for the sake of money we can give up our parents, family, everything; not to speak of you. Alright, I am leaving--is it all right?[28]
(Exits)

MALA- Everything is going down, I say sinking.

MAHESH- What is going down?

MALA- Our prestige, good name, respectability, everything.

MAHESH- This is the truth which makes me write, Manimala.[29]

MALA- What are you writing?

MAHESH- Before the alms-houses of the 20th century stand millions of men and women, in long queues. They have lost their prestige, their caste and creed, nationality; for them life is dead a long time ago, with no trace. Yet they are standing. Expecting that the supermen of the high

places will meet all of their demands, will drive away all their wants, their poverty. Oh no-- you backboneless(spineless) fools. You don't get anything by begging. You unite, you be prepared, break the iron-gates of those high-places by kicking hard, and take by force, the rights of your life, of your livelihood.[30]

MALA- You are making stories out of such stuff?

MAHESH- Stories (laughs)! There is no story in it---

MALA- No story?

MAHESH- No, there is not. There is no story about the poor, foodless people of India, no poetry in their life, no life to be made out of it at all. There are only thousands of problems. I am creating a new literature for these problem-ridden, skeleton-like human beings. By reading the literature of death that I write, they will find new meaning in life.[31]

MALA- Have you found the meaning in your own life? The meaning of yourself? Do you know what will happen to Manjusha?

MAHESH- Manjusha--

MALA- You, yourself--

MAHESH- I, myself---

MALA- Me---

MAHESH- You--

MALA- Shelve your literature for a while. Just do a little bit of mathematical calculations, and find the account find out who we are, what we are, where are we?

MAHESH- Who, what, where are we? That is calculation. From literature to mathematics. From the sea to the Sahara desert. So from tomorrow our household just won't move. Yet, you men of that high-house, seven-storied[32] house, you do not care to know our state, even in your dreams of very simple arithmetic. We have only five paisa and they have at least a half-a-million(five laks). They add--we deduct. So our children can't even buy a pencil for want of five paisa-and their sons and daughters then wait for their lovers, dressed in saris worth five hundred rupees.[33]

(Exit)

P.21 ACT I, SCENE III -- The House of Panasar Chatterji*

Enters Ivy, dressed in a costly suit

IVY- Premik[1]...*I mean lovers...yes, I am still waiting for Him!* I am waiting for Anjan! But why hasn't he turned up yet? All right, I am not going to spare him with leniency.

Enters Projesh, dressed in a Western-style suit.

PROJESH- *No, my dear sister.*

IVY- *What?*

PROJESH- You won't be able to defeat Anjan.

IVY- Certainly, I will be able.

PROJESH- Never. *Eat what you can digest.*

Enters Lotus

LOTUS- What do you mean?

PROJESH- Jaha harjam karitea para, tahole ashar kanna (direct translation of the previous sentence into Bengali)

IVY- Are you taking me for a coward?

PROJESH- Never. *But your mind is very weak for Anjan.*

Ivy- Dada--

PROJESH- *How strange, dear sister,* even now your face is covered by blushing.

LOTUS- Yes, because she blushes our grandfather says--

PROJESH- What does he say?

Enters Panasarbabu

PANASAR- That to have a sense of shame is a virtue which must be possessed by women.

IVY- *Absurd!* It is shame which brings disaster to women.

PANASAR- My child, I know you will speak like that, since you have a little bit of English education.[2]

PROJESH- Has Ivy said any nonsense?

PANASAR- Am I mad...or you? You Western-educated persons, do I dare to say that you can utter nonsense? All the nonsenses have been uttered only by the wise men, the Sages of India. All nonsense is to be found in ancient Indian scriptures.

PROJESH- Your religion be damned!; not to speak of your scriptures.

PANASAR- Should I tell you the naked truth?

P.23 IVY-
PROJESH- What is that?
LOTUS-

PANASAR- Most probably, Indians are not really human beings.[3]

PROJESH- How could you insult your own country?

IVY- Grandpa is anti-national.

LOTUS- Grandpa is an uneducated fellow.

PANASAR- Ha! Ha! Ha! (laughs) I am really an uneducated fellow. But the words of this uneducated fellow are not really untrue.[4]

PROJESH- What are those words?

PANASAR- India is now like a big railway station platform. *The express of Yankee culture* is waiting there and the ghost-like persons of India are trying to scramble inside the compartments.

IVY- You are really mad, grandpa.

PANASAR- Tell me, where are those persons who are lost, who rushed to sacrifice their lives for others? Where has that song been lost? The song which sang of doing good to humanity? Will the sons, like Vidyasagar, not be born again, here in India? Billions of men are in a state of stupor, and will nobody tell them to-------[5]

Lotus begins singing

The Song

LOTUS- Don't be sleeping any longer.
How much longer will you be sleeping, oh you dispossessed of the country?
P.24 Awake, arise, look the sun is up.
And the bugle is sounding all around.
Time for breaking the iron-prison has come.[6]

Enters Sankarbabu

SHANKAR- *Stop...stop....my boy. Don't continue* such dirty songs.

IVY- *Do you know, daddy,* that granddad of ours is determined to turn Lotus into something of a common person.[7]

PROJESH- I told you about this danger, a long time ago.

SHANKAR- *Yes, my boy. You are right.* You have said the right thing. *You, Lotus*...go and attend to your studies. *Lose no time. Go!*

LOTUS- Grandpa, I am leaving--
(exits)

PANASAR- Go, my child. Maybe, you will go astray if you stay near me anymore.

SHANKAR- You are interferring.

PANASAR- What do you mean?

SHANKAR- Unfortunately you have not studied *law*.[8] Panasar--*law*--

PROJESH- Well, it is an English word.

IVY- The Bengali word for it is *Aiân*.

SHANKAR- *Yes...Aian*. Had you studied law you would have been aware of a word called *jurisdiction. And everybody has to abide by it*. And everybody has to abide by it.

P.25 PANASAR- Is that so?

SHANKAR- *And you have gone beyond your jurisdiction.*

PANASAR- I have gone beyond my jurisdiction.

IVY-
PROJESH- Grandpa!

PANASAR- The son is trying to teach the father, law. And without having any sense of what law really means.

SHANKAR- What are you talking about?

PANASAR- I am not talking nonsense, Shankar. You indulge in legal jargon to send innocent men to prison, defending persons who are really guilty, and what does this precious law really mean--tell me?

SHANKAR- What?

PANASAR- This law of yours means lawlessness, illegality.[9]

SHANKAR-
IVY-
PROJESH *Aian hin.* Lawlessness, illegality!

PANASAR- Today's India presents a picture of lawlessness, lack of rules and conduct, indiscipline. By preaching Yankee versions of democracy, by indulging in political horse-trading, by making constitutions according to your sweet will, you have turned innumerable men and women of India, which was a godly country, into non-human beings. Take care now, even now the time for saving us is not past.[10]
(Exits.)

IVY- The old man is suffering from dotage.

PROJESH- The adage is--Don't become eighty!

P.26 SHANKAR- Your granddad has become a real problem.

IVY- Can't you send him to our country-house?

PROJESH- *Or transfer* him to our garden-house?

SHANKAR- Before that, another thing must be done.

PROJESH- What is to be done?

IVY- Tell us, *daddy*.

SHANKAR- I should like to change the name of this house from 'Panasar Bhavan' to...

PROJESH- Want to change the word 'Bhavan' to *'Mansion'* ?

IVY- No. No longer after granddad's name, but after daddy's name--What about calling it Shankar's Villa?

SHANKAR- Something better than that.

IVY-
PROJESH- Suggesting what?

SHANKAR- Kabita Cottage.

PROJESH- After the name of our mother!?

IVY- *Sure*. Daddy used to love mother very much.

PROJESH- Ivy!

IVY- Yes. The way I love Anjan, daddy used to love mother that way.

PROJESH- Please do stop, you girl.

SHANKAR- (laughs) Projesh is feeling bashful. *No, no..my boy.* Bhalobasha...*I mean love...is always sweet.* Don't you spoil it by your sense of shame. What do you say, Ivy?

IVY- *Definitely.* Let us go now.

P.27 SHANKAR- Where to?

IVY- *Let us play bridge for a while.* Anjan has not yet arrived, and I feel rather depressed.

SHANKAR- *Don't you think anything of it, my girl! He is coming...*

Enters Anjan.

ANJAN- I have come a long time ago, uncle!

SHANKAR- *Very good, my boy. Come before,* run before,*always* try to be *first.*

ANJAN- But---

SHANKAR- *That's very bad.* That was the matter of contention between your uncle and myself. He was of the opinion that one should think before one starts doing something, and I was of the opinion that if one starts thinking one can't start doing anything. You have got to be in the thick of the battle, taking courage. *No risk, no gain.* (laughs)

11

IVY- You are keeping in good health, Shankar?

SHANKAR- *Very good, my girl.* You are rightly careful. Now I must leave. *By the by,* one more word. You must stay away from your grandfather. That gentleman wants to put the clock back. *That's very bad. I have never seen a greater fool than he.* I have never seen a greater fool than he.
(Exits)

IVY- *Daddy's principle* and my principle is the *same.*

ANJAN- Ivy!

P.28 PROJESH- She has told the truth, Anjan. Granddad is the 'horns of a dilemma' to us.

IVY- *Ohvay sankat--means the horns of a dilemma.*

PROJESH- I must make a move.

ANJAN- No, listen Projesh!

PROJESH- *You are quite a fool.*

ANJAN- Projesh!

PROJESH- Ivy was looking at her watch every now and then, waiting for you, and she was yawning too. So I want you to have your chance.
(Exits)

IVY- Are you feeling very elated and happy at what dada has just told you?

ANJAN- Ivy, happiness is not a thing which can be measured.

IVY- Happiness can't be suppressed, either, *my darling.*
(She takes a hold of Anjan's hands)

ANJAN- Ivy!

IVY- Your looks betray it.

ANJAN- Can you guess one's mind by his looks?

IVY- *Definitely. The face is the mirror of the heart. Mukh maner ainya.*[12]

ANJAN- Are you talking about winning the battle of life?

IVY- Won't you listen to how somebody has been defeated in her life?

ANJAN- Tell me.

Suddenly Ivy embraces Anjan[13] and says emotionally...

IVY- You are the first man in my life.

P.29 ANJAN- Please stop it now, Ivy (he is released, and he stands at a distance.

Ivy begins to sing...

The Song

IVY- Come near, do not go far away, do not stay away,
Do not go back at this time, season of the mind[14]
being given.
Look at the bosom of the flower.
Don't ask why, with what whim and happiness.
The bee has planted its kiss, and don't take
notice of it.

While Ivy is singing she takes hold of Anjan's hands, and Anjan is annoyed and says....

ANJAN- I don't like this Ivy!

Ivy thinks Anjan is merely feeling bashful, and she goes on singing...

IVY- Oh why this bashfulness
You can take verything you desire
Take whatever you like, tell me why sleep
avoids me. [15]

ANJAN- Ivy. I can't sleep.

IVY- Why?

ANJAN- I have been robbed of my sleep.

IVY- Who robbed it?

ANJAN- That loafer and scoundrel, Kalyan Majumdar. I had faith in him, and believing him I only smashed to pieces the golden throne of Manju's mind. It is due to me that the poor girl has lost everything she had acquired.

IVY- Then the identity of Kalyanbabu is absolutely false?

P.30 ANJAN- Dangerously false, deadly false. Even the name does not belong to him.

IVY- Will you show me this loafer, once?

ANJAN- But what can you do when you see him?

IVY- I will shoot to kill him.

ANJAN- But that will not bring new life to Manjusha.

IVY- Why not? Is she not a mother by now?

ANJAN- Yes. She is a mother by now. In the basket of her sorrow for one year and three months, the flowery smile of that five month old child is the only solace of Manjusha.[16]

IVY- Has Kalyanbabu seen his child?

ANJAN- Why not?, afterall he lives where they live.

IVY- *How strange*. Even now Manju has not driven him out? She ought to have *divorced him immediately*.

ANJAN- They can't do that, Ivy!

IVY- Why?

ANJAN- Because girls like her are chaste, virtuous women.

IVY- ANJAN!

ANJAN- They are unsophisticated girls of the countryside of Bengal. They dream of lighting the lamp every evening at the base of the basil tree [17], and they also dream of blowing the conch-shell every evening. They, for ages, like creepers grow around their husbands and spread their sweet smell all around. [18]
(Exits)

IVY- *They are all idiots*. They will certainly die out. They give birth to babies every year. They don't eat until their husband's meals are finished, and they place the males on their heads. *Never*. We won't allow this. I shall tell daddy and write an article tomorrow. I, with the right of progress, will break the repressive sleep of these rural girls. [19]

P.31 ACT I, SCENE IV -- In the Street*

Manjusha enters with her child in her arms, singing a lullaby.

The Song

MANJUSHA
Come of thou, sleep!
And kiss the golden eyes of my baby
I will make for thee an ornament, stealing
the gold of the moon.
And I will meet thy demand by giving you the
jewel on the hood of the snake
And I will put the mark of coloured powder [1]
using a purple cloud colour.

Enter Mohan

MOHAN- How is Khokan[2], didi?

P.32 MANJUSHA- Not keeping well, Mohanda. He is running a high temperature, He was crying the whole day and at last he is now asleep.

MOHAN- Have you made arrangements for treatment and medicines?

MANJUSHA- Where will I get the money for it Mohanda? You know what a family life I am now leading. Borrowing money from someone, rice from another and somehow keeping body and soul together. And how am I to meet the medical expenses after all?

MOHAN- Anjanda is away from home now, not yet back. Had he been here there would have been no trouble.

MANJUSHA- But how could he continue always helping, Mohanda?

MOHAN- Have you written to your didi and her husband?

MANJUSHA- Anjanda, himself, met my brother-in-law and told him everything.

MOHAN- Then why has he failed to come? Your brother-in-law is a nice man, Manjusha.

MANJUSHA- But the hard realities[3] of life do not allow one to be nice for long! You know that my didi can't stand me.[4]

MOHAN- Where is the father of the baby ?

MNAJUSHA- He was here just now, and might have gone out.

MOHAN- What a man he is--made us thunder-struck (surprised).

MANJUSHA- No good talking about the past wrongs--let by-gones be by-gones, Mohanda.

MOHAN- But Khokan will not be medically treated for want of a little amount of money--I can't stand the idea, Manju.

MANJUSHA- Stop worrying.

MOHAN- What do you mean?

P.33 MANJUSHA- Khokan will get medical treatment.

MOHAN- But---

MANJUSHA- Please, no buts, Mohanda! The thing I preserved carefully despite my trials and tribulations, that thing I have with me now. You please pawn it and bring me some money (Gives him something wrapped in paper)

MOHAN- What does it contain?

MANJUSHA- The golden earrings of my mother.[5]

MOHAN- Didi!

MANJUSHA- Yes, Mohanda! I managed with only one meal a day, even starved sometimes, was insulted by people while trying to borrow money, yet I kept them carefully. I kept them concealed--they are my mother's momento.

MOHAN- You better keep them, didi.

MANJUSHA- But I could get them returned from the pawn-shop in a couple of days.

MOHAN- But there are no days for you, only nights. Let me bring a day in your life so full of nights; I don't want to lose this opportunity.

MANJUSHA- Where are you going?

MOHAN- To bring medicine.

MANJUSHA- But where is the money?

MOHAN- I have some money which I could collect by begging. You preserve, carefully, the momento of your mother.

MANJUSHA- Mohanda!

P.34 MOHAN- Didi, let the money be spent--does not matter much. But let the momento of the old be preserved by the new generation.[6]
(Exits)

MANJUSHA- Mohan Das, a beggar, so full of kindness and sympathy--but----

Kalyan enters, dead drunk.

KALYAN- Only Kalyan Bannerjee[7] lacks sympathy and kindness--is it not, Manjusha?

MANJUSHA- You---drunk?

KALYAN- How strange! As if you did not know that before. Did you not find me smelling after our marriage?

MANJUSHA- I could smell. I asked you. You said, in answer---

KALYAN- That I have taken some medicine which is rather smelly (laughs loudly)

MANJUSHA- How could you laugh? don't you feel ashamed?

KALYAN- No. I don't suffer from any sense of shame, Manjusha. Had I been suffering from shame, I would not have won you. You know the adage--one can't be daring if one suffers from a sense of prestige, shame, or fear. Those three things should be removed from one's life by a kind of surgical operation, otherwise one can't achieve anything and be a full man.[8]

MANJUSHA- Do you call yourself a man, in the true sense of the term?

KALYAN- At least you can't call me a non-man, because I have won over three girls before you.

MANJUSHA- Is it true?

KALYAN- Damn it! I have let the cat out of the bag. Drinks play strange tricks on you. Just have a little of the stuff in your belly, and your mind opens like a wide gate.

P.35 KALYAN- Here what I am saying--whether it is true--indeed true. Under the influence of liquor, this is the first time that I have told you the truth.[9] Of course, I did not marry those three girls and they too did not care to become a mother, like you.

MANJUSHA- You are so mean-minded! So lowly is your behaviour! By telling lies you cheated us all, and have made my life, my youth, a curse--don't you possess even a bit of humanity?

KALYAN- Talking of humanity! (laughs loudly)-Words borrowed from the rotten and Indian philosophy--a philosophy thoroughly rotten. Listen Manju! I can't stand any philosophy. I know this *Eat, drink and be merry. Kao peo, ar gio.*

MANJUSHA- Had Anjanda been here, I could have shown him the true identity of his friend.

KALYAN- You mentioned Anjan? Does he really know me? We worked together for just two years. Of course, I could place him correctly. That chap will not be able to achieve anything in *life. He is most foolish.* In this country, Anjans are fewer in number.

MANJUSHA- Can't you be one of the fewer?

KALYAN- Could if I wanted to. But I don't want to.

MANJUSHA- Why shouldn't you be so? Is it not the duty of a man to lead a social life with responsibilities to his family?--His wife and children? You invited our Khokan into the world. Look at him and forget your old life, and be a new man. I will wipe out all your misdeeds, by my smile; I will wash out all your blemishes with my love and service.[10]

P.36 KALYAN- Manju!

MANJUSHA- It is man who makes mistakes--and you certainly did, too. All your mistakes will be covered in flowers, by me. I am a girl belonging to a country where women, like Sita, Sabitri and Behula were from, and I can banish all the darkness of my husband's life with the light of my love; I can set up a new home.[11]

KALYAN- What do you mean?

MANJUSHA- Move forward two steps, it compensates your one step backwards.

KALYAN- All right, let it be like that.

MANJUSHA- You promise?

KALYAN- By putting my hands on you, I promise that I will give up drinking. I will forget my past life--and this time I am going to build up my life anew, and will build up a happy home life.

MANJUSHA- I fell like prostrating myself before you (does pronam)[12]

KALYAN- Really, Manju, I made a mistake. Now I have been made a real man by 'Panch Paiser Prithibi'.[13]

MANJUSHA- 'Panch Paiser Prithibi?! '

KALYAN- Yes, Manju. I picked you from 'Panch Paiser Prithibi' By the touch of your touchstone, my iron-mind has turned to gold.

MANJUSHA- Happy I feel at what you are saying, your words. Let Anjanda come--and I will tell him--Anjanda, I have won victory through defeat.[14]

KALYAN- But---

P.37 MANJUSHA- But what?

KALYAN- Most probably you will not meet Anjan again.

MANJUSHA- Why?

KALYAN- You will leave for Calcutta, tomorrow.

MANJUSHA- Darling, so you really mean it?

KALYAN- Yes, Manju. I am not goint to tell anymore lies. But I am rather worried.

MANJUSHA- Why worried?

KALYAN- Where am I to accommodate you?

MANJUSHA- I will live, where you live--

KALYAN- But I stay on the street, on the pavement.

MANJUSHA- I will also stay like that.

KALYAN- But how am I to feed you?

MANJUSHA- Whatever you eat, I will eat.

KALYAN- Will you be able to withstand the hardship?

MANJUSHA- I could stand it--I was prepared for death, I can stand anything in order to build up my life again, come what may.

KALYAN- Everything of me if false, Manju.

MANJUSHA- But you are not a lie.

KALYAN- Manju!

MANJUSHA- Your house, car, wealth--they proved to be a lie--false. You gave the wrong identity of yourself--but let those things be so. Leaving behind this heap of lies, I will accept the one iota of truth which is there, and happily live with it.

KALYAN- I have been unjust to you, Manju. Do please forgive me.

P.38 MANJUSHA- For shame, please don't do it. Don't ask forgiveness of me. To ask forgiveness of a wife, the husband touches the wife with sin.[15] Look, Khokan is smiling in his sleep. Look what a poor state our baby is in.

KALYAN- Really, Manju, I will put him under the treatment of a good doctor while we are in Calcutta.

MANJUSHA- What are you thinking of again?

KALYAN- You have got to have some money, at least for a fortnight, to meet our expenses in Calcutta.

MANJUSHA- Leave the money question to me.

KALYAN- How could you get any money?

MANJUSHA- Look, here are two earrings. By selling these two earrings we will get some money (she shows him the package)

KALYAN- Let me have a look at them. (he takes the package). Fine, fine,...they weigh quite a bit, and will fetch me enough money for five[16] bottles of liquor.

MANJUSHA- What are you talking about?

KALYAN- I am going to sell these in order to have my liquor.

MANJUSHA- Then--why--

KALYAN- So long I have been 'acting' with you.[17]

MANJUSHA- You---

KALYAN- I just heard about those earrings from Mohan--now *bye-bye*.

MANJUSHA- (Taking a hold of Kalyan's clothes) No, I will not allow you to get away, you robber. I won't allow you to have drinks by selling my mother's momento.

KALYAN- Let me go, I tell you--(draws away his jacket) You can't hold me back by gripping my clothes. Today I am leaving forever.

P.39

MANJUSHA- No! No! I bow down to your feet, don't leave Khokan and me behind and go away forever. Believe me, if you leave me like this I will go mad (she sits on his feet with Khokan on her lap)

KALYAN- Kalyan Bannerjee does not worry about some Manjusha going mad, or dying. (He kicks Manjusha-since Khokan is on her lap Manjusha falls headlong with Khokan)

MANJUSHA- God!!

KALYAN- My beauty, God made you attractive and beautiful. And so I came rehearsing for 'Panch Paiser Prithibi' and sucked to the fullest the honey out of you.[18] I don't like to suck the honey out of the same flower for so long, and so I am leaving in search of another flower. (Exits)

MANJUSHA- Who is there--don't let him go. I, with Khokan(when she tries ot lift him up she finds him dead) Oh, what has happened?! Why--my Khokan looks like he's--- Khokan, Khokan

Anjan enters, with a plastic bag in his hand. He finds Manjusha with Khokan clutched to her bosom.

ANJAN- Khokan, Khokan--see how many things I have brought for you. Dresses, baby food, biscuits. And see how red and beautiful these flowers are. (he takes out red paper flowers from his pocket, about to give them to Khokan--but he is shocked and says...) How is that--Khokan---

MANJUSHA- Is dead, Anjanda! !

ANJAN- Khokan is dead! (the flowers fall from his hand).

MANJUSHA- He did not die--he was murdered.

ANJAN- By whom?

MANJUSHA- By your friend. That Joyanta Chaudhury of 'Panch Paiser Prithibi'[19].

ANJAN- What are you talking about Manju?

MANJUSHA- I am telling you the truth, Anjanda. He was running away with my mother's momento, and I tried to prevent him. For that reason only he kicked me. Kicked by him I stumbled and fell down with Khokan.

ANJAN- Manju!

MANJUSHA- I got up and found that he had run away--and my Khokan is sleeping his last sleep.

ANJAN- Khokan! Khokan!

MANJUSHA- (laughs) What a man you are, Anjanda! He who is capable of withstanding the shock of a thunderbolt-why should he break down so easily?

ANJAN- Give him to me Manju--to me, Manju.(he takes Khokan and clutches him to his bosom.)

MANJUSHA- You blessed me--placed a benediction on me, saying--"You will be very happy." Look how happy I am today.
P.41 My source of all happiness is sleeping on your bosom-how peacefully? (laughs) Today I am very happy, Anjanda, today I am very happy, indeed.[20]

ANJAN- Manju!

MANJUSHA- No, oh no. Don't you speak so loudly. My Khokan is sleeping, it will be broken. I put him to sleep after much effort.(Laughs)

Enters Mohan, with a medicine bottle. Nepal follows him.

MOHAN- What makes you laugh Manjudi? Well, you are here already (addressing Anjan). That is all the better. Listen, didi. The doctor said to give a dose of the medicine to Khokan immediately.

ANJAN- No more need for medicine, Mohanda.

MOHAN- No need for medicine?

MANJUSHA- My Khokan is completely cured of all diseases.(laughs)

MOHAN- Anjanda!

ANJAN- Khokan is dead, Mohanda.

NEPAL -
MOHAN- Dead!

ANJAN- Yes. Nepal, you please take Khokan for---

NEPAL- Don't you worry, I will attend to everything (takes Khokan from Anjan and goes away quickly. Manjusha is following him, and she goes on saying...)

P.42 MANJUSHA- No, No, don't take away my golden Khokan. He is very cold Anjanda! Give me the new dress and I will dress him up with that. Stand awhile, I will put callysium[21] round his eyes, and a mark on his forehead. (Manjusha is about to go, but Anjan gets hold of her and says...)

ANJAN- Where are you going, you poor girl?

MOHAN- But Anjanda, she must weep.[22]

MANJUSHA- Why, why do you want me to weep? What wrong have I done to you? Answer me, Anjanda! You performed "Panch Paiser Prithibi', without me, did you not? The Manika within me, let her die without crying. Poor Manika, why not let her carry the dead child to Joyanta. Let him not drop a few tears. I am not. after all, Manika--I am Manjusha.[23]

ANJAN- How can I make her cry- tell me Mohanda?

MANJUSHA- Why, again, do you try to make me cry, Anjanda? Why again do you try to? Did you not already try by making Kalyan Bannerjee play the role of Joyanta Chaudhury? Let me alone, leave me a lone, you chicken-hearted, self-centred man.

ANJAN- Tell me more, Manju, tell me more. Call me a coward, selfish, chicken-hearted, whatever you like. But in exchange, only cry for awhile. Let me stand like the Himalayas-head up and looking with wonder at your eyes full of tears.[24]

MANJUSHA- (laughs)

ANJAN- Stop! Stop, your ruinous laughter.
I know, that for a mistake of mine, you are now in a miserable state.
P.43 I know why your eyes have gone dry like the Sahara. But I can't do anything now.

MANJUSHA- Is there really nothing to do?

ANJAN- With what I have got, I can at least take up the burden of your economic wants and can keep you as fine as an image of a goddess. With new light I can flood the courtyard of the temple of your body[25], but due to my rashness the nectar of your heart, which has been wasted on the dust of the street, I cannot give retribution, however much I try.

MANJUSHA- (laughs)

ANJAN- It will be disasterous, Mohanda. If she does not cry the girl will turn mad.

MANJUSHA- Why should I be mad? I am living in happiness--I have become very happy (laughs)

When she has proceeded a few steps Mohan begins singing...

MOHAN- The Song

Khoka, thou golden Khokan, a piece of the beautiful moon.
Come, come thou back.
Emptying your mother's bosom, where are you keeping yourself, hiding.

Listening to the song, Manju stands still. After a while like a cow bereft of its calf[26], tears role down her cheek. Mohan goes on singing...

P.44 Kissing thy red lips
Who will say, my baby, you go to sleep.
And who will feed on the nectar of their breast.

MANJUSHA- Oh Khokan, Khokan--Come back-do come back.

Mohan leads her away by holding her hands.

ANJAN- Cry, cry, you poor girl. The pearls of your tears falling drop by drop from your eye-lashes, let them fill up the empty oyster-shell[27] of my heart. As I made the mistake, I have got to give recompense for it. By how? and with what? Can anybody tell me that due to foolhardiness, I, Anjan, have helped the touchstone to be stolen from the chest-box of Manjusha's mind--with what magic spell can it be brought back?
(Exits)

P.45 ACT II, SCENE I -- The Meadow in Calcutta (Gaur Math)*

The old gypsy, Nigar Hosan, and the gypsy young woman, Sania enters. Nigar has a small drum in his hand[1]-he is playing on it.

SANIA- Bhanu Matir Khela[2], babuji[3] Bhanu Matir Khela. Once seen you will be pleased and your heart will be overpowered. Babuji, Bhanu Matir Khela.

NIGAR- Your empty heart will be all right--men feeling depressed will come to be pleased--come and see Bhanu Matir Khela. Come, babuji, come---

Brahmadatta enters, carrying books and papers.

BRAHMA- What kind of play are you showing, my boy-who happens to be the player?

NIGAR- Bhanu Matir Khela, babuji, Bhanu Matir Khela. Once seen and you will be pleased and the heart will be overpowered.

BRAHMA- Why will that be? My heart is already overpowered.

SANIA- What has happened, babuji?

BRAHMA- My heart is overpowered.[4]

SANIA- What a pity. But what made your heart so, babuji?

BRAHMA- Should I tell you?

SANIA- Of course.

BRAHMA- You will let me tell?

P.46 NIGAR- Go ahead, babuji, tell us. You have not yet seen Bhanu Matir Khela, and yet what overpowered your heart?

BRAHMA- Seeing that ox grazing over there.[5]

SANIA- What a pity!

NIGAR- Sania!

SANIA- Stop thou, old man. You don't know anything about the ways of this city, of the men of this city of Calcutta.

BRAHMA- You have told the truth, bibi[6] Your words are like--

NIGAR- Look here, babuji--Are you going to see the magic-play?

BRAHMA- What kind of magic are you going to demonstrate, and who will show it?

SANIA- That old man (refers to Nigar)

BRAHMA- Curse my ill luck (he is about to go)[7]

NIGAR- Listen, babuji, listen---

BRAHMA- Tell me.

NIGAR- That wench will show the magic.

BRAHMA- Mairee[8].

NIGAR- Yes, babuji. She is a pakka[9] player.

BRAHMA- That I can jolly well see. Had she not been a pakka (ripe) one----

SANIA- What a pity---

BRAHMA- Who is this wench, to you?

NIGAR- She happens to be my wife[10], babuji.

BRAHMA- Do you mean that is your wife? As if the planet Venus[11] is having the evil-eye from Saturn. What is your name?

P.47 NIGAR- Gypsy Nigar Hosan

BRAHMA- And your name?

SANIA- Sania bibi.

BRAHMA- Your residence?

SANIA- On the streets.

BRAHMA- On the streets?

NIGAR- Yes, babuji. We are gypsies. The road is our house, on the road we live as our rooms. The whole life I have been roaming the streets and showing my Bhanu Matir Khela, yet I could not as yet get even a single handfull of earth where I could set up my residence.

BRAHMA- But you did not hesitate to get married? And how could you seduce this wench?

NIGAR- With my love, babuji.

BRAHMA- Bosh![12] There can't be even a drop of love in your heart.

NIGAR- Then, what is there?

BRAHMA- Maybe a carload of charcoal.

SANIA- What a pity (begins laughing) But how could you know that babuji?

BRAHMA- I forgot--I have not told you the important thing about me.

NIGAR- Out with it, babuji, out with it---

BRAHMA- I am Jyotishyunabe Mahamohaphadhyay Tantracharys Brahmadatta Vidyabagish. I can, shutting my eyes, and placing my hands on a person, can tell whether the person is male or female.[13]

SANIA- What a pity.

P.48 BRAHMA- No pitying business, bibi. By looking at the lines on your palm, I can tell, effortlessly, your past, present, and future.

NIGAR- Would you look at my palm please, babuji?

BRAHMA- There is nothing on your palm.

SANIA- Babuji!!!

BRAHMA- Nothing. That I could guess by looking at his forehead There is the mark of Jupiter below and below that is the planet Rahu, casting its evil eye.[14] Let me see your palm bibi. (he takes her hand, her left hand) Oh, your hand is as soft as Polson's butter.[15]

NIGAR-
SANIA- What does it mean?

BRAHMA- Good luck in double strength. Good over good. The zodiac sign Pisces, the fish, at the time of birth. So--you are in the habit of being a creature of the deep-water. A cluster of stars like, Aswini, Bharani,Migashira, etc.....

NIGAR- Leave aside all this useless talk. Tell us the real thing--how many children more are to be born to us?

BRAHMA- How many have you already got?

NIGAR- Five children, babuji.

BRAHMA- Stop breeding more--Stop it bibi (looking at the hand) Five already--be prepared for another half-a-dozen... the old man is quite capable of....?

SANIA- (all of a sudden taking hold of Brahma's hand) The old man is very potent, is it not so, you devil?

P.49 BRAHMA- What is this? Let me go, Mairee----

NIGAR- Let the fellow go, Sania.

SANIA- Get away from here, you wretched fellow. Had I not been requested by my grandpa, I would have taught you a lesson.

BRAHMA- Grandpa!! He is not your husband? No children ever born?

SANIA- I pity the fool you are--What a fool you are.

BRAHMA- Bibijan!!

SANIA- Then, stupid fellow! I am not married even now--would the children drop from heaven?

BRAHMA- Of course.

NIGAR-
SANIA- Babuji!!

BRAHMA- Stay for two years in Calcutta. You will see my astrological calculations come true, to the hilt. Children would there be for you, not only dropping from heaven, but up from earth's womb as well.

SANIA - What a pity--the old fool took me for a cheap woman.

NIGAR- Let's forget it, Sania. Let's start our song and dance. Bhanu Matir Khela, babuji, Bhanu Matir Khela-once seen you will get pleasure, your heart will be overwhelmed.

Sania begins singing and dancing.

P.50 SANIA- The Song

Bhanu Matir Khela, babuji, Bhanu Matir Khela.
Once seen you get pleasure, your heart will
be overwhelmed.

Enters Babul

BABUL- There, incense, fine---carry on, carry on.

Enters, Kalyan dressed very fashionably.

KALYAN- What's up here, Babul?

BABUL- A Persian rose is here in Gaurer Math.

SANIA- Well, well---

KALYAN- Are you showing magic?

NIGAR- Oh yes, babuji.

BABUL- What kind of magic?

NIGAR- Various sorts of magic.

BABUL-
KALYAN- For example.

Sania still singing....

A dom will be married to a domani, and a
Tree will come out with money, buried underground.
And fish will be caught by rod, line and hook
from the dry ground.[17]

NIGAR- Big, big fishes, babu. Fairies from the moon have their soiree here.

BABUL- I swear, I'm damned if I'm not tempted.

P.51 KALYAN- BABUL!!

BABUL- O.K. Guru[18] I am not going to play tricks on you. *You are really a masterpiece* of a fellow.[19] Have made your luck by jammed by locking it again.

KALYAN- Shut up.

BABUL- O.K.

KALYAN- O.K. Now what you have said about your magic, is it really true?

NIGAR- What kind of talk are you making, babuji? Had the magic been true, would we have cared to show it again? Well, babuji. If by burning a rupee we could have made a tree showing money, then would we have laboured so hard in order to make a living throughout our life, by showing magic? Yet, it is true that my granddaughter is a fine magician, whose magic takes you to a make-believe world.

KALYAN- We will be able to tell your tricks.

SANIA- Oh no, you won't be able to, babuji.

KALYAN-
BABUL- How can you say that?

NIGAR- The girl has told the truth. You will see the magic and know that it is magic, but you won't be able to catch how it is done.

KALYAN- We will not be able?

NIGAR- No, babuji. To know is easy, but to catch is difficult. Don't you see, babuji, don't you see, to understand how all over the world a group of men are stealing, matching by force, making money by selling adulterated stuff. Millions of poor masses are being exploited by them
P.52 and they are making themselves rich and powerful. You know them, but you can't catch them.[20]

BABUL- But---

NIGAR- Things have changed. Everything is known, but nothing can be done. Who will do the catching, tell me? Everyman is playing magic and tricks on every other man--plainly playing magic. Bhanu Matir Khela, babu, Bhanu Matir Khela, once seen you will get pleasure and your heart will be overwhelmed.
(Exits)

KALYAN- What happened? Why is he gone? Will there be no magic show?

SANIA- No, babuji.

KALYAN-
BABUL- Why?

SANIA- Oh how piteous---

KALYAN- How is that? Are you leaving?

SANIA- I am going, babuji, Namasthea[21].

BABUL- You really won't show us your magic?

SANIA- Babujis, you have not come here to see magic.

KALYAN-
BABUL- Then why?

SANIA- Not to see the play, but to play with somebody.[22]

KALYAN-
BABUL- What do you mean?

P.53 SANIA- What a pity, babuji, how regrettable--you have missed it.

KALYAN-
BABUL- What have we missed?

SANIA- Slight of hand, confusing the eyes.
(Exits)

BABUL- Those are exactly the words that are written.

KALYAN- Where?

BABUL- In a drama.

KALYAN- What is it called?

BABUL- 'Panch Paiser Prithibi'.

KALYAN- 'Panch Paiser Prithibi!!'

BABUL- Yes, Guru. I took part in 'Panch Paiser Prithibi'. It contains a song too. The song is...

The Song

Looking for a man--
I am looking for a man
As I, most probably will not find him, I
am shutting my eyes with apprehension
Where is a man who speaks the truth
Where, among all men, is there one who follows
the true path?
I know that you hide the truth within yourselves.[23]

KALYAN- *Shut up, you idiot.*

P.54 BABUL- Why, Guru?

KALYAN- Life is not a drama.

BABUL- What are you saying, Guru!! If it is not a drama, then what is it? Take your own case. What were you, and what are you now? You could not pass the exam even though you took it three times while a college student, and then for a year and a half you were missing-- and now-- well, Guru-- How could you make so much money?[24]

KALYAN- That had been told to you by that gypsy girl?

BABUL- What?

KALYAN- Confusing the eyes and slight of hand.

BABUL- Kalyanda!

KALYAN- (laughs)

BABUL- What is up?

KALYAN- Now, I am no longer Kalyan Bannerjee.

BABUL- Then who are you?

KALYAN- Now I am Goutam Mukherjee.

BABUL- For how many times, will you change your name?

KALYAN- As many times as it is necessary. Why, change only my name, I would change my father's name if it were necessary.

BABUL- Let me take the dust off your feet, Guru[25]. From today on I am as faithful to thee as Hanumana was to Rama.[26]

KALYAN- Are you telling the truth? Ready to work for my *party?*

BABUL- *Sure.*

KALYAN- You will not betray the party?

BABUL- The guy who betrays is a son-of-a-bitch.

P.55 KALYAN- Where do you live?

BABUL- My home? (he whispers the address to Kalyan)

KALYAN- Change that address.

BABUL- Then where will I stay?

KALYAN- Stay here (he whispers the name of the new address)

BABUL- You Guru, *are genuine stuff.*

KALYAN- Now Listen--

BABUL- Order me.

KALYAN- From this day on, you are no longer Babul.

BABUL- Then who am I?

KALYAN- You are Shobhan Mitra[27].

BABUL- Guru!

KALYAN- Your father is Rajendra Mitra. He was a very big business man. He died last year. You are now looking after the business. You have got two country houses and three houses in the city. You have got four cars.

BABUL- But my real name is Babul Das. Father's name was Haripada Das. He is very much alive and kicking, and he is a worker in a jute mill. We live in a slum. We have trouble paying the rent regularly. I go about in bare feet like a hungry dog.[28]

KALYAN- Oh you idiot. Do work for my party for a year, and you will get *results* readily.

BABUL- Will that be so, Guru? Am I to believe you?

P.56 KALYAN- You must do what I ask you to do.

BABUL- I will do it.

KALYAN- You must learn what I want you to learn.

BABUL- I will learn it.

KALYAN- Then, let's start from today.

BABUL- Start today--but what is this---it has started raining.

KALYAN- That is all for the better. What do you see under that tree?

BABUL- A girl is standing there under an umbrella.

KALYAN- Ivy, the daughter of Shankar Chatterjee, the barrister. She is out with her elder brother in their family car. That young chap has gone somewhere, dropping her here.

BABUL- How could you know so much?

KALYAN- Shut up! Do as I tell you. The girl is coming in search of a taxi, this side. You walk in the rain, get drenched, and then take shelter under her umbrella.

BABUL- And then?

KALYAN- The next step--leave it to me. Don't delay. The girl is coming.

BABUL- Hail to Thee, Guru.
(Exits)

KALYAN- Anjan, you are trying to find me out. If I am caught I will be handed over to the police. (laughs) Kalyan Bannerjee is dead. He will never be found. But I am keeping a watchful eye on Anjan. I know this too, that Manjusha, after selling her father's country house is
P.57 now living with the family of Maheshbabu. I know too that Shankar Chatterjee, the barrister, is a multi-millionaire. And so----no I am not going to divulge my plan. Let the dream lie within me.
(Exits)

Enters Ivy, with the umbrella over her head.

IVY- Dada never cares to tell me what he is going to do. He said to me "Come back and stand under the tree, and I will come and pick you up at the right moment." How bothering--it is pouring out now. I can't see anybody near-- Taxi! taxi--couldn't hear me---now what to do---

All of a sudden Babul enters, gets hold of the umbrella and says....

BABUL- Come with me.

IVY- Who are you? Let go of my umbrella.

BABUL- Don't you be troublesome--Mairee--I can't get drenched.

IVY- I will call a policeman.

BABUL- Do that later--Now let us go.

IVY- No, I won't go.

BABUL- You have got to, my pretty.

IVY- Oh, who is there to help me?

BABUL- No one here to help you.

All of a sudden, Kalyan , with a raincoat on, enters and grabs Babul by the back of the neck and says...

KALYAN- Here is somebody to help her--you idiot--

P.58 BABUL- (Freeing his neck from the grip) Hail Guru (runs away)

KALYAN- Run away-then---you are saved today. I am not carrying my revolver today.

IVY- Many thanks to you. You saved me today. What happened? What are you looking at in that way?

KALYAN- No, that is nothing--Taxi--Taxi--stop! you please get in.

IVY- Do please come with me.

KALYAN- No, no, I have to--

IVY- You must come. *My daddy* will be pleased to learn that *you saved me* from the clutches of a hooligan. Come, please.
(Exits)

KALYAN- (Takes out a piece of paper from his pocket, and throws it away) Anjan!! *Now your paradise is lost. I mean* you have bid adieu to your heaven. (laughs)
(Exits)

ACT II, SCENE II -- The drawing room of Maheshbabu's house.*

Manju enters, dressed in a torn, dirty sari, and says in a distressed voice...

MANJUSHA- Bidding adieu to heaven, I have now come to hell. I don't know how long I will be able to carry this burden of life. Sometimes I feel that it is better to die than to live.

Enters, Maheshbabu, with a gunny sack.

MAHESH- No, Manju! It is not better.

MANJUSHA- What is not better, Jamaibabu?

MAHESH- That word 'better', now-a-days good means bad.

MANJUSHA- What are you driving at?

MAHESH- Telling the truth. Tell me what good stuff you get today--rice, pulses, fishes, meat. But look at the price!! Cut-throat prices-as if money is that cheap.[1]

MANJUSHA- Very strange!

MAHESH- Nothing is strange. I am a litterateur. Send me to any place, to the meadows, to the bazaar, to the ports and cities—I will find out the right thing.

MANJUSHA- What is the right thing?

P.60 MAHESH- Characters.[2]

MANJUSHA- It appears that, in the long run, you will go mad.

MAHESH- Not only me, Manju. So many others in Bengal will run mad in the long run. Yesterday something happened—would you like to listen to it?

MANJUSHA- Tell me.

MAHESH- Getting down from the bus, I was proceeding towards Rabindra Kanan[3]. Suddenly a gentleman stood before me and said "My salute to you, babu". I too saluted but I could not find that gentleman.

MANJUSHA- A funny incident, indeed.

MAHESH- Listen. I looked and looked and thought—who might this gentleman be—where did I meet him before,etc.. Suddenly the man said, "Can't you recognise me,...I am Satish."

MANJUSHA- And then?

MAHESH- I remembered everything. But I was surprised to see the pair of shoes on his feet.

MANJUSHA- But, why so?

MAHESH- That pair of shoes must have cost him at least Rs.40.

MANJUSHA- But that does not matter to you, does it?

MAHESH- You tell me it does not matter, do you? The man himself is worth Rs. 40.

MANJUSHA- Jamaibabu!!!

MAHESH- Fashion—fashion. The poor Bengalis are drunk with fashions. Even if they use a napkin to wear when they are at home, they must go out dressed in tyrelene, tyrecott, etc.[4]

P.61 MANJUSHA- You have told the truth.

MAHESH- I not only want to say the truth— you know? I want to write about it. I will sit and write, after coming back from the bazaar. Do you know who imported this fashion? From Britain, America, France— the captains of capitalism. they want to stop socialism and communism by infesting the whole world with the poison of fashion, luxury.[5]

MANJUSHA- When will you go to the market?

MAHESH- Oh, I am going. Let me come back from the market--but what was I thinking of....now, I remember...Have got to buy a sari for you.

MANJUSHA- No, Jamaibabu.

MAHESH- Why not?

MANJUSHA- Don't bring a sari for me.

MAHESH- But your sari is very torn.

MANJUSHA- She whose life is very torn, what harm is there if her sari is torn too?

MAHESH- I understand. Your didi must have said something to you.

MANJUSHA- You can't blame didi--you are spending a lot of money on me.

MAHESH- The money you brought by selling your country house, doesn't that money also have to be taken into account?

MANJUSHA- Please don't mention it.

MAHESH- Why shouldn't I mention it? Are we to put aside all truths and...

P.62 Enters, Anjan.

ANJAN- And stick to only that which is false.[6]

MANJUSHA- Anjanda.

MAHESH- Your Anjanda looks like he is not keeping in good health--is it not so?

ANJAN- No, Jamaibabu--my health is quite O.K.

MAHESH- My dear brother-in-law, don't tell me white lies.

MANJUSHA-
ANJAN- Jamaibabu.

MAHESH- Not only you, my dear Salababu. The people of the whole country have extended their necks to the slaughter house of falsehood. No one talks freely, and open-mindedly to others. All talk is false, all smiles are artificial.

ANJAN- It has got to be so, jamaibabu. It is due to the unbalanced society, that the royal gate of truth has been closed to every mind. Fathers, mothers, teachers, students, even husbands and wives are keeping each other's company - with a large gap in between. This has created *a dangerous gap*, in social life.

MAHESH- *Right, you are right.*

ANJAN- And talking about health---How could people be in good health--the country is flooded with adulterated stuff People are eating and drinking poison to commit suicide--but they do not die--even the poison is adulterated.

MAHESH- (laughs)

P.63 MANJUSHA- It is about noon now--the market will be closed.

MAHESH- Wait-let me laugh til my heart's content. A new theme for my literature portraying life --adulteration in poison too. (laughs)

Enters, Manimala

MALA- Well,well,well. I say, I find here a lot of laughter. But are you going to eat your rice, only with salt?

MAHESH- But didn't you tell me a little while ago that you had potatoes, egg-plants, onions, etc.--only there was no fish.

MALA- But how can one eat cooked rice, without fish? Fie--look it is almost noon now--I say, Manju-you wretched girl- couldn't you remind him to go to the market?

MANJUSHA- I told him many times, didi.

MALA- You never cared to tell him--I know. Your mind is not here, but somewhere else. You care very little for looking after household affairs.

MAHESH- Why do you blame her?

MALA- For what wrongs she has done me-like a bolt from the blue. We can't even manage our own household-with all the financial difficulties we have-and she came as another weighty burden.

ANJAN- What are you talking about, didi?

MALA- I am telling the truth-the right things, Anjan. I refuse to carry another man's burden anymore.

MAHESH- Isn't Manju your sister?

MALA- Sister---sister, my foot. This wretched girl
P.64 has brought my soap out from the almirah[8] to wash her own clothes. Take care-don't you use my soap again.

MANJUSHA- I will never do it again, didi.

MALA- Didi-don't try to get familiar. Such a grown-up--youthful girl--yet I don't get any cooperation in my household work. I had a mind to go to the circus in the Howrah Maidan[9] --but this plan has been dashed to the ground. You wretched girl--can't you even cook for one evening?

MAHESH- What are you saying? It is she who cooks everyday from the first day she was here.

MALA- You, please stop--

ANJAN- I have a proposal, didi.

MALA- Stop, Anjan--Don't you try to preach. The kind of good you did to all of us, not even an enemy thinks of that much. Kalyan, your friend, --I know--all of you are bluffers.

MAHESH- Manimala- take this money, and go and fetch as much fish, meat,etc,,as you want to--but please don't shout and put me in utter shame.--Please don't disgrace me.

MALA- I feel like dying from shame, myself. Look at my precious husband--a new man with a temper. Some wretched publisher mistakenly bought a book written by my previous husband(Mahesh), and now he has some money in his possession-he is showing his pride. But this is the end. No one is going to buy your books again. Why should they buy them tell me? What a type of writing. Always writing about man suffering from wants, and big talk about revolution. Not an idea or a bit of entertaining stuff. There is no mention of the love theme there.

MAHESH- This time I intend to put a lot of the love-theme in my writing--I am going to write about you as my heroine.

MANJUSHA-
ANJAN- Jamaibabu.

MAHESH- I will write that the most ideal woman of modern times is Manimala. Her love is as deep as the sea. But all of her love is with money, only. She will do anything for a handful of money. In her life, everything except money is false--her relatives, her husband, her home-
everything. The only truth for her is money--money--[10]
money--- (Exits)

MALA- All right. Now tell me, Anjan, am I very wrong in in my evaluation? You steal, rob, but if you have money you will be declared not guilty, and set free. You may be a licencious, a devilish fellow but if you can donate some money to some organisations, you will be declared the most saintly man of the country. I tell this girl, again and again, make paper bags, shave betel nuts[11], knit woollen sweaters, anything-but earn some money. But this wretched girl, does she ever care to listen to me?

MANJUSHA- I would listen didi--I must listen. In order to bring some money to you, I will do whatever you wish, whatever you ask me to do.

ANJAN- Manju!

MALA- Don't you prevent her. It is good to recognise the value of money. Money is a very valuable thing. He who has no money, he has nothing. Take you , for example, had you been rich you could have helped Manju with money--don't you think so? To be very frank, was it not you that caused this girl's life to be ruined?

MANJUSHA- Didi!

P.66 ANJAN- Manju, didi has said the right thing. I ought to have thought about this problem, and I did not. Didi has done the right thing by reminding me of it.

MALA- But I really didn't mean it-I only said it for the sake of conversation and example.

ANJAN- What you said is worth taking notice of and acting accordingly, Keep this one hundred rupees (gives her the money)

MANJUSHA- Anjanda!

MALA- What shame! You are still standing idly, Manju! You could have offered Anjan a cup of tea and some snacks. Am I to teach you everything--even hospitality?

MAJUSHA- Teach me, teach me, didi. Bring out your bag of knowledge, knowledge of how to earn money, every trick you know--and teach me all of them, one by one. But my only request is--give back Anjan's money.

MALA- Why? Is Anjan somebody unknown to us, and I should return the money?

ANJAN- No, didi, no. Please don't return it. Forget Manju's words. She does not know anything about the realities of life. Don't you neglect her, teach her all the useful work. I promise that I will pay you one hundred rupees every month.

MANJUSHA- Why should you pay, Anjanda? Haven't you done everything possible for me? The storm which blew over my life, that storm also broke branches in the tree of your mind.[12] The flood of my misery also overflowed the bounds of your happiness. And after all this, why should you waste your money?

ANJAN- You mad girl, I am not really wasting it.

P.67 MANJUSHA- What are you doing then?

ANJAN- I am saving money.

MALA- Anjan!

ANJAN- By those miscalculations, there has been no additions to Manju's side, only subtractions--she has got to have an account on the debit side.

MANJUSHA- No, I won't put up with it.

ANJAN- Accept it, Manju, accept it. Joyanta Chaudhury of 'Panch Paiser Prithibi'---to satisfy their whims, thousands of Manikas of this country, are left standing at the door-step of life, unlived--accept this life as a drama, and doing that you must stand with your head erect, and paint on the scene of your struggle, the blue-print of a new society.[13]
(Exits)

MANJUSHA- Anjanda! Anjanda!

MALA- Look here you wretched girl. If you stop Anjan from paying one hundred rupees a month, I will teach you a very hard lesson, I promise.

Malay enters with a basket full of sweets.

MALAY- Now, where am I to put this?

MALA- Who! Oh Malay Thakurpo! So you got my letter in time?

MALAY- Yes, boudi. After getting your letter, I came here.

P.68 MALA- You have done the right thing. I was thinking that--

MALAY- My, my, won't you take this basket of sweets first?

MALA- O.K. Give them to me. I hope that you have brought Sar Bhage[14] from Krishnagore.

MALAY- Yes, boudi. Take this ten rupee note too.(gives her the money)

MALA- But why the money?

MALAY- For preparing meat curry for dinner here tonight.

MALA- Meat curry!

MALAY- Yes, boudi--I am feeling like having the excellent meat curry which you can cook, and---

MALA- and what, Malay Thakurpo?

MALAY- I will tell you later.

MALA- O.K. Tell me afterwards. But the ingredients for the meat curry must be prepared before--should start now to prepare for meat curry, the ginger juice, onion paste, chili paste, etc. I say, girl, are you listening to what I am saying?

MANJUSHA- Oh! Yes, didi, I was listening.

MALAY- Is she your sister?

MALA- Yes--have a good look at her.

MALAY- I have looked carefully, boudi.

MALA- Is she O.K. for the job?

MALAY- Of course. When she is under my charge, there is no escape. *I will make her a jewel within a month.*

MANJUSHA- What is this gentleman talking about, didi?

MALA- Sorry--I have forgotten to introduce him to you. Here is Malay Roy--the famous director. He is well-known in the theatre and film world. He will teach you the art of acting.

P.69 MANJUSHA- Acting, oh God! again acting?

MALA- This time not in 'Panch Paiser Prithibi'.

MALAY- For Five Thousand rupees *per month*!

MALA- You don't mean it.

MALAY- Yes, boudi, I mean it. I can't find my heroine.

MANJUSHA- But I won't act again.

MALA- Won't act! You have got to act again.

MANJUSHA- Didi!

MALA- Listen, Manju! Now-a-days one can't survive without acting. There is no other way out. Just look and see, many housewives and daughters of good families of modern Bengal are going out by the back door and acting, in so many ways--even if they don't actually act on the public stage.[15] (Exits)

MANJUSHA- Oh God! Where I am placed now--the sea behind and a mountain in front.

MALAY- Don't you worry Manju. I will make a fountain flow over the mountain for you. (Holds Manju's hands)

MANJUSHA- What is this!? Why are you holding my hands? Let go of my hands. (takes her hands back)

MALAY- (laughs) No harm if a director holds your hands. In future he may even--

MANJUSHA- Stop. Please go away from here.

MALAY- You don't know, Manju, what type of man I am. I am not that type of man.

MANJUSHA- I don't know your type?--I know very well--

P.70 MALAY- Manju!

MANJUSHA- One who lives in the water knows well the ways of the crocodile. One who touches fire knows the heat too. Should I tell you something, Malaybabu?

MALAY- But you don't know me--

MANJUSHA- I know your type perfectly well, Malaybabu. Men of your type whistle when they see girls going to schools and colleges, they make rings of cigarette smoke when they see a girl, and you are one of them who goes hunting women all over the countryside. You are a second edition of Joyanta Chaudhury, the *villian* of 'Panch Paiser Prithibi'.
(Exits)

MALAY- A very attractive girl--she will be valued much. But no fear, no fear. If I want to make her fall into the net, and want to fold the net up...*there must be a third hand*...(laughs)
(Exits)

ACT II, SCENE III -- Kabita Cottage*

Enters, Ivy, wearing drain-pipe trousers and a Hawaiian blouse.

IVY- Failed to make the *third date*. Come on time for the first date, the *second date*, but...

Enters Projesh

PROJESH- What happened, Ivy?

IVY- I am going mad.

PROJESH- Why?

IVY- Your Champa Chaudhury has not yet come?

PROJESH- She will be coming.

IVY- I don't think that she will come. What type of girl is she with whom you are carrying on this courtship? A girl who fails to keep appointments?

PROJESH- As if your *lover*, Anjan, is a man who keeps his word. Goutam is infinitely better than him.

IVY- Is daddy back from the court yet?

PROJESH- No. He will back late today.

IVY- Why?

PROJESH- *He is to meet Miss Kankaria in the Hotel Helen, for some contract work.*

P.71 IVY- Have you seen Miss Kankaria?

PROJESH- *Sure.*

IVY- What does she look like?

PROJESH- Lovely. When you look at her she appears to be lovely.

IVY- Then we are to admit that *daddy's choice* is good.

Enters, Lotus

LOTUS- She is here.

PROJESH-
IVY- Who? Where?

LOTUS- She is talking with granddad now.

IVY- Is it so? Granddad is becoming quite a problem.

LOTUS- Dada, I will also learn how to dance.

PROJESH- Lotus!

LOTUS- Why not? You, didi, daddy, everyone of you knows how to dance---and why shouldn't I learn? I will learn the *twist* dance.

IVY- When you are old enough and married, I will teach your wife the *cabaret* dance.

LOTUS- My wife is already there.

PROJESH-
IVY- Where?

LOTUS- Why, at the camp of the gypsies.

P.73 IVY-
PROJESH- Lotus!

LOTUS- I bought biscuits for the little Munna.[1]

PROJESH-
IVY- (laughter)

Enters, Champa Chaudhury, in a tight dress meant for dancing.

CHAMPA- *How lovely.*

IVY- Why so late, Champa?

CHAMPA- You know how things are these days.

PROJESH-
IVY- What happened?

CHAMPA- A procession was passing on the street, and so there was a traffic jam.[2]

PROJESH- Did you drive the car, yourself?

CHAMPA- Why not--am I a small girl?

PROJESH- I don't mean that, but---

IVY- Dada, shelve your courtship for the moment. Let's put on some music and dance.

PROJESH- All right. Go ahead.

CHAMPA- *Ready.*

LOTUS- *One, two three.*

Champa dances while singing. Projesh and Ivy also dance with her--Lotus is trying to dance.

P.74 CHAMPA- I will sing the song while dancing--

CHAMPA- The Song

In the sweet spring month of Falgun[3]
weaving the shimmering net of dreams
Came love to this heart, But I didn't know it
The flowers were dropping like showers
And he came silently[4]
And I could not tell him of my love, in my
coyness.
And, oh, when in the golden moonlight
The two of us would meet again
On the flower-bedecked nuptial bed
And the night passed while I could not overcome
my coyness
And oh! I could not draw him to my bosom.

Enters, Shankerbabu

SHANKAR- May I come in?

PROJESH- *Sure.*

IVY- If you don't join us daddy, the fun will not be complete.

LOTUS- I am learning the *twist.*

SHANKAR- *Very good, very good, my child.* You must learn. But--

IVY- Let me introduce, daddy. Daddy, she is Miss Champa Chaudhury. She is dada's--

SHANKAR- I understand, my child. You need not tell me more. I am happy to see that Projesh has an eye for beauty.

CHAMPA- I must leave now, Ivy--*bye, bye.*
(Exits)

P.75 SHANKAR- The girl is very sweet.

PROJESH- She looks very much like Miss Kankaria.

IVY- What was the verdict given today on the case you had in court, daddy?

SHANKAR- It was quite funny. In the beginning the judge was hesitating, but when I said, *"My Lord. I hope you will let this liar impose on you"*, the whole thing went just the other way around. Barrister Amalendu Sen knew that *diamond cuts diamond.* It was a case of Greek meeting Greek. I could win an absolutely false case.

Enters Panasar

PANASAR- No. Shankar.

SHANKAR- What do you mean by 'no'?

PANASAR- You really did not win the case.

SHAKNAR- What then?

PANASAR- You were defeated.

PROJESH-
Ivy- Defeated?

PANASAR- Yes. To win by falsehood and lies means to lose the truth. Falsehood is impermanent, but truth is eternal. Money and fame should not be the be all and end all of life. *It is your look out to have the culprit punished.*

PROJESH- It means that you must see the culprit punished.

P.76 PANASAR- Lotus, my child, do please sing once that song about the people as God.

SHANKAR- No, he won't sing.

IVY- We care very little for your God as people.

PROJESH- We refuse to take any account of the masses.

LOTUS- Listen grandpa! Today a beggar came to beg. I told him--

SHANKAR-
PROJESH-
IVY- What did you tell him?

LOTUS- I said, "Get out you dog. Otherwise I will shoot you, to kill."
(Exits)

SHANKAR-
PROJESH-
IVY- (all laugh)

PANASAR- You are laughing?

IVY- Do you expect us to cry?

PROJESH- Listen, granddad! We don't care for your old rotten values.

PANASAR- Take care, then you can be driven away from and disregard your father-be fashionable.

SHANKAR- Baba![5]

PANASAR- Anyway, after such a long time, I am listening to you calling me 'baba'.

P.77 IVY- The word 'baba' is rubbish.

PROJESH- This is a word that only befits the language of rural folk.

PANASAR- Are you listening, Shankar?

SHANKAR- Yes. I am listening.

PANASAR- And not protesting?

SHANKAR- How strange? Why should I protest?

PANASAR- And why shouldn't you? Before your eyes, they are going to the dogs, and you think that you should remain quiet?

SHANKAR- No. But they are modern boys and girls.

IVY- Granddad can't stand the modern age and modernism.

PANASAR- I can stand the age, but I can't stand those who dance, like monkeys putting the age on their heads.[6]

PROJESH-
IVY- Granddad!

PANASAR- You must be on your guard! This is not England, but India. Here parents and children have been in the habit of discussing about theological and metaphysical topics together--they have never learned to sit together and booze.

PROJESH- This is the old opinion.

IVY- You are saying something that is prehistoric-Pre-Dravidian, even.

SHANKAR- I really can't---

PANASAR- Listen mindfully, Shankar. Science, after depriving man of his emotional moorings, has brought to man's life a mad tempo. Though many changes were brought to social life by the blind rush for progress, yet human nature has remained practically unchanged. Take for example, the relations between men and women--it should never be considered as a sort of business partnership, a *business partnership*. It is not a relationship which can be terminated when it is running at a loss, and to be maintained when it is making a profit. All profit and loss accounts boil down to having children. And when you have children learn to be responsible for your children and teach them to be proper children. If you fail in that your children will be as worthless as my child.

(Exits)

PROJESH- What a shame.

IVY- Granddad , as a matter of fact, has accused our father.

SHANKAR- I have made a mistake. That old man should not be allowed to stay at Kabita Cottage.

PROJESH- *Absolutely moralless.*

IVY- *Out of etiquette.*

SHANKAR- Tell the bearer[7] to make the garden house ready today. Tomorrow morning--yes tomorrow morning that old man must be moved out of this house into the garden house.

Kalyan(Goutam) enters dressed in European style. He is twirling a key-ring in his hand.

KALYAN- *May I come in?*

SHANKAR- *Yes, my boy. Come in, surely.* For you the door of Kabita Cottage is always open.

IVY- Why are you so late?

PROJESH- As if he has nothing to do.

KALYAN- *You are right, my friend.*
P.79 I was very busy. My professor in England used to tell me--"*Work hard, don't waste time. Time and tide wait for no man.* Work hard, don't waste time. Time and tide wait for no man.

SHANKAR- *Just speaking of your professor. By the by,* then you have studied in England?[8]

KALYAN- *Yes.* I returned to India just a few days ago. Father died. I have a big business to look after, you know.

SHANKAR- *My blunder, blunder, my boy.* I must tell you something I have nearly forgotten to mention.

KALYAN- Please tell me.

SHANKAR- Projesh and Ivy are your friends. Don't address them as 'apni' but rather address them as 'tumi'.[9]

IVY- As 'tumi'. Do you understand?

KALYAN- Yes, I do understand. But--

PROJESH- But what has happened *friend?*

KALYAN- When I was abroad--

PROJESH- Ivy! Won't you offer some food to our *friend?*

KALYAN- No, no, please--

SHANKAR- Why are you feeling shame, *my boy*. Consider this place as your home. This is what I told you on the very first day you came here. Yes, here is a proposal, I want to have a business relationship with you.

KALYAN- *A very good proposal,* kakababu.

SHANKAR- Yes, I would like to have a discussion regarding this matter, *I mean, I will have a meeting with you.*

P.80 KALYAN- Of course, I have as my academic subject the study of commerce. Otherwise I would not be able to run my father's vast business.

PROJESH- *Come my good friend.* Let us look at the garden.

SHANKAR- *I mean, the flower garden.*

KALYAN- *Oh, I see.*

IVY- *It's a very nice garden. Camellia, black prince, California poppy, etc.*

KALYAN- No Ivy creeper[10]?

IVY-
SHANKAR- (all laugh)
PROJESH-

KALYAN- Let me go, today.

IVY- Going so soon? Won't you take something? What would like to have? *Fry of Bhekti fish?*

KALYAN- *No.*

IVY- Chicken curry?

KALYAN- No.

IVY- What about having milk?[11]

KALYAN- (holding Ivy's hands)*Not today, my dear.* Another day. When I was abroad, I used to take much milk. *Don't mind. Time is up. Let me leave today, Bye-bye.*
(Exits)

P.81 SHANKAR- *Look at the discipline he learned from foreign* countries. *Always smart and busy.* Compared to Goutam, you are just like *babies.*

IVY- I am going to change my *style*.

PROJESH- *I have changed*, before.

Enters, Mohan.

MOHAN- *I have also changed, Sir.*

SHANKAR- You! Who are you? What do you want?

MOHAN- I am unemployed. I want a job.

SHANKAR- Was the door-keeper sleeping?

IVY- No. I told him to come. While I was coming back after seeing an English cinema, he stood before me and said...

MOHAN- Didimani[12] would you engage me as your house servant?

IVY- I told him "I will tell daddy about you, but you must come to our house after changing your clothes, you must be in smart dress.

PROJESH- But how could he know our place?

MOHAN- I followed the memsahib[13].

SHANKAR- What kind of job do you know, tell me?

MOHAN- I know all kinds of jobs.

SHANKAR- What was your former occupation?

MOHAN- I used to sing songs in the drama. The last song I sang was a song in the play 'Panch Paiser Prithibi'.[14]

IVY- Come--give us a song.

P.82 MOHAN- Listen---

The Song

They are awakening-they are awakening.
When in that damp room of the slum, going without food
With no medicine to treat him while ill.
The boy died. Just at that moment
The babu, residing in the seven-storied house, called his bearer and said..
Put on the neon light
Send the girl
And open the wine bottle.[15]

SHANKAR- *Stop. Stop.*

PROJESH- *Get out!*

He continues with the song

MOHAN- So the five paisa worth world is angry and is uprising
And they are doing so in a determined way
And the mad dogs of a decadent economic system are running away with their tails between their legs.[16]
And they are rising up--rising up.
(Exits)

IVY- So the man came, not to seek a job.

SHANKAR- Don't you believe these low-born men, these dogs. They They have occupied everything-the streets, the tram-cars, the buses, etc.. You can't even walk on the pavements because they occupy them.
P.83 Like so many she-hogs their females are giving birth to innumerable children--they will turn the whole country into a slum.[17]

Enters, Anjan.

ANJAN- They will not be able to do so, uncle.

SHANKAR- You!

ANJAN- I said the correct thing. You have the police, the army, the rifles and the cannons under your control. Why don't you destroy them-these-low-borns-just use heavy cannon fire.

SHANKAR- You too, you want to *support* them?

ANJAN- I not only *support* them, I am one of them.

SHANKAR- *Immediately*, give up that party, Anjan.

ANJAN- It is not possible.

IVY- Why isn't it possible?

PROJESH- You are well-educated, aren't you?

SHANKAR- You must take my advice into account, Anjan.

ANJAN- I have done so, kakababu. In my veins flows the blood of the revolutionaries.

SHANKAR- Anjan!

ANJAN- I was born into a poor family. Standing like a dog

before the dust bin--I can see what the upper strata of society is doing.

SHANKAR- Anjan Bannerjee has changed his opinions, I see. All right, today I am busy. Preoccupied with the case which will be judged in the Burdwan Court[18]. I have got to win, by hook or by crook. Now listen, Anjan!
P.84 You are the son of my friend--I have some dreams regarding you. But with what I found out today--am I to banish those dreams?

ANJAN- Kakababu!

SHANKAR- *Don't fear, my boy*. Are you now feeling terribly afraid? No--no, don't fear--I am not making any final *settlement*. (Putting his hands on Anjan's back) I know you are a fine boy, and that you have suddenly lost your head--anyway Ivy, *my dear girl*--make Anjan understand my point, the wishes of Shankar Narayan Chatterjee--do it, my child.....(Laughs)
(Exits)

IVY- Are you really a communist?[19]

PROJESH- How strange, the son of a 'bhadralok'[20], can never be a communist, and Anjan can't be a communist.

ANJAN- Projesh!

PROJESH- To hell with these arguments, *brother*, why do you indulge in these useless troubles? Come with me.

ANJAN- Where to?

PROJESH- To the camp of the gypsies. Today they sing and dance.

ANJAN- What do you mean?

PROJESH- *Come, friend*. I will show you something which will remind you of Bagdad of the Arabian Nights, and the songs will make you feel you are in Persia.
(Exits)

P.85 ANJAN- Who has he referred to?

IVY- He is referring to Sania.

ANJAN- Who is Sania?

IVY- The gypsy girl. A group of gypsies have set up their camp next to our garden. The girl is very se...(wanted to say sexy)--*I mean, what you call*---

ANJAN- What is amiss?

IVY- Let us forget it...Had you been here a bit earlier I could have introduced you to Goutam. He is a son of a very rich man. *Recent foreign returned.*

ANJAN- Oh!

IVY- Are you apprehensive?

ANJAN- Why?

IVY- By hearing what daddy has just said?

ANJAN- I turned a deaf ear to what your daddy's words were.

IVY- Why?

ANJAN- Because I was thinking, and I am still thinking.

IVY- Thinking of what?

ANJAN- My thoughts roamed about from heaven to the netherworld.

IVY- Come, let's go. Drop the political discussions, Come---

ANJAN- Where to?

IVY- Let's go to Gaurer Math, and walk a while.

ANJAN- NO!

Ivy- Why, no?

P.86 ANJAN- I am not feeling like it.

IVY- What are you saying, Anjan? You don't feel a storm rising in your mind, for possessing me?

ANJAN- There is no cloud--how could there be a storm coming?

IVY- O.K. I will make a cloud rise in your mind.

ANJAN- How?

IVY- With a little smile, with a little bit of song, and with a little touching.

ANJAN- Ivy?

IVY- Are you feeling afraid? Why? You are a man--don't you want to enjoy life? Don't you want to taste novelty? Haven't you been charmed by seeing the first Kadam flower blooming on the tree?[20]

ANJAN- I am a bit different, Ivy. In renunciation rather than enjoyment I get pleasure. I prefer worship to being worshipped.

IVY- You are rather a coward.

ANJAN- You can even call me an old man.[21]

IVY- *Even now, I am still giving you a chance...*

ANJAN- Your chance is not a chance, *but by chance*. And I have not learned to rush madly, being drunk with *by chance*. My father was a friend of your father. As a result of their promise, you are my betrothed, would-be bride. So I request that you be a proper woman, and don't aspire to be a queen.

IVY- Anjan!

P.87 ANJAN- Forever the males have been begging before females, to get rewards from their nature-given sweetness and grace. The coyness is for women--the prestige is for the man; the wayward mind of the man, built up a sweet peaceful home under the soft shadow of the benedictory heart of women. But when women give up their true nature, and go begging for love from males--the love ceases to be nectar, but rather it turns into poison.[22]

(Exits)

IVY- Has Anjan really turned into a communist? If that is so...then, no, no, I am wrongly doubting him. He is a nice boy. He doesn't understand what love is. I will make him understand that my desire to have and possess you is what modern love is.

(Exits)

ACT II, SCENE IV -- By the side of the Ganges(Hooghly) River.*

Enters, Babul--drunk...

BABUL- Modern love. (laughs) You bloody fool, modern love. You can buy it for four rupees a kilo. If you can buy it at two rupees you get one kilo extra-gratis. (takes another drink). No, I told him "You son of a swine--my dear Gopichand, take more money if you like, I don't care--but you must give me good stuff." That son of a bitch--instead of giving me good stuff, he gave me something adulterated.

Enters, Mahesh.

MAHESH- (laughs) You have said something, excellent.

BABUL- What something, sir?

MAHESH- The word *'pure'* adulteration.

BABUL- Who are you, sir?

MAHESH- I am a writer.

BABUL- Don't tell a lie. You are an I.B.[1].

MAHESH- *No, no believe me, sir.*

BABUL- You are calling me sir. Me sir? (laughs)

MAHESH- What is amiss?

BABUL- Even if we wear clothes made of tyrecott and tyrelene we remain unchanged.

MAHESH- Are you drinking?

BABUL- Don't you begin by asking me such a personal question- I will not oblige to answer you.

MAHESH- I beg to be excused (about to leave)

BABUL- *Please listen, sir.*

MAHESH- Go ahead.

BABUL- What are you looking for?

MAHESH- I am looking for characters.[2]

BABUL- What do you mean?

MAHESH- I am characterless[3].

P.89 BABUL- That mean---

MAHESH- There are no more characters in my *stock.*

BABUL- Absolutely nothing?

MAHESH- There are, of course there are. There are quite a lot. I came across many characters in train compartments, in tram-cars, in buses, on the streets and meadows, in villages, in markets, in cities...but I can't put them to use because I have exhausted them. The publishers are saying "Give us love stories because the demand for terrible,[4] I mean, obscene love stories is very high. But---

BABUL- *But, why sir?*

MAHESH- If the writer himself is not obscene, how could he write obscene stories? Could you kindly make me into an obscene, barbaric person?

BABUL- *May I know, sir,* whether you are Maheshbabu?

MAHESH- Yes. But, who are you?

BABUL- Let me take the dust off your feet[5] (he does so).

MAHESH- What is your name?

BABUL- Babul Das.

MAHESH- Babul Das. Isn't your father a jute-mill---

BABUL- Worker. You were my private tutor.

MAHESH- Now you are in such a state? Didn't you pass the higher secondary examination?

BABUL- (laughs) Babul Das is educated, no doubt...His father laboured hard and underwent hardships to make him an educated young man--and had Babul Das had the opportunity....no, no...that Babul Das is dead. Now I am unemployed, a waster, a loafer, a hooligan who is now banished from the confines of civilisation.[6]

MAHESH- Hooligan!

P.90 BABUL- Sir, sir, you please go away. You were my teacher and you taught me fine ethical lessons...but today, I think, had I not been taught those things, I would have taken to hooliganism more easily. I would have learned to pick pockets more easily and earlier.

MAHESH- Do you feel proud of being a man following the wrong way?

BABUL- Mastermahasaya (teacher)! I am keeping myself straight by following the wrong way. I would have been all the more wretched, really bad, had I stuck to the so-called right way.

MAHESH- Babul!

BABUL- My father's hand was damaged by the machine while he was working in the factory. Then I began to face terrible hardships and difficulties with a younger brother, old father, and old mother to care for. None cared to give me a job, no one helped me. I wanted to live honestly, I also talked pleasantly to people, but no one wanted to help me. Once I didn't even have five paisas from the pockets of others; and today I am picking those pockets, and emptying them completely. I am keeping well by being bad.[7]

MAHESH- I have found it, I have found it. I have found the new character. I will write today, I will write about you. And I will write that if a man wants to live well, by having good food and clothing, he has got to

be bad, he must follow the wrong path. The institutions for rendering education to the people must be abolished from the countryside, and institutions for teaching pick-pocketing should be established in their place.

(Exits)

BABUL- (laughs) The teacher has been taught by the student-[8] this kind of learning can be called out-teacher teachering.

P.91 Enters Brahmadatta.

BRAHMA- Only ask the grace of the Guru (this is said in Sanskrit)

BABUL- What sort of a chap are you?

BRAHMA- Jyotishyunabe Tantracharya Brahmadatta Vidyabagish.

BABUL- Do you know palmistry?

BRAHMA- Yes, I know it well. *Let me have a look at your palm, sir.* (takes his hand)...Oh fine....

BABUL- What is there?

BRAHMA- Guru means Guru of the gods, and who is the guru[9] of the gods--Brihaspati, and Brihaspati means----

BABUL- The day before Friday.

BRAHMA- The day after Saturday--that is on Sunday you will gain something in excess.

BABUL - Gain?[10]

BRAHMA- Yes, 'love' and 'love' means bhalobasha and 'bhalobasha means *'progressive'* bhalobasha.

BABUL- Does your reading come to be true?

BRAHMA- If you can't believe it, have a look at this handbill. A handbill means a letter of praise, a certificate. Here is a letter from Manaranjan babu of Idilpore--it says" Sir, your counting is very true I won the state lottery this month"; Abdul Salan from the village of Kusum says "your counting is fearfully true, sir. I am selling my radio sets at a fantastic rate." Sukumar Bannerjee of the village of Mulgram[11] wrote, "In keeping with your counting, the tires of my truck are no longer undergoing much wear and tear" Should I read more, Sir?

P.92 BABUL- No, stop please.

BRAHMA- Shall I give you an amulet?

BABUL- Amulet?

BRAHMA- *Yes, sir.* If you use this amulet the things apart from you will come near. She, about whom you think so much that your tea gets cold, she will come to you with the *speed of a rocket,* within seven days.

BABUL- What is the name of the amulet?

BRAHMA- *Apollo IX* amulet or charm....costs two rupees.[12]

BABUL- Here is the money---you swine of a cheater.

BRAHMA- What do you mean?

BABUL- Don't I know you? Weren't you a rickshaw puller when you were younger?

BRAHMA- I don't even know the first alphabet of astrology-and so people can guess it so easily.

BABUL- Go away, you wretched fellow.

BRAHMA- You needn't be cruel, I am going away. I am going back home to tell my wife[13], "My wife, I am failing to carry on with this trickery. The public has become too *clever*". Most probably I shall have to become unemployed like 80 thousand academically qualified engineers, who are now going on without any jobs.[14]
(Exits)

BABUL- Fortune--he came to tell a fortune--this son-of-bitch astrologer. Was it arranged by fortune that I should have to maintain my old father with one arm amputated, by hooliganism, by acting as agents, by picking pockets?

P.93 Enters Projesh

PROJESH- What are you talking about Shobhan?

BABUL- *Doing acting, friend.*

PROJESH- Acting!?

BABUL- Yes, as I am playing a part in 'Panch Paiser Prithibi'

PROJESH- You are always busy, going about from place to place, indulging in talk and spending company time. How do you manage to look after the big business?

BABUL- Me! Look after business--why should I bother!

PROJESH- Then--how--

BABUL- There are men paid for doing that. There are a lot of paid men, *my friend. My P.A. is an expert girl*[15]. If you see her, you will certainly lose your head. Do you want to meet her, one day?

PROJESH- Not now. *Later brother.* Let me see that one first(nods his head in the direction of Sania)

BABUL- Which one?

PROJESH- That gypsy girl, the beauty Sania.

BABUL- Oh! Not an ordinary girl--the very prototype of a heavenly nymph.

PROJESH- Shobhan!

BABUL- Then would you likw to see Sania's gypsy dance?

PROJESH- Dance--why a mere dance, why a dance only---I would like to see.....

BABUL- Something else? (he laughs).

PROJESH- Believe me, Shobhan, I have gone mad after seeing that girl. *Oh, beauty of the wild type*, yet how sweet.

P.94 BABUL- But surely you will be going to the club tonight, I hope?

PROJESH- *Sure.*

BABUL- Miss Champa Chaudhury will be there about ten.

PROJESH- Let her come. You should bring a few bottles of good wine. Here, take my donation of five hundred rupees-my donation for this month. (gives him the money)*By the by* don't you forget to keep *the menu* unaltered.

BABUL- *Don't you worry, friend.* I am afraid that you really haven't come to understand that we are 'night' men.[16]

PROJESH- Shobhan!

BABUL- Simply by the timing of a fellow's footsteps, we can guess what he is desirous of. After seeing the dance of the gypsy girl, Sania, when you get to the club you will see that Champa Chaudhury is there, abloom, like a Champa flower.[17] You will also see that the roasted chickens are *ready*, and also bottles of different colours---then, after having a drink, you will be able to shut your eyes and think that heaven is not far away, but rather down here at our feet. (laughs)
(Exits)

PROJESH- I didn't know that so much pleasure could be had from these enjoyments. *By having them as my friends, my life* has changed. Goutam Mukherjee has made me realise---

Enters, Nigar Hosan.

NIGAR- That the whole noble world is now within your grasp[18].

PROJESH- You have said the right thing, Nigar Hosan.

NIGAR- But why are you here, my sweet babu?

PROJESH- I have come to see you dancing and to listen to your songs.

P.95 NIGAR- For shame, for shame.[19]

PROJESH- What happened?

NIGAR- Go away from here, my sweet babu.

PROJESH- Why?

NIGAR- After drinking all day, we are all dead drunk now. The boys have passed out and the girls have turned shameless, babuji.

PROJESH- Is it so?

NIGAR- Yes, my sweet babu! If you see such a sight you will be overpowered with shame.

PROJESH- (laughs)

NIGAR- Why are you laughing, my sweet babu?

PROJESH- I won't feel ashamed.

NIGAR- My sweet babu!

PROJESH- I am no longer a child, Nigar Hosan. When you came here for the first time I was a child. Then I used to have a keen sense of shame. Now I have grown up. Now I am free from shame, and other such things.

NIGAR- I understand, my sweet babu.

PROJESH- What have you understood?

NIGAR- That the world has undergone radical changes.

PROJESH- Nigar Hosan!

NIGAR- Yes, my sweet babu! Gypsy Nigar Hosan first came here twenty years ago--you were just a toddler

P.96 When I used to ask you to come to me, you used to run away feeling bashful--and the Memsahib (refers to Projesh's mother) used to say.."Nigar Hosan, your sweet babu is rather bashful."

PROJESH- Let's forget things twenty years past.

NIGAR- All right, babuji. Now, please give me five paisa-will you?

PROJESH- What will you do with five paisas only?[20]

NIGAR- Buy some bidis[21]. Since it rained the whole day, I couldn't show any BhanuMati magic--and so I could not earn even five paisas.

PROJESH- O.K. I am giving you--

NIGAR- Very good, my sweet babu. God will bless you, my sweet babu.

PROJESH- But did you have any food today?

NIGAR- Nothing, babuji.

PROJESH- You don't mean to say that!

NIGAR- Yes, babuji. All of them went to have their drinks, but I did not take anything.

PROJESH- What a pity! Going without food the whole day.

NIGAR- (laughs)

PROJESH- Nigar Hosan!

NIGAR- Don't you make me laugh, babuji--you have made old Nigar Hosan laugh. Babuji, is this the first time that I have starved? You don't know how much money we *can manage to income* by showing BhanuMatir magic.

P.97 PROJESH- ---You---

NIGAR- I have been starving for my whole life span, my sweet babu. Somedays I live on two pieces of bread, if I can get them, and the next day I live on water for the whole day. If this Nigar Hosan could manage to have two square meals a day, then---no, no. babu no more useless talk. Now please give me five paisa.

PROJESH- No, not five paisa, Nigar Hosan. Here are twenty-five[22] rupees, and please take them (hands them to Nigar).

NIGAR- My holy father! Twenty-five rupees. Babu, throughout my life I have never had the opportunity of seeing twenty-five rupees at a time. Only if I could have had this five years before.

PROJESH- Then what?

NIGAR- No--my sweet babu. Let's forget those things. If you want to see the dances and listen to the songs, please come after a while. Meanwhile, spend your *your time*, elsewhere. Even now they are still busy with their drinks.

PROJESH_ All right. I will do so. But I have something more to say---

NIGAR- Tell me, my sweet babu.

PROJESH- I will give you more money--a lot of money--do you understand?

NIGAR- I understand. But why should you pay me so much money, babuji?

PROJESH- Just for no reason. As a matter of fact, I will give you this money to save you all from starvation. 23
But take care--my family shouldn't know that you are getting financial support from me.

P.98 NIGAR- Babuji!

PROJESH- My good man! You needn't be surprised. We have much and you have nothing--I am ready to give you some.
(Exits)

NIGAR- Twenty-five rupees---twenty-five rupees in the possession of Nigar Hosan, the gypsy--I can buy the whole world with this twenty-five rupees. (laughs)

Sania, quite high from drinking, enters.

SANIA- (laughs)

NIGAR- Sania! (hides the moeny) Why are you here?

SANIA- I am here to take you away, you old man.

NIGAR- Why?

SANIA- I want to dance with you.

NIGAR- For shame--you hussy!

SANIA- What a pity. You are showing your temper, you old man.

NIGAR- Sania!

SANIA- I am very high, granddad. I am also having a strange feeling in my heart.

NIGAR- Let's go back to the camp.

SANIA- No.

NIGAR- Why not?

SANIA- No, granddad. Here there will be dancing and singing, and by dancing and singing with them I will make my wounded heart healthy again.

P.99 NIGAR- Do it, by all means. I am leaving.

SANIA- What a pity. The old man got angry.

NIGAR- No, Sania. No anger. I will have drinks with them.

SANIA- Granddad!

NIGAR- Yes, you wench. Gypsy Nigar Hosan today is the Emperor of the World. (laughs)
(Exits)

SANIA- The old man has been starving the whole day. But I am quite helpless-- I haven't even got five paisa on me. My, my, my, I am quite drunk. Now I feel---

Sania sings and dances---

The Song

There is wine in the cup of my heart.
And by drinking that wine, a guest is going
about here and there.
Secretly he stole my heart.
And in return only gave me pain
And the bulbul sings in distress--Oh where is
my darling, where is my darling.

Enter, Projesh.

PROJESH- Excellent!

SANIA- Who is there? Oh its you, sweet babu.

PROJESH- Yes, Sania, its me.

SANIA- Why are you here, babu. You had better go away as soon as possible.

P.100 PROJESH- Why?

SANIA- If anybody sees you here, it will create trouble.

PROJESH- No one will be able to see us, Sania, no one in the darkness of the evening.

SANIA- Babuji!

PROJESH- Sania!

SANIA- (bursts out laughing)

PROJESH- What is so funny, Sania?

SANIA- Are you feeling very thirsty, babuji? [24]

PROJESH- Well said, Sania. I got drunk at the very first sight of you. I have lost the pearl of my heart in the sea-depth of your eyes.

SANIA- Pick up that pearl, babuji, and go back.

PROJESH- You're telling me to go back?!

SANIA- Yes, babuji--It simply can't happen.

PROJESH- What can't happen?

SANIA- What you want.

PROJESH- Sania!

SANIA- Yes, babuji. You are the scion of a high family and I am only a low-born girl, and with I can't have--- [25]

PROJESH- Listen, Sania. I am not here to use you as a plaything.

SANIA- Then, why?

PROJESH- By making you the person of my heart, ornamenting you to be so, I will keep that pearl of my heart well-preserved (holds the hands of Sania)

SANIA- Let go of my hands--let go of my hands. (goes apart)

PROJESH- What is wrong, Sania?

SANIA- Now I am dead drunk. My whole body is under the power of spirits. Now, you please go away--my granddad will be here any moment now.

PROJESH- O.K. I am leaving now. (About to go)

SANIA- If you feel thirsty, babuji, come again.

PROJESH- Sania!

SANIA- Babuji.

PROJESH- I am drunk, too, Sania. I am drunk now. (Suddenly Projesh draws Sania to his bosom and embraces her).

Enters, Nigar Hosan.

NIGAR- Babuji!

PROJESH- (breaks from Sania) Who is there?

NIGAR- I am Nigar Hosan.

SANIA- Granddad!

NIGAR- You stop, you shameless hussy! You have gone completely shameless. You are flirting with the sweet babu, behind the back of Nigar Hosan.

SANIA- Oh what a pity.

NIGAR- Sania!

P.102 SANIA- Don't you understand, old man, it is not flirtation, but love, genuine love?

NIGAR- Love, genuine love.

SANIA- Yes, my granddad. That sweet babu has told me, "Sania I am not here to make a plaything of you. I will make a queen of you."

NIGAR- A great bluff.

PROJESH- Nigar Hosan.

NIGAR- Nigar Hosan sees everything clearly now, babuji. Now I know why you paid me twenty-five rupees, and why you promised to pay me more, a lot of rupees--I know clearly.

PROJESH- --Me--

NIGAR- By paying twenty-five rupees you want to buy flesh, as if you are in a meat-shop, babuji---take back your money, take back your money (throws it at Projesh).

SANIA- Granddad!

NIGAR- Get away from here, quickly, you shameless hussy.

SANIA- It is not me, but you, who are shameless.

NIGAR- Me, shameless?

SANIA- Not only shameless, but also senseless, intelligenceless--you are devoid of any power of seeing things rightly, granddad. And so you failed to see this properly.

NIGAR- What?

SANIA- That the small flowering tree you knew, is now fully developed. And now, how beautiful it is to look at and what dreams it dreams--how full this whole tree is with smiling flowers.
(Exits)

P.103 NIGAR- O.K. You shameless girl. I have got to teach you some lessons.

PROJESH- Nigar Hosan!

NIGAR- Count your money, babuji. Only five paisa less than your twenty-five rupees.

PROJESH- Why five paisa less?

NIGAR- I just bought a few bidis.

PROJESH- If I am to take back the money, I am not going to take even five paisa less. Give me back the twenty-five rupees, whole.[26]

NIGAR- Babuji!

PROJESH- You gypsy, Nigar Hosan! I want even that paltry sum of five paisa back. I will come here again at exactly the same hour. If you can make the rupees whole by adding back the five paisa, I will take the money, but if you fail to do so, then I will give you another five hundred rupees for spending the five paisa. Remember, only one night is left from today, and there is also less five paisa.
(Exits, laughing)

NIGAR- If I fail to pay back the five paisa, five hundred rupees will be paid to me. He wants to buy the chastity of Sania for five paisa, and after buying it, the babuji will throw it away, this half-million worth chastity, within a few days. Sania has lost her head and fails to understand, but Nigar Hosan has got to be clear-headed. No, no I don't want any five hundred rupees. I will certainly give back--must give back to that swine--five paisa. I will tell Sania, quietly, "Sania, let's leave this place. They want to buy you and they want to make the whole world a place worth only five paisa" (laughs) (Exits)

ACT III, SCENE I -- The house of Maheshbabu.*

Enters, Malay with a bag in his hand.

MALAY- Manjusha has now got over the fear of 'Panch Paiser Prithibi'. Yet, she is not ready to be caught by me. But she has got to succumb. I have been able to win the favour and support of Malaboudi, and I know that if I can keep her in my favour, I will have Manju.....

Enters, Manimala.

MALA- My goodness, when did you arrive, Malay Thakurpo?

MALAY- Just a little while ago.

MALA- Please sit down. I am going to bring you some tea.

MALAY- No, boudi, I don't want tea, just now. I just had tea.

MALA- Then, let me bring you some sarbat (sherbet)[1].

MALAY- Mala boudi, you are a strange person, why do behave like that? You become busy to offer me food, as if I am an outsider, with whom you must be very formal.

MALA- Why, you are not an outsider. Yet---

MALAY- Let it be dropped. Where is Manju?

MALA- She is sleeping.

MALAY- Did she tell you anything about me?

MALA- Yes, she told me. Of course, I turned a deaf ear to her words.

MALAY- Then, listen boudi. As I am the director, I have to correct the artist, if she makes mistakes. Take, for example, --the heroine is standing before the hero?

MALA- She has got to come.

MALAY- But because of her shyness and coyness, she fails to say anything.

MALA- For shame! Her pretention is insufferable.

MALAY- The hero is saying again, and again, "Please talk, please talk."

MALA- He has got to say so, as they are carrying on a love-affair secretively, and can't waste even a minute of their time.

MALAY- Then I was compelled to place my hand on the face of the heroine.

MALA- It is fine, that does not transgress the limit--I thought he placed his mouth on her mouth.

MALAY- That is exactly what I did with Manju, while teaching her acting.[2]

MALA- Moreover---

MALAY- What about this moreover, boudi?

MALA- If you want to earn money, you have got to get rid of your shame and such other things, to a certain extent. What is there in your bag?

MALAY- Saris and ornaments.

MALA- For whom?

MALAY- For you, and also for Manju.

MALA- Come, let me have a look at them.

P.106 MALAY- Here you are. Two pairs of Manipuri earrings.[3]

MALA- Oh, how beautiful! The make is fine. How much did you pay for them?

MALAY- I had to pay nothing, as I am, after all, Malay Roy the director everybody holds in high esteem, don't you know? The boys at the club gave me these after taking up a collection to buy them.

MALA- Is it a club for boys coming from rich families?

MALAY- Of course.

MALA- Oh, it is such a pleasure to be a rich man.

MALAY- Look at this sari.

MALA- My eyes are blinded by the dazzle.

MALAY- This is, of course, dazzling. It is now hard to find in the market, *out of market*.

MALA- The wretched girl is sleeping, otherwise I would have shown her the sari. Even after being loaded with such a gift, the wretched girl forgets to smile.

MALAY- I have *changed Manju's name, boudi*.

MALA- What name have you chosen?

MALAY- Chaudhrani.[4]

MALA- Oh! What a beautiful name. People will go mad, by listening to the name. You did well by changing the name.

Enters, Maheshbabu--in a drunken state.

MAHESH- Can the mind be *changed*, too, by only *changing* the name?

MALA- I could not care less for the mind stuff. Let that be preserved for the realm of you men-of-letters. What I need is money.

MAHESH- I have brought money. A lot of money. Come, take this money and count it, an amount of money like this you have never seen before in your life.

P.107 MALA- Really---Oh, a great deal of money.

MALAY- Where could you get so much money, Maheshda?

MAHESH- By selling.

MALA- By selling what?

MAHESH- I sold myself.

MALAY- Sold whom?

MAHESH- Sold myself.

MALAY- Maheshda!

MAHESH- (laughs) Sold myself. I got a great deal of money and spent a little bit of it on drinking. As I lost myself, I got drunk.

MALA- It is O.K., that you took a drink. If you don't drink you can't---

MALAY- write well.

MAHESH- This time my writing is going to be acceptable stuff--it is going to be highly readable. I am going to write love stories. Cheap love. The heroine will say "I want money. Money can buy minds"....

MALA- Of course, money can buy minds.

MAHESH- Who says that minds can't be bought by money--they are cheaper than ordinary clay.

MALAY- But, you don't really believe that, Maheshda?

MAHESH- My god! If I refuse to believe that, people will call me a madman.

MALA- You are not ill, I hope?

MAHESH- Had I been a healthy man, my home would not have turned into a theatre, and I would not have bought so much money--promising to write so-called love stories.[5]

MALAY- Maheshda!

MAHESH- Advertisements, Malay, publicity. By the trick of publicity, of advertisements, you can convince people that lichi fruits[6] are growing on wild arums. Open the newspapers, and take your count.
P.108 How, after giving an undertaking to the Government, some playwright is being advertised as an uncompromising playwright.[7]

MALAY- Please write a play for us, Maheshda.

MAHESH- But, the play is already on, Malay.

MALAY- Where?

MAHESH- In the market places, in factories and industries, in the whole state, in the whole country, in politics.[8]

MALA- I can't help laughing, looking at you.

MAHESH- And looking at you, I feel like crying.

MALAY- Maheshda!

MAHESH- Aren't you the same Malay, who when he stopped by thought that you would have to lend a fiver?

MALA- Why are you raising past things now?

MALAY- I am sorry. I have been misunderstood.

MAHESH- Mahesh Bhattacharya used to misunderstand, a bit, Malay. Had I been able to understand things as 'rightly' as you people, I would have been able to get a lot of my plays published. Then the publishers would have mobbed me, demanding plays from money in exchange of money, and I would have won the President's Literary Award,[9] overnight by writing in praise of 'Dharmatantrabad', and the title Bharataratna or Padmabhusan would have been conferred on me.[10]

MALA- Where are you going?

MAHESH- To write.

MALA- What will you write?

MAHESH- The unwritten history.

MALA-
MALAY- What do you mean?

P.109 MAHESH- Mahesh Bhattachya, the man-of-letters, is drunk. He is sinking--let him be sinking. But on you, my *sarabharas-proletariat, awake, it is time to get up*. Awake, it is time to get up.
(Exits)

MALAY- Will the man go mad, in the long run, didi?

MALA- Let him go to hell.[11] It doesn't matter whether he is okay or mad. But-----

MALAY- But what, boudi?

MALA- That young man, Anjan, is avoiding this place. It is seven days past the time when he ought to have given the money promised by him. You wretched young man, who cares whether you come or not--you could have sent the money. Let him come here and I will give him a piece of my mind. Let me drop this topic, thakurpo. Do you knwo, thakurpo, I have been desirous of wearing a necklace for ages. But----

MALAY- No buts, boudi. I will buy a necklace for you.

MALA- As if I didn't know it. But you must give me that amount of money you are giving me now, without others having any knowledge of it.

MALAY- Don't you worry. Whatever you want to have, tell me and I will supply it for you. But----

MALA- Don't you worry, thakurpo, I am going to send that wretched girl immediately. How could she sleep so much? At her age I could not even sleep.
(Exits)

MALAY- As if you sleep much now, while you are a mature woman--how could you sleep while always trying to grab money, and fro money you--none of my business--let me forget unnecessary things--she whom I----

Manjusha enters.

P.110 MANJUSHA- She is here, Malaybabu.

MALAY- Manjusha!

MANJUSHA- What is amiss? What are you looking at?

MALAY- You look so beautiful after you sleep.

MANJUSHA- Is it so, Malaybabu? Who do I look like--Urbashi[12] or Sophia Loren?

MALAY- Chaudrani.

MANJUSHA- Chaudrani?

MALAY- Your new name.

MANJUSHA- Fine. Even my name is lost to me and has been changed.

MALAY- Why only your name? I will change your very life, everything.

MANJUSHA- Even my life?

MALAY- *Sure. Within a year I will give you a chance to to appear in a film.*

MANJUSHA- So you have bought my didi, by giving her saris and ornaments?

MALAY- Chaudrani!

MANJUSHA- You are a man of unusual intelligence, Malaybabu.

MALAY- Even now you address me as 'apni', and also as Malaybabu.[13]

MANJUSHA- Then what do you expect me to say, " *Oh my darling*--Oh my darling?

MALAY- Are you angry?

MANJUSHA- Then you even expect 'love anurag'[14] from me?

MALAY- This you say, particularly in your sensitive state.[15]

MANJUSHA- (giggling) The abhiman[16] of a professional actress--it doesn't mean much.

P.111 MALAY- Anyway, *tomorrow is the play--just rehearse, for once, the last scene* and let me show you how it is done.

MANJUSHA- Please show me.

MALAY- Take this room for a first-class railway compartment--The Rajdhani Express[17] is running at great speed--*A reserved berth*--late at night--no lights burning--

MANJUSHA- Darkness.

MALAY- Yes, and in the darkness the heroine gets up from her berth, and the hero does as well. A storm is raging in the minds of the two. Suddenly the heroine flies into the arms of the hero and says " Save me please."

MANJUSHA- I understand, but---

MALAY- Take me for the hero.

MANJUSHA- (laughs)

MALAY- What is wrong?

MANJUSHA- You can't save me.

MALAY- *Oh, don't lose the image. Now, let us begin--*

MANJUSHA- I can't do it.

MALAY- What do you mean?

MANJUSHA- *You are not the hero.*

MALAY- Then, what?

MANJUSHA- *The villain.*

MALAY- *Then the hero* is most probably Anjan?

MANJUSHA- Malaybabu!

MALAY- There is no way out, Manju. I have spent money, quite recklessly, for you. I want to wipe out your dream regarding Anjan.

P.112 MANJUSHA- Anjan is not so lowly--not so mean as you. She, for whom you are spending so much--Anjan doesn't even look at her.

MALAY- It is a lie.

MANJUSHA- If it had been a lie, I would not be an actress today.

MALAY- I don't believe it, Chaudrani. I know that to Anjan, you are the image of a young woman whose youth is as brimful as a river in spate.

MANJUSHA- Then, to my eyes too, Anjan is the very image of the sea where the river yearns to go, attracted by love.

MALAY- Chaudrani!

MANJUSHA- You are mistaken, directorbabu. The sea never goes to the river. For ages it has been the river which plunges into the sea, and she loses her own identity.[18]
(Exits)

MALAY- No. I can't allow it to happen. The silver bosom of the river on which I have made my dream-boat to float, I will not allow that river to plunge into the sea.[19]
(Exits)

ACT III, SCENE II -- The Garden House of the Chatterjee family*

Enters, Ivy.

IVY- I won't use it, I won't use it, by no means will I use the vermilion mark on my head, nor will I put on the conch shell bangles and the single iron-bangle on my wrists. Is there any reason[1] why one should use such things while married?

Enters Lotus.

LOTUS- Then why do other girls use them?

IVY- Those who use them are *so many idiots. They have no idea about beauty and it shows.* Moreover, they fail to understand---

LOTUS- Fail to understand what?

IVY- By using the vermilion mark, conch-shell and iron bangles, they assert the fact that women are slaves of men.[2]

LOTUS- Then, do you want to be a goddess to your husband?

IVY- *Sure.*

LOTUS- Are you not going to use the vermilion mark, conch-shell and iron bangles?

IVY- *NEVER!* The most I can do is to use a ring on which his name is engraved.

LOTUS- You can jolly-well put on the vermilion mark, *in the modern style.*

IVY- What do you mean?

P.114 LOTUS- Haven't you noticed? Just a little vermilion-mark in the parting of the hair, and then covering it up with hair?[3]

IVY- Those who do that, they are not free from fear.

LOTUS- Don't you have any fear?

IVY- Fear! Why should there be fear?

LOTUS- How will you address your husband?

IVY- By saying his name[4]. By holding his name.

LOTUS- You can also do so by holding his ear.

LOTUS- Compared to other girls, you are the other way round.[5]

IVY- *Definitely.*

LOTUS- But what about being a mother?

IVY- What do you mean, *you idiot.*

LOTUS- What the others want to tell you, do you know?

IVY- What?

LOTUS- *Shut up you idiot!*
(Exits)

IVY- Come, *you must have some punishment today.*

ANJAN- *Instead of giving him punishment*, you had better give it to yourself. (says as he enters)

IVY- You! When did you come?

ANJAN- Quite a while ago.

IVY- Were you talking to daddy?

P.115 ANJAN- (makes an indefinite sound)

IVY- Tell me, what has happened to you?

ANJAN- Nothing. Nothing has happen to me.

IVY- I have heard that now you are very engaged in party work.

ANJAN- You have got nothing to do with it, Ivy.

IVY- Of course I have nothing to do with your party, but *I had something to do with you.*

ANJAN- Why are you using the past tense--what about the present--don't you have any more relations with me?

IVY- I don't know.

ANJAN- Then, who knows?

Enters Shankarbabu

SHANKAR- Myself!

ANJAN- Kakababu!

SHANKAR- Ivy is my daughter. I have got to look after her future.

ANJAN- Of course, it is your duty.

SHANKAR- Then please answer me-- why did you give up your job?

IVY- *How strange. Is it a fact?*

ANJAN- Yes.

IVY- What are you talking about, Anjan?

SHANKAR- Did he see fit to tell me this himself? I was told by B.B. Ghose, the barrister. He told me that Anjan had given up his job two months ago.

P.116 IVY- You ought to have at least told me.

SHANKAR- He ought to have told you?

ANJAN- It would have been to no avail, kakababu, had I told it. After the incident which took place there, it was impossible for me to continue working there.

IVY- Give us the story, Anjan.

ANJAN- One day I found some workers demonstrating in front of the 'Drug House'. *I made enquiries and came to know that after taking baby-food,* manufactured by our company, a child died--and that was the cause of the demonstration.

SHANKAR- And then?

ANJAN- The police came, made an investigation and nothing harmful could be found *in the sample test of baby-food*-- but---

IVY- But, what?

ANJAN- I could not shake off my doubts. One day, I suddenly went into the *store-room*, and saw--

IVY-
SHANKAR- Saw what?

ANJAN- That what I apprehended proved to be true.

SHANKAR- That mean?

ANJAN- That the company buys empty tin boxes, from the hawkers, second-hand, and then the stuff put into them could be anything but *food of any kind and something more serious, it could be poison.*

IVY-
SHANKAR- What then?

P.117 ANJAN- I met the authorities and told them the whole thing. All the owner said "*You are an officer and office maintenance is your duty. To tresspass into the store-room is a great offence on your part.*"

SHANKAR- He told you the right thing. I have told you so many times that there is such a term as 'jurisdiction' in the law. I told you too, that after you have a job you must turn all *pre-job qualifications into dis-qualifications*.

ANJAN- --but---

SHANKAR- It is not a question of -buts- Anjan. *You can't achieve success with honesty and efficiency*. You have got to move into the modern[6] age by deletion of the words 'honest' and 'simple'.

IVY- *Daddy's words are right.*

SHANKAR- Listen some more, Anjan. Leftist--I mean the Communist Party--you must give it up.

ANJAN- That is not possible, kakababu.

SHANKAR- Just consider this, Anjan. I have heard from Mr. B.B. Ghose that the boss--the owner--hates you because you are a communist. If you are ready to leave the party and devote yourself to preserving the interests of the company, the boss would not only reemploy you, but also give you[7] a promotion and your emolument would be increased.

ANJAN- Even if I am paid 10,000 rupees a month, I won't work there again.

IVY- Do you want to unreasonably lose so much money and such a high position, Anjan?

ANJAN- It is not a question of losing it, I have already lost it.

P.118 SHANKAR- *Are you ill?*

IVY- You must be ill.

ANJAN- No.

SHANKAR- Then you should give up your role *as one of the leaders of the Communist Party and join* the service again.

ANJAN- You used to know my father, kakababu. Never in his life did he resort to falsehoods. His ideals inspired me. And so it is my firm determination too, not to bow down, ever, before falsehood.

SHANKAR- That doesn't lead to *good results in life, Anjan.*

ANJAN- In acquiring my education, I never cared for having such results.

IVY- Many of your hopes will be blasted, Anjan.

ANJAN- It is better to have your bad hopes blasted, Ivy.

SHANKAR- Do you expect that Shankar Chatterjee would marry his daughter to an unemployed, worthless, communist?

ANJAN- You needn't give your daughter in marriage to a person you think is a dead loss.

SHANKAR- *Get out, get out, I say--you nuisance.*

ANJAN- (laughs) So easily defeated, kakababu? But I can't help saying one thing. Truth cannot have an easy victory. Truth is asleep, today, as a result of of incantations of untruth spoken all over the world and the soul of man has been insulted by deceit, conspiracy of self-seeking and agression for the horrid lust for money. Yet, you know it, for certain that one day everyone will have to bow down to the truth.[8]

P.119 IVY-
SHANKAR- Anjan!

ANJAN- There is a mercury light burning in the hall of the performance of Yankee culture---that is where the party is---And, it enables you to see what dark clouds have gathered in the sky. By putting on the coloured spectacles of bourgeois luxury, you think that the world is your monopoly. But no--but no, they who eat from the dust-bin, sleep on the pavement, and who are pressed to the ground by the wheels of your motor-cars--they have rights over this world.[9]

SHANKAR- Get out, nuisance!

ANJAN- (laughs) I will go, even if you do not ask me. But those people you have turned into animals by depriving them of their rights, they will not leave so soon, if they ever once arrive.
(Exits)

IVY- Daddy, but Anjan has left?

SHANKAR- Let him go. Shut the door of Kabita Cottage. *Never let that idiot* enter the house again.

IVY- Daddy!

SHANKAR- *Don't mind, my girl!* You would not have been happy with Anjan. *Remove from your mental album* the pic-

ture of Anjan, and replace it with a picture of Goutam.

Ivy - *Your proposal*, daddy, is not bad. (Shankar leaves) But will it be Goutam or Anjan, Anjan or Goutam? I have got to decide. But how to decide? (she thinks a while) O.K. Let me toss (she tosses a five paisa piece)[10] This
P.120 side of the five paisa piece is Anjan, that side, Goutam. (she tosses the coin-and marking the result, smiles) How lovely--Goutam, Goutam (she shouts cheerfully)----

Suddenly Kalyan(Goutam) enters.

KALYAN- What's up, Ivy?

IVY- You have won.

KALYAN- What is it I have won?

IVY- You have won the toss.

KALYAN- *What is the matter?*

IVY- I will tell you afterwards.

KALYAN- There is no harm in telling me now.

IVY- Would you like to listen to it now?

KALYAN- Surely.

IVY- Then, listen--(she sings)--

The Song

One bee got the scent of the flower.
And by the touch of the bee, oh,
In the mind of the flower came the signal
for blossoming
In love for the spring
The pollen of the flower is sensitised
And the body and the mind are trembling
in hope and fear.
Probably the time for union has come.
The bee comes rushing, humming, and does
not care for the excuses of flowers.[11]

P.121 KALYAN- I presumed this before, Ivy.

IVY- You knew?

KALYAN- Sure.

IVY- Then, let us go.

KALYAN- Where?

IVY- To the Metro Cinema--there is a nice picture now showing there.

KALYAN- But I have to go to a friend's place.

IVY- Why?

KALYAN- To bring some money. Tomorrow there will be *a strike* by the bank employees, but I have got to *pay my labourers*.

IVY- How much money do you need?

KALYAN- 10,000--minimum-*10,000 minimum*.

IVY- I am in charge of daddy's money.[12] I will give you 10,000 rupees from my daddy's account.

KALYAN- If I never return the money?

IVY- Stop! Don't be silly and talk nonsense. I will send the money to you by bearer later this evening.

KALYAN- *Thank you, my darling. Just in such a moment of emergency in our foreign---*

IVY- *Let foreign* be hanged, Goutam.

KALYAN- *Don't mind darling. I lived in foreign*, you know, for a long time, and that is why I say so. But in our foreign---

IVY- Again talking about foreign--

P.122 KALYAN- O.K. I won't talk about it again--*by the by--where is my friend?*

IVY- You mean, dada?

KALYAN- *Yes*.

IVY- Running after Sania.

KALYAN- And with what purpose?

IVY- The same purpose that brings you here.
(Exits)

KALYAN- I have made a mistake--I ought to have quoted a figure of more than 10,000 rupees---Anyway, that which in the very beginning brings 10,000---at the end it should--

Shankarbabu enters.

SHANKAR- --a few more zeroes---

KALYAN- Kakababu!

SHANKAR- *Hello*, Goutam. It is nice that you have come. I was busy for the last few days...there is a new judge... and he doesn't want to bend. Yet the case...let us forget it, when will that chap you know, Agarwala[13] come?

Babul enters, disguised as Agarwala.

BABUL- Here I am, babuji.....namaste.[14]

SHANKAR- Namaste. Your deed is prepared?

BABUL- What are you saying, Mr. Chatterjee---you are a very efficient man. Yes---isn't it so, Goutam?

KALYAN- Good deeds must be done as quickly as possible.[15]

P.123 BABUL- Yes, yes. You have said the right thing, Goutambabu. As I always say--business talk first, then small talk.

SHANKAR- Am I to pay the price you asked--no reductions?

BABUL- You must pay the price--nothing more and nothing less.

KALYAN- Reduce your price a little bit, Mr. Agarwala.

BABUL- Don't ask me to, Goutambabu. You know perfectly well how much money I spent on buying that plot of land... I had great hopes of starting a business here in Bengal, but at the present time there is a great deal of trouble in Bengal, strike today, 'gherao'[16] tomorrow---for this reason---I decided that I would not do any business here, rather I would do business in my own native place.[17]

KALYAN- Mr. Agarwala!

BABUL- I want, at least as much money as I paid for that plot of land.

SHANKAR- O.K. I am signing the cheque.

BABUL- Let me put my signature on that deed of yours, too.

KALYAN- We will take possession of the land, within 1 month Mr. Agarwala.

Both people sign the documents. Babul takes the cheque and Shankarbabu takes the deed. Kalyan says...

KALYAN- Within a month.

BABUL- Of course you will take possession, babuji--take possession and make it your own--build up your factory there and do business--you will be able to make a lot of profit. And while you are counting your money
P.124 you have made in profit, remember the name of Ramkishan Agarwala--Joya Ramjiki Joya, babuji, Joya Ramkiji Joya.[18] (Exits)

SHANKAR- Ramkishan Agarwala is quite a nice man, don't you think so Goutam?

KALYAN- *Sure*. After I first met the man, didn't I *report* that to you?

SHANKAR- You have taken a great deal of trouble.

KALYAN- No, no, no--no trouble whatsoever. Let me take my leave now, kakababu.

SHANKAR- Go then, but before you go I am going to tell you some sweet news.

KALYAN- Please tell me.

SHANKAR- I will give my Ivy in marriage to you.

KALYAN- Kakababu!

When he tries to take the dust off his feet, Shankar holds his hands and says...

SHANKAR- *May you live long---bye-bye*.

KALYAN- *Bye-bye*.
(Exits)

SHANKAR- Anjan and Goutam----*far different---I have selected Goutam for Ivy*.

P.125 Enters, Panasar.

PANASAR You had better do something else, Shankar.

SHANKAR- ---yours---

PANASAR- Let me finish what I want to say.

SHANKAR- Please say it quickly.

PANASAR- Arrange a "Sayambar Sabha"[19] for your daughter.

SHANKAR- My daughter---

PANASAR- Maybe she isn't a princess, but she is, at least, the daughter of a barrister, isn't she? And so she should be able to put the garland around the neck of anybody she chooses.[20] But in her case, the motive for her

choice will not be the heroic and noble qualities of the man, but rather her choice will be guided by the barbaric qualities he possesses.

SHANKAR- What are you driving at?

PANASAR- How long will be you be going about, 'hawking' your daughter? Choose somebody and get her married to him.

SHANKAR- I will give my daughter in marriage, at the proper time.

PANASAR- When will that proper time arrive? When the proper time for getting her married is past?

SHANKAR- It is for reasons like this that I transferred you to the garden house.

PANASAR- If you feel like it, you are at liberty to drive me from the garden house, as well.

SHANKAR- Then you will have to be a 'pavement' dweller?

PANASAR- Why, I would rather stay there, than at the gate of your Kabita Cottage.

SHANKAR- What do you mean?

P.126 PANASAR- Don't you worry, Shankar. I won't stay as your gate-keeper.[21] You needn't pay me any money for my job as gate-keeper. At the end of the day, merely send some crumbs, some left-overs from your dinner table, send them by your maid-servant. I will eat that food, with no grievance.

SHANKAR- Baba!

PANASAR- Shame on you, Shankar Narayan--your prestige will be lost if you call me 'baba'. It is better to call me your dog---your dog.[22]

SHANKAR- What am I to do with that old fellow? In the long run that fellow may lead me to....no, no, *no time* for idle thoughts, Tomorrow in Burdwan Court, *that patricide* case, there will be hearings in that case. The last cross-examination of the culprit who killed his father.[23]

(Exits)

ACT III, SCENE III -- On the street in a slum area*

Enters, Brahmadatta, carrying packets and empty tin-boxes and bottles.

BRAHMA- Listen brothers! I want to appeal to you. If you have empty tin-boxes and bottles at home, bring them to me. I will buy them at a reasonable price.

P.127 Tin-boxes, empty tin-boxes---boxes of coconut oil, boxes of powder, boxes of babby-food, boxes of medicine of cigarettes, of barley---any empty boxes.

Enters, Nigar Hosan.

NIGAR- Thakurbabu![1]

BRAHMA- No, call me Koutababu.[2]

NIGAR- Why babuji? Have you given up your previous business?

BRAHMA- Let by-gones be by-gones. If you have empty boxes at your disposal, please bring them to me. I won't take them gratis, I will pay for them. I will pay the price according to the quality of the goods.

NIGAR- Will you be able to take them all, babuji?

BRAHMA- What are you saying? Nigar Hosan! Don't you know--

NIGAR- Know what, babuji?

BRAHMA- That I am the sole agent for empty boxes in this locality.[3]

NIGAR- Then, take me too.

BRAHMA- What do you mean?

NIGAR- I have turned into something like an empty tin container, babuji. I have no value left in this world.[4]

BRAHMA- Why? Has your granddaughter left you?

NIGAR- No, babuji. She has understood my state, though--But the son of the barristerbabu--the sweet babu--wants to steal her away.

BRAHMA- Do one thing.

P.128 NIGAR- Tell me what to do.

BRAHMA- Go straight to the police station.

NIGAR- Fie--fie--that place is a complete hell too.[5] No good is done there, no justice is ever done there.

BRAHMA- Then come with your granddaughter, to my place.

NIGAR- No, Thakurbabu--I am going away from here.

BRAHMA- But I think, you will be okay if you just take your granddaughter away from here.

NIGAR- Surely, I will take her away from this place.

BRAHMA- How can you save her from the clutches of your sweet babu?

NIGAR- (taking out his knife) With this knife, Thakurbabu.

BRAHMA- Oh my god--it is shining even in the darkness.

NIGAR- Thakurbabu, I will roam about here the whole night. I will see how that Satan can steal my Sania[6]. That Satan wanted to buy Sania by paying me 500 rupees, but I didn't agree. I bought five paisa worth of bidis, and I also repaid that five paisa. Now, if he continues his Satanism, I will pierce his heart with a single stroke of the knife, I will make him understand that my name is Gypsy Nigar Hosan.(laughs)

BRAHMA- It is better to leave this place, than to try to buy containers..(shouts again) Empty containers, empty containers.....

Enters Babul, with a boy on his shoulders.

BABUL- Who is there?

P.129 BRAHMA- It is me.

BABUL- But whom do you mean by me?

BRAHMA- I.

BABUL- Who are you?

BRAHMA- Empty container--

BABUL- What are you talking of?

BRAHMA- Oh sir, I have come to buy empty containers.

BABUL- Give me your hands.

BRAHMA- Here, take my hands, *sir*.

BABUL- (Putting one of his hands on Brahmadatta's belly) Will this container do?

BRAHMA- (removes his hands) What nonsense.

BABUL- It is not empty, but rather it is absolutely full. By the grace of my guru, I have emptied a full bottle while having a snack of roasted chicken. You guy--- consider this high amount of rupees--fifty thousand rupees. Ramkishan Agarwala just put his signature on the line and in came fifty thousand rupees, flying into his pocket.

BRAHMA- *I am leaving now, Sir.*

BABUL- Ah! You there-- just what do you mean by leaving? No hanky-panky business? If so I will just slap you as smashing as *a megatone bomb; and your face, you guy, will undergo a change.*

BRAHMA- *Yes, Sir.*

BABUL- What is your name?

BRAHMA- *Yes, Sir.*

BABUL- Trying to be clever, huh? Aren't you the same astrologer?

BRAHMA- Yes sir, but I gave up that business.

P.130- BABUL- Why--was it failing to bring in a profit?

BRAHMA- *Yes, Sir.* It gained some profit.

BABUL- What profit?

BRAHMA- *Yes, Sir.* --empty container--[7]

BABUL- (laughs) *Business* of trickery is all over the world. But where is that blessed guru of mine? Where are you guru, having fun at other people's cost?

Enters, Kalyan.

KALYAN- Babul!

BABUL- Who in the hell, are you--oh--guru, you? I thought that---

KALYAN- Again are you tipsy? If Projesh comes to know that you have managed to grab fifty thousand rupees by disguising yourself as Ramkishan Agarwala, then tell me, what will happen?

BABUL- That would be like a bottle of foreign liquor being spoiled by a few drops of spittle.

KALYAN- What would we do then?

BABUL- *Babul is dead- Shobhan Mitra is speaking.*

KALYAN- Where is Nigar Hosan?

BABUL- Most probably sleeping, *throwing his body* on the ground?

KALYAN- *No, he is on guard.*

BABUL- Are you stating a fact, guru?

KALYAN- Of course.

P.131 BABUL- O.K. I am going to *manage* him.

KALYAN- Listen Babul! If you can make use of this opportunity *I will reward* you with five thousand rupees. And along with the money I will give Sania as the *special prize.*

BABUL- Guru!

KALYAN- Projesh will certainly leave Sania in the lurch, after he enjoys her for a few days. As soon as he leaves her, you must catch her.

BABUL- Oh, my mouth is watering, I swear.

Enters, Projesh.

PROJESH- What is up *my friend,* why are you delaying?

KALYAN- I was explaining the whole thing to Shobhan.

PROJESH- As soon as Sania comes out, you are going to pick her up and take her away. But is the room now properly furnished?

BABUL- Of course. When you are there with the heavenly nymph, you will feel that you are in a heavenly garden[8]. Isn't it so, Kalyanbabu?

PROJESH- Kalyanda?

KALYAN- Oh that--that you know, I mean---Once I took part in a play. And even now Shobhan, from time to time addresses me by the name of the character I played.

PROJESH- Then you know how to act?[9]

KALYAN- Oh that...yes, I mean, I know acting. I would like to have you participate in acting, too.

PROJESH- We can wait for that.... now get yourself *ready* for today's acting.[10]

P.132 KALYAN- Don't you be afraid, *friend.* I am going to sit in that corner of the garden. Shobhan! *Be ready.*
(Exits)

PROJESH- That girl has not come out once since dusk. All right, let me see now, how long can she wait to come out? Shobhan, we have got to get Nigar Hosan from here, if he comes,....by any means. Be very careful--I will be waiting beside you.
(Exits)

BABUL- Damn it, I was almost on the point of being discovered just now---but the guru, that blessed chap, is really *brainy could manage quickly*---Oh, there comes that guy, Nigar Hosan.

Babul puts on the dress of a Fakir[11]

BABUL- Khoda[12] meherban----khoda meherban...

Enters, Nigar Hosan.

NIGAR- Who is there?

BABUL- Allah Malik, allah malik[13].

NIGAR- Fakir, sahib.

BABUL- Who! Oh you! Aren't you called Nigar Hosan?

NIGAR- How did you know my name, Fakir Sahib?

BABUL- Me? I don't know anything, Nigar Hosan, only God, who is merciful and the lord of everything is omniscient. God is merciful!

P.133 NIGAR- Can you tell my fortune, Fakir Sahib?

BABUL- By the grace of god, I can tell to a certain extent--come, let me see your hand (taking the hand of Nigar) .....by God!.... I see you will be in grave danger.

NIGAR- Why, Fakir Sahib?

BABUL- Do you have a granddaughter?

NIGAR- Yes, your honour, I do.

BABUL- Some Satan of a fellow wants to abduct her.

NIGAR- Fakir Sahib!

BABUL- Don't you be afraid, my son--that person won't be able to do her any harm. Come, I will give you the stuff for the remedy.

NIGAR- Come to my camp.

BABUL- No, no. It won't help us if we go to the camp. We must go to a secluded place. Come, let us go to the side of the Ganges.

NIGAR- I agree---let us go there, let us go there, then.

BABUL- God is the sovereign of everything--God is the sovereign of everything.

(Both exit)

Enters, Sania

SANIA- Granddad--granddad--where are you going with the Fakir Sahib, you old man? Oh, I say, granddad....

PROJESH- He will be late in returning.

P.134 SANIA- You!

PROJESH- Yes, it is me. I have come to take you away, Sania.

SANIA- Babuji?

PROJESH- Your granddad gave me back the whole sum of twenty-five rupees, after he made up the deficit of five paisa. But I couldn't take it back.

SANIA- What do you mean, babuji?

PROJESH- I mean, I couldn't take back my mind.[14]

SANIA- Your mind!

PROJESH- Yes. I want you with all my mind and my 'vital being'.

SANIA- No, babuji.

PROJESH- Haven't you loved me, Sania?

SANIA- I loved you, babuji. And because I loved you, I didn't want to belittle you.

PROJESH- To hell with your moral speeches. Now, come along with me.

SANIA- Where to?

PROJESH- There, where I am taking you.

SANIA- Oh, what a pity.

PROJESH- Sania!

SANIA- You will take me to hell, babuji.

PROJESH- Please come with me, Sania.

SANIA- Oh, no.

PROJESH- Come along, Sania.

SANIA- No, certainly not.

PROJESH- Won't you come?

SANIA- Oh, what a pity, you want to seduce me with sweet words.[15]

PROJESH- Sania! I will marry you.

P.134 SANIA- (laughs) How many girls have you told the same words to, babuji?

PROJESH- I understand. You aren't ready to go, without making trouble. (Comes forward) Come along, I say---

SANIA- Take care, babuji. You don't know what a nettle Sania is---

Suddenly Babul enters, gags Sania and says---

BABUL- He will try to know you, after taking you to the garden of heaven. Come now.

PROJESH- Shobhan!

BABUL- *Hurry up, friend. The car is ready, Hurry-up, hurry-up.* (goes away with Sania)

PROJESH- *Idiot* Nigar Hosan. Stay by the side of the Ganges. Your beautiful granddaughter, Sania, is on her way to Projesh's heavenly garden. After a week I will throw her away in the dustbin--like a leaf-plate which has been used.[16] (laughs)
(Exits)

Enters Nigar, in a hurry.

NIGAR- Sania, Sania--she is neither inside the tent, nor outside of the tent--then, where can she be? Oh, Sania I have brought some good medicine from the Fakir for you--it will save you from being abducted by any Satan of a fellow. Sania, oh Sania!!

Enters, Kalyan.

KALYAN- (laughs)

P.136 NIGAR- Who are you? Have you seen my granddaughter, babuji?

KALYAN- Yes, I have seen her.

NIGAR- Where did you see her?

KALYAN- Your sweet babu has taken her away in a car, forcibly.

NIGAR- Babuji!

KALYAN- The Fakir was not a real Fakir--but an associate of your sweet babu.[17]

NIGAR- Oh, how wretched, how miserable, how regretful---

KALYAN- Listen, Nigar Hosan--no good regretting--we have got to rescue the girl, by any means.

NIGAR- Of course, Of course-- I will snatch Sania away from the clutches of that Satan. That Satan, sweet babu, does not know the real Nigar Hosan. That son of a swine thinks that Nigar Hosan has lost his physical strength. No, babuji, no---This old Nigar Hosan will show that dog how powerful my breast in---how sharp the knife is, and how poisonous and full of fresh blood my heart is. (laughs)
(Exits)

KALYAN- Thus, I have laid the death-trap for Projesh. In my pocket came sixty-thousand rupees. Now it is the turn of the convent student, Lotus. And then it is the turn of Anjan, and then---after I am the owner of vast property, I will play hide and seek in the bower of the youthfulness of Ivy.[18] (laughs)
(Exits)

P.137 ACT III, SCENE IV -- The drawing-room of Maheshbabu's house.*

Enters, Manjusha.

MANJUSHA- He would have played....had my child Khokan lived... he would have come running and embraced me, calling "Mummy--mummy" (she cries) No, no, I can't afford to cry--by wiping my tears, smiling sweetly, and by practising acting as a profession, I have got to give my didi pots of money. Directed by Malay Roy I have to stand before new and newer heros, everyday and say, in a voice choked and sweetly without emotion "Oh, I love you." (she breaks down crying)

Enters, Maheshbabu.

MAHESH- You are crying, even today?

MANJUSHA- Before I explain that...why have you gotten drunk? Why are you sacrificing yourself by tampering with things tht are unjust?

MAHESH- I will answer you later. First, you please answer me. Tell me, how long will you be wiping tears from your eyes?

MANJUSHA- As long as the sea of sorrow remains undried.

MAHESH- Good--a beautiful answer.

MANJUSHA- You like it a lot, isn't it so, Jamaibabu?

P.138 MAHESH- Manju!

MANJUSHA- *Struck with wonder simply by listening to a dialogue.* (laughs)

MAHESH- How can you laugh, Manju?

MANJUSHA- By forcing myself, Jamaibabu.

MAHESH- Who are you really cheating?

MANJUSHA- Well, I am cheating myself.

MAHESH- Strange.

MANJUSHA- No, Jamaibabu. This is the law. An actress should laugh while crying. And she should say, laughing, to the hero, "you are my companion in life and death."

MAHESH- What are you saying, Manju?

MANJUSHA- I am saying the right thing, Jamaibabu. In the dazzling foot-lights the passionate hero will draw the heroine to himself and embrace her. The spectators will clap, seeing this scene of reunion after a long separation[1]. Some would, perhaps, present a garland of Rajanigandha[2] to the heroine for her best acting. Wearing that garland of victory, and standing on the pebbles of the million mistakes of her real life, and wiping her eyes--the playful heroine of that night, will be breaking down in the laughter of defeat.[3]

MAHESH- ---but---

MANJUSHA- No, Jamaibabu. There are no buts--there is not such a word as 'wonder'. The cup of life of the actress who charms millions of men, is full of tears.[4]

MAHESH- No, Manju! No, that can't be. By throwing away the tears, and emptying the cup of them, the cup should be made brimful of laughter.

P.139 MANJUSHA- Who will do that?

MAHESH- Those who deal in laughter.

MANJUSHA- Those are words from fiction, but not from life.

MAHESH- My fiction is a protest against disaster.

MANJUSHA- That is only a literary feat.

MAHESH- Literature is the guide--the knowledge of life, Manju.[5]

MANJUSHA- Jamaibabu!

MAHESH- It is literature which builds up society, changes the course of politics, carries the mute cry of the pain of life in this century, to the minds of the people.[6]

MANJUSHA- But who cares to read that kind of literature?

MAHESH- Men who are like Anjan, they read it.

MANJUSHA- But how many Anjans are there in this country?

Enters, Manimala.

MANIMALA- They are countless.

MAHESH- Because,[7] you are accustomed to counting from the wrong end.

MANIMALA- You stop! If you hadn't been affected in the brain by drinking, you would have realised that licentious men, like Anjan, are the cause of the ruin of this country.

MANJUSHA- What are you driving at, didi?

Enters, Malay.

MALAY- Malaboudi, has told you the truth.

MAHESH- Here comes the mouthpiece of Mala (laughs).

MALAY- So you are laughing, Maheshda. You don't know that it is difficult to guess the real character of men like Anjan. They are pakka actors. They are just sweet in their words, but---

P.140 MANIMALA- But they contain poison, within.

MAHESH- Since I have taken to wine, I am now drunk. But how have you two become drunk? How strange--it is I who drank wine, but it is you two who have been effected, have gone tipsy--how, tell me?

MANIMALA- I knew he would explain it like that. If you speak the truth now-a-days you will be taken as a drunkard.[8]

MAHESH - Don't mouth these words-they don't befit your mouths.

MALAY- Then whose mouth do they befit?

MAHESH- Anjan's mouth.

MANIMALA- How much do you know about Anjan?

MAHESH- At least more, and better than you.

MALAY- But you don't have the eyes to see properly.

MANJUSHA- But he has the right vision.

MANIMALA- Stop, you wretched girl. Do you know who ruined your life?

MANJUSHA- I know who ruined my life--it was ruined by---

MAHESH- By that *loafer*, Kalyan Majumdar.

MALAY- No. But by Anjanbabu.

MAHESH- Malay!

MALAY- Don't you understand that the marriage of Manju with Kalyanbabu was no real marriage?

MAHESH- Then what was it?

MALAY- A stage play of a marriage.[9]

MANJUSHA- Untrue. that is untrue. All these words are absolutely untrue.

MANIMALA- Untrue, wholly untrue? Tell me, you shameless hussy, whether you were in love with Anjan, or not ?
P.141 Whether, disregarding public opinion, of the whole village, you did agree to the proposal Anjan made for you to participate in acting? Raise you face, and tell me, whether I am telling untruths or not?

MALAY- Why do you unnecessarily put her in shame, boudi?

MANIMALA- Shame! As if she is very bashful--as if she is dying from shame!

MANJUSHA- No,didi. I have been bereft of any and all sense of shame, I am shameless now. All the veil of my shame has been blown away by the wind of your selfishness.

MAHESH- You have said the right thing, Manju.

MANIMALA- What do you mean, she said the right thing?

MANJUSHA- Yes, didi, I have said the right thing. I had a sense of shame. And it was this sense of shame that brought to the morning of my life the night-darkness of shamelessness. Had I been able to speak my mind to Anjanda that day, and not been defeated and turned mute by shame, then this darkness would not have prevailed in my life.

MALAY- Don't be misled by the words of Manju, Malaboudi. I can swear that Anjan and Manju are carrying on an illicit love affair.

MANJUSHA- No, no that is wholly false.

MAHESH- And I also refuse to believe you, Malay.

MALAY- Well, if you refuse to believe it, I will provide you with evidence.

MANJUSHA-
MANIMALA-
MAHESH- With evidence?!

MALAY- Yes, with evidence. Director Malay Roy does not accept anything without evidence. The evidence which made me *determined*, that very evidence I will *show to you*.

(Exits)

P.142 MAHESH- He is a veritable beast, mean, wretched, and ill-bred fellow.

MANIMALA- Take care. Don't you be abusive about Malay Thakurpo.

MAHESH- Manimala! To quench your all-devouring fire of desire to possess material goods, I have turned into a drunkard, and being now a victim of drink I have thrown away all my ideals, and please don't try to drag me down any lower.

MANIMALA- Me---

MAHESH- You wanted money, I gave you handfulls; You forced Manju to be a professional actress, I didn't protest; And by pampering Malay the stray dog, you have allowed him

to be insultingly assertive. Even then I kept silent. But if you want to raise yourself up even higher, materially, then Mahesh Bhattacharya, the man-of-letters, will go all the more down.
(Exits)

MANIMALA- Of course one has to go lower down, otherwise none can get the steps for climbing up in this age. Tell me, isn't it so?[11]

MANJUSHA- What are you talking about didi?

MANIMALA- Don't you understand, you wretched girl? Tell me, why have you asked Anjan not to pay the one hundred rupees per month--out of your love for him?

MANJUSHA- No, didi. I asked Anjan nothing. As he is unemployed he is not in a position to send money.

MANIMALA- Oh! Then Malay Thakurpo is correct. So, you are having a secret love affair with Anjan.

MANJUSHA- Didi.

P.143 MANIMALA- So now I understand why Kalyan refused to have any relations with you? No husband can tolerate a wife carrying on a love affair with another man.

MANJUSHA- Don't say such things, didi. Anjanda is as pure as sandlewood. I have no sinful relationship with him. Please, for once, put some faith in the words of your poor unfortunate sister.

MANIMALA- I am ready to believe it, if you---

MANJUSHA- If I what---

MANIMALA- If you can drive Anjan out of here by insulting him, when he comes here.
(Exits)

MANJUSHA- I am asked to insult Anjanda! He will come here, with his mind open and free as th- sky, and I am asked to spray black ink insults in that mind! Yes, I will do it....by insulting Anjanda I will put him on the throne of great prestige.

Anjan , very tired, unshaven, wearing dirty clothes enters.

ANJAN- Manju, Manju---here---do you know Manju! I have decided not to let you do any more acting. Within a month I will take you away from here, and---

MANJUSHA- Keep me in your place?

ANJAN- You guessed correctly. I have found a job for you in a nursing home. There you will work during the day and during the night---

MANJUSHA- I will share your bed, and be your companion of pleasure.

ANJAN- What do you mean?

P.144 MANJUSHA- Don't you really understand? The whole world is after it, and you mean to say that you are the only exception?

ANJAN- Manju!

MANJUSHA- You understand everything, perfectly. You want to have your fun with me, and so by conspiring, by play-acting you have strewn my life with the sands of pain.

ANJAN- What are you talking about?

MANJUSHA- Talking with the right words. You have burnt my flesh and mind, and reduced it to ashes by exposing me to the burning sun of society--by the fire-burning heat of the sands.

ANJAN- M---e----------M---e-------

MANJUSHA- Coward! Libertine! Characterless!

ANJAN- Manju! What have you said, Manju? What words you have used, Manju. On the limitless sandal paste of my heart you have sprinkled mud. You have thrown to the dust my mind, after tearing all the petals off that white lotus.[12]

MANJUSHA- Anjanda!

ANJAN- Oh, Manju! The words you used, I never guessed that they would ever be used by you. My mind, full of goodness and ever awake in the tired temple of my body, even in its limitless and tiredness when the subconsciouness starts its work, I didn't dream subconciously of this. You are a flower in my way-side life, you are my younger sister--and I could never think anything else but this.[13]

MANJUSHA- M---e------M----e------

P.145 ANJAN- Don't delay for even a minute, Manju. Kill me immediately. On that stone of untruth, I will enscibe, with my own heart's blood, and declare to the whole world --to society--that truth never dies, affection never withers, and there is no blemish on this brother-sister relationship of Anjan and Manju.

Manju-putting her hands on Anjan's shoulders, says in a voice choked with weeping---

MANJUSHA- Forgive me Anjanda. Believe me, what I said was not really what I wanted to say--those were not my words, really. The words, those you heard from my mouth, save me from the hell of those persons, Anjan--- save me.

Malay shows Manimala this scene between Anjan and Manju.

MANIMALA- And so, in this way he will save you, you shameless hussy.

MANJUSHA- Didi!

MANIMALA- For shame--how can you raise your face and speak after what you two have just done?

ANJAN- Maladi!

MANIMALA- Stop, don't you do any more speaking. Oh, what an honest person you are! Tell me, if you are so bent upon it, why didn't you marry Manju yourself, instead of turning her into a prematurely old woman?

MALAY- It is not proper to carry on in such a way with a girl of a 'bhadralok' family, Anjanbabu.

MANIMALA- Take care, never come to my house again.

MANJUSHA-
ANJAN- Didi!

MALAY- We are 'bhadralok' and so she is asking you not to come again in a proper gentlemanly[14] way.

ANJAN- I will come to this house, Malaybabu, just once more.

P.146 MALAY- Anjanda!

ANJAN- Oh yes, Manju. I must come to this house once more.

MANIMALA- Let me know, why should you come to this house again?

ANJAN- I don't want to say today why I will come again. But I want to say this much--the kind of trading you are doing in falsehoods packed in a showy basket of honesty, in order to gain--while you are counting your gains you will find that in the long run the pages of profit will run to zero--the debits and credits will amount to zero.

(Exits)

MANJUSHA- Anjanda!.....Anjanda!

MANIMALA- Oh even now he is your Anjanda!

MALAY- Do you know his real.identity?[15]

Enters, Mohan, singing---

The Song

MOHAN-

Throwing the garland of victory in the dust.
he who rushes foward, to embrace defeat.
Can any of you tell me about his real identity?
He who has responded to the great call of communism
And who is determined to build up society anew
Who has risen to dig the earth full of ancient garbage
To bring out gold from its bowels
Can anybody tell about his identity?[16]

Enters, Projesh and Babul[17]

BABUL- Of, fine! As if bringing out nectar and making it full....

PROJESH- What about making him sing the songs of Palesh[18]. *Hello, Malay.*

P.147 MALAY- Please do come in-----do come in.

MANIMALA- Please sit down--don't be standing.

PROJESH- *Yes, boudi darling.* We certainly are going to sit down. We have come here to sit and talk--don't you think so Shobhan?

BABUL- Here I am already sitting.

MANIMALA- Chaudrani---have conversation with them. I am going to bring some tea.

PROJESH- *No tea, boudi darling.*

MANIMALA- Coffee?

BABUL- No, no neither coffe or tea.

MANIMALA- Then, what drink would you prefer?

BABUL- Let us have the discussion about that with Chaudrani Devi. You better leave.

MANIMALA- O.K. I am leaving. I am liking, very much, you and what you say, I feel[19] we were near and dear ones in a previous birth.
(Exits)

MOHAN- Allow me to take my leave, didi.

MALAY- Don't talk about leaving--you haven't heard what these two babus are talking of.

MANJUSHA- You will have to sing the songs of[20] 'Panch Paiser Prithibi' on this coming Sunday.

MOHAN- Do I really remember these songs, didi? How many days have passed since I sang those songs. I have come to the city since then, left the village and am making my living by begging--would the babus of the city care to listen to the songs of a beggar?

PROJESH- You needn't worry about that. Take this--ten rupees. *Giving you in advance.* Don't forget, coming Sunday.

P.148 MOHAN- But-----

MANJUSHA- You needn't be apprehensive, Mohanda, I will be there to help you so that you will be able to sing the songs correctly. Please come here daily.

MOHAN- That will do,didi. Now I am leaving. Namaskar to you babus.
(Exits)

BABUL- What a relief! Goutam is on his way to Darjeeling[21] and was worrying about a singer.

MANJUSHA- Is he not back yet?

PROJESH- No Chaudrani Devi. He is now making a *tour* in Darjeeling.

BABUL- And with him---

PROJESH- *Don't be silly, my friend.*

BABUL- *Oh, I see,* I didn't remember. For the last few days I have been feeling like I am the last Mughul Emperor Shahan Shah Bhahadur Shah.[22]

MALAY- What do you mean?

BABUL- From the bathroom of the harem, there is the ringing sound of bangles. The sentries of the palace do the obeisance and the leading Begum is calling to me.

MALAY- (laughs)

PROJESH- Have you laugh later, Mr. Roy. Here is the money, bring us a bottle (gives him the money).

MALAY- *But what about that scene---*

PROJESH- *How strange. Show the scene.* But hurry, before everything else we must have the mood properly geared up.

P.149 MALAY- *All right.* Then I will be waiting in the next room.

PROJESH- Now, that insufferable fellow is gone. Now tell us, how are you Chaudrani Devi?

MANJUSHA- I am all right, but---

BABUL- What is this -but- business, my lady? To put an end to your -buts- I would call the whole Mughul army to action.

MANJUSHA- You are rather inebriated, Shóbhan.

PROJESH- He who does not become intoxicated by simply looking at you, is not a man.

BABUL- Oh my! (laughs)

MANJUSHA- Listen Projeshbabu! I have my teamwork with Goutambabu but I haven't had the opportunity for a single *rehearsal* with him.

BABUL- Don't worry, he did play a part in 'Panch Paiser Prithibi' before.[23]

MANJUSHA- Me too, I played it before.

BABUL-
PROJESH- Is it true?

MANJUSHA- Yes, I had my birth in 'Panch Paiser Prithibi'[24].

PROJESH- Oh, bother---

BABUL- What is the trouble?

PROJESH- My stock of cigarettes is exhausted.

BABUL- Then-what to do---

PROJESH- *Please bring a packet.*

BABUL- As you order me, my Emperor, I obey. Why only cigarettes this servant is ready to serve you-he can tear the moon from the sky, if you wish, Salute to you, my sire.

P.150 PROJESH- (brings out a packet of cigarettes and lights one) (laughs) What are you looking at darling?...you and myself, we will leave Calcutta and move to Bombay. Though Calcutta is not paying you the real price for your mind, Bombay will, at least, pay you the real price for your body.(Takes hold of her hands)[25].

MANJUSHA- Let go of my hand----let go---they will be here presently.

PROJESH- Let them come. I couldn't care less--because I love you Chaudrani.

MANJUSHA- Here come Shobhanbabu.

Enters, Babul

BABUL- Your majesty, your servant has come. Here are your cigarettes.

PROJESH- *Thanks, my friend.*

BABUL- The bottle is waiting for you in the next room.

PROJESH- O.K. my dear Chandrani Devi. *I will meet you again before I leave this place.*

BABUL- Tell me my queen[26], how long am I to wait for you?

MANJUSHA- Shobhanbabu!

BABUL- Though I am drunk, I am not lacking in good sense. Believe me, I love you truly (takes hold of her hands)

MANJUSHA- Here comes Malaybabu.

Enters, Malay.

MALAY- Mr. Mitra! Projeshbabu wants to meet you.

BABUL- *Yes.* To the army chief, his majesty has sent orders and his servant has got to be present as the bottle
P.151 of wine from Punia is opened---so I go, darling of my heart. *We will meet again in the future.*
(Exits)

MALAY- The manners of these men from rich families are incomparable. How nice are there manners.

MANJUSHA- Nice indeed, without any parallel in the world.

MALAY- You too are incomparable, Manju.

MANJUSHA- Indeed!

MALAY- Manju! Yes, and that is why I love you.

MANJUSHA- Do you love me?

MALAY- Believe me, my loved one. If I don't get to be with you, my life will be useless. My happiness, please, my dreams, all centre on you. I have discovered gold in the mine of your mind, my queen.

MANJUSHA- Me, a queen, your queen (laughs).

MALAY- Yes. You are my queen, my darling, my loved one; you are the companion of my dreams. I love you with all my heart, my mind, my life, with all I possess, I love you--I love you.
(Exits)

MANJUSHA- (laughs) love, love, love. So everyone of them loves me. Malay, Shobhan, Projesh, none of them can survive unless their love is requited by me. But can anyone tell me how I could put so much love, such a huge burden of love, into this little heart of mine? (laughs) How could I keep it? [27]
(Exits)

P.152 ACT IV, SCENE I -- The drawing room of Shankar's House.*

Enters, Ivy.

IVY- The way I can keep it, keep it in that way, I will. Do you understand, dada. Oh, dada is not here, he must be gone. Anyway Goutam is back....he came back from Darjeeling at ten last night. Goutam, who comes to see me at least ten times a day, that Goutam, has not cared, though he is back from Darjeeling, to come yet---

Enters, Kalyan.

KALYAN- Cared to meet Ivy, Why?

IVY- Really, I don't feel like talking to you anymore.

KALYAN- O.K. Then, I will do the talking.

IVY- I won't answer.

KALYAN- Are you angry, Ivy?

IVY- Why? Do I care for you?

KALYAN- Then, should I tell you that you do?

P.153 IVY- Go ahead.

KALYAN- You care for me, because I am the man of your heart.[1]

IVY- (smiles) You are just a rustic.

KALYAN- What do you mean?

IVY- Only a country bumpkin speaks like that.

KALYAN- Then, should a resort to *foreign* ways?

IVY- Yes, speak in that way.

KALYAN- *I am your hero.*

IVY- By the by, let me tell you something---

KALYAN- Go ahead.

IVY- I have heard stories about the heroine of the drama you are about to stage.[2]

KALYAN- Who told you stories?

IVY- Dada.

KALYAN- What did he say?

IVY- The girl is called Chaudrani. Beautiful to look at, she is quite chummy with dada I have heard.

KALYAN- *Very good.* To be chummy is always welcome.

IVY- But why is he failing with Sania--he has failed to get intimate with her.

KALYAN- This time he will succeed.

IVY- How?

KALYAN- Your dada took Sania to the Hotel Helen, and put her there.

IVY- *I see.* Then you are in the know about everything?

P.154 KALYAN- I wasn't in the city, but I was told everything by your dada. This drama will be a bit, in the long run, I hope.

IVY- That reminds me. You haven't cared *to give rehearsal* even for a single time. How will you be able to act in the play?

KALYAN- I will *stage-manage* everything during the performance.

IVY- Let's drop this talk, You must meet daddy before you leave.

KALYAN- Why? Only the other day we had a full discussion.

IVY- What was your discussion about?

KALYAN- I won't tell you.

IVY- You may not tell--but I know everything.

KALYAN- *No, no you don't Ivy.* We talked about something new, entirely new.

IVY- Then tell me.

KALYAN- *No.*

IVY- *Do tell me,please.*

KALYAN- *Never.*

IVY- Won't tell me--O.K.--I will have nothing to do with you from now on (is about to leave)

KALYAN- (taking hold of her hands) Listen. *Don't be angry, darling.*

IVY- Why should I be angry? Do you mean anything to me now?

KALYAN- Don't I mean anything to you ?

IVY- Yes, that is so.

KALYAN- O.K. I am leaving (he is about to go)

P.155 IVY- My, my don't you leave (holding his hand) don't be angry, *please*, I was just joking with you.

KALYAN- Joking?

IVY- Why not? (embracing Kalyan's neck) You are the first man in my life.

Suddenly Anjan enters, standing on the doorstep, listening to Ivy's words, and seeing her necking with Kalyan, he bursts out laughing.

ANJAN- (laughs)

KALYAN-
IVY- Who?

ANJAN- (laughs) Wonderful! You two, you pretend that you don't know me--is that so?

IVY- Do you know him?

KALYAN- *Quite impossible.* Never in my life have I seen him before.

ANJAN- Yet, you were my colleague, you worked with me for two years.

KALYAN- *Pure mad.* Do you know him?

IVY- *Absurd.* I have never seen him, even in a dream.

ANJAN- Yet, just like today, you necked with me and said sweetly in an emtional voice--"You are the first man in my life."

IVY- You have told the truth, Goutam. This man is veritably mad.

ANJAN- (laughs)

P.156 IVY- Why are you laughing?

ANJAN- This game of hide and seek, makes me laugh.

KALYAN- A mad cap, a madman.

ANJAN- Strangely, you are sticking to your kind of truth. Neither of you is ready to disclose.

IVY- Get out of here.

ANJAN- Why--are you afraid that you will be disclosed?

KALYAN- *Shut-up.*

ANJAN- Don't you be so jumpy--I won't disclose you.

IVY- Disclose what to whom? Do you think you have the liberty to indulge in madness here?

ANJAN- Are they trying to really turn me mad?

KALYAN- *Shut-up idiot.*

IVY- If you dare to utter even a single word....

ANJAN- Will you ask for the darwan[2a]--but the truth that is in the inner chamber of your mind--can you drive that away with a darwan?

KALYAN- *How strange, what audacity.*

ANJAN- A person like you shouldn't make such remarks. They sound strange coming from your mouth.

KALYAN- This man won't quit. It won't be easy to get him out of this place. Come Ivy(holding her hand). We can't do it, without the darwan. People like him, they are only afraid of a good thrashing.

IVY- Yes, lets both arrange for this thrashing.
(Both exit)

ANJAN- Mad...in the dream-bower of Ivy, Anjan is no better
P.157 today than a mad-man. Malay and Maladi think that Anjan is a characterless fellow. By Kalyan and Ivy he is dubbed a mad-man. Then, what I am to do? Where am I to go? Malay and Maladi, Kalyan and Ivy, they are the 'average' denizens of this society- this 'civilised society' Apart from them the persons about whom I think, the unfed, unclad, dispossessed, and such---who will tear away the mask of this artificial civilisation of society today, and when will it be done?

Enters, Shankar.

SHANKAR- Today, I will take away your mask, *you scoundrel.*

ANJAN- Kakababu!

SHANKAR- *Shut-up.* I don't want to be addressed like that by a *loafer*. I am through with you. I refuse to recognise that I have ever had any acquaintence with you or persons of your family, in any generation.

ANJAN- Well, do you really have any acquaintence with yourself? You don't.

SHANKAR- What are you driving at?

ANJAN- Had you been aware of your[3] real identity--you would come to know the truth.

SHANKAR- What kind of truth?

ANJAN- The true identity of your would-be son-in-law.

SHANKAR- I know perfectly well, who he is.

ANJAN- You know[4] it just the other way around--absolutely wrongly.

SHANKAR- Then this wrong to me is absolutely right.

ANJAN- Then to you, the statement that the sky is overhead would be a wrong statement.

SHANKAR- Who has asked you to convey any knowledge to anyone?

ANJAN- Are you mad or what? I am not such an ignoramous that I would try to dispel your euphoric ignorance.

P.158 SHANKAR- Why have you come to Kabita Cottage?

ANJAN- I felt that it was necessary for me to be here.

SHANKAR- You felt your presence here was necessary---

ANJAN- And now I feel that my presence could do no good. Because of my sense of duty, I was forgetting the insults given me the other day, the person who I came running here to meet, by seeing her true nature all my illusions were dispelled.

SHANKAR- What do you really want to say?

ANJAN- You are all of the same breed. Blue blood flows in your veins.

SHANKAR- *Shut-up nonsense.* (Whips him)

ANJAN- (makes the sound of pain)

Enters, Panasar, quickly.

PANASAR- Shankar! Shankar! Have you gone mad? Don't you remember who you are whipping?

SHANKAR- Whipping a libertine, a *loafer.*

PANASAR- Anjan--a libertine, a loafer?

SHANKAR- A man who, driven by his passions for a married girl, gives up his job and spends all his time in love-making with her, can he be anything but a libertine?

PANASAR- How desireable it would be, if you turned into the kind of libertine Anjan is.

SHANKAR- *Shut-up.*

PANASAR- Don't forget to add the word 'rascal' too.

ANJAN- *In modern age*, that is also implied, granddad.

SHANKAR- What I would like to do to you---

P.159 ANJAN- You can deliver, safely, a few more blows with the whip. You can hand me over to the police, by dubbing

me a thief, libertine, characterless fellow--you can even shoot me like you would shoot an animal. But beware, you expert lawyer of bourgeois law! Hundreds of Anjans, like myself, by getting no recognition from any quarter, are becoming determined to build up a new society, bound together by a newly made promise. They have been beaten for ages, and now it is their turn for retribution. And so one of these, Anjans, before he leaves, asserts this---[6]

PANASAR-
SHANKAR- Anjan!

ANJAN- You must be prepared to get your retribution blows--they will far exceed the ones you gave me.
(Exits)

PANASAR- You have told the truth, Anjan--that day of retribution is not far away. (about to leave)

SHANKAR- Listen.

PANASAR- Well, tell me.

SHANKAR- I have heard that you are going to function as a priest in the 'barwari' Durga Puja in this locality.[7]

PANASAR- Can't you see the 'namaboli' I have on?[8]

SHANKAR- How much will you be paid for your priestly duty?

PANASAR- I never do a puja in exchange for money.

SHANKAR- Then why?

P.160 PANASAR- I pray to the goddess for that 'shakti' that is able to rouse up the latent 'Shakti' of the country. The invincible 'shakti' of the goddess can defeat the evil forces--the demons--by using the mantra that calls the divine 'Shakti' I will try to rouse the oppressed masses, the latent but potential people's republic.[9]

Enters, Ivy.

IVY- Daddy, send granddad to Ranchi![10]

SHANKAR- I am thinking about doing just that, Ivy.

Enters, Nigar Hosan.

NIGAR- No, babuji! Do your thinking later--now bring out your son.

SHANKAR- Why?

NIGAR- Because he has abducted my granddaughter.

SHANKAR-
IVY- Nigar Hosan!

PANASAR- I thought something like this would happen.

IVY- Please stop, granddad.

NIGAR- That old babu might stop, but I won't memsahib.

SHANKAR- Your granddaughter might have eloped with someone else.

NIGAR- No, your son simply abducted her.

SHANKAR- Is there any evidence that he did so?

NIGAR- Evidence?

P.161 SHANKAR- Yes, Nigar Hosan, evidence is the primary thing in law. You don't know this, and it is quite natural that you don't know this. Afterall you were not a student of the law, like my son.

Ivy- Before anything else, provide us with evidence.

SHANKAR- I can't accept anything without evidence.[11]

NIGAR- Is there any evidence taht you earned money, got rich and took on the airs of a King, by honest means? Is there any evidence that you are an unimpeachably honest man?

SHANKAR- Nigar Hosan!

NIGAR- Is there any evidence that this girl is your daughter, and that that boy is your son--you might just be the putative father?

PANASAR- (laughs)

SHANKAR- *What! How cheeky! I shall punished*[12] *you.* Darwan Darwan!

IVY- *No, daddy! No need at all.* No need to call the darwan I am going to teach him a lesson.

Picks up the whip, which is lying on the floor and is about to deliver a blow, when Nigar takes hold of the whip.

NIGAR- Look out, memsahib! Instead of using the whip on me better use it on you, and thereby let your shameless heart learn the necessity of being a bit bashful....

SHANKAR- I will ring up the police station....

NIGAR- You will ask the cops to come, is it?

PANASAR- Nigar Hosan, please go back to your place--

P.162 NIGAR- Why, old babu! Because your son happens to be a barrister? No, Nigar Hosan, has come across and dealt with many barristers like him. Tell me, babuji, whether that Satan of a son of yours will hand over my granddaughter?

PANASAR- There is no hope, I think, that you will ever get her back.

NIGAR- That I also know, old babu. I know I will not be able to get her back, easily. I know that I will have to undergo much trouble to get her, to find out where she is. But remember this, barristerbabu that Nigar Hosan is ready to do anything for the sake of Sania.
(Exits)

IVY- How ill-bred he is.

Nigar is on his way out, but he turns and says...

NIGAR- What are you saying, memsahib? Nigar Hosan is an ill-bred fellow, a lowly creature--but what about you--what were you doing behind the rose bush with that new babu(Kalyan)----

SHANKAR-
IVY- Nigar Hosan!

PANASAR- (laughs)

NIGAR- Gypsy Nigar Hosan, doesn't know your law, babuji, but he knows what is illegal and unlawful. Throughout your life you have been playing with the law, babuji, but you haven't seen the unlawful things that go on right here under your nose. The light of your lawbooks can't shine in your daughter's eyes and mind, do you need in writing what really constitutes the evidence of shamelessness and a lack of the sense of feminine dignity?
(Exits)

PANASAR- I have got it, got it--I need not go anywhere else. I am going to pick up the clay, necessary ritual stuff for Durga Puja on the sixth day of the full moon, and when the ritual should be inaugerated.... 13

P.163 He picks up some dust from the middle of the doorstep and puts it on a piece of paper.

SHANKAR- What have you put inside that piece of paper?

PANASAR- The dust which is required for the Durga Puja-it is to be collected from the door-steps of prostitutes and used in the ritual.[14] (Exits)

SHANKAR- *God, oh my god, this father. Had that old idiot not been my father, I would have whipped him into understanding that Goutam is not a loafer, but my would-be son-in-law in future.* Goutam is my would-be son-in-law.
(Exits)

IVY- Then that lowly creature, Nigar Hosan, did witness the whole thing...So what?, so what if he saw? *Matters little...something that was enjoyment for the moment.* A bit of pleasure in a sweet, honey moment.
(Exits)

ACT IV, SCENE II -- A room in the Hotel Helen.*

Enters, Babul.

BABUL- Of what pleasure....pleasure is bubbling up, my holy father. By dint of tricks, the pick-pocket Babul Das *is today a great gentleman, Shobhan Mitra.* The Babul of the 'bustee' is dead--and here, in the Hotel Helen, Shobhan Mitra has come *to enjoy.* Whenever Mr. Mitra orders the boys and bearers he *is always doing turn about, doing turn about.* (laughs)

P.164 Enters, Kalyan.

KALYAN- Babul!

BABUL- Who is there? Oh, your majesty?

KALYAN- You are very drunk, it appears.

BABUL- Forgive me, your majesty. I have not been defeated by wine.

KALYAN- Have you sent for Nigar Hosan?

BABUL- Sure.

KALYAN- I hope that Projesh isn't aware of our plot?

BABUL- Not even that guy, called God, is aware of it--*not to speak of that third-rate party.*[1]

KALYAN- Where is that gypsy beauty, Sania?

BABUL- *In the next room.*

KALYAN- I have heard that she won't take any food.

BABUL- Projesh told me he would make her eat today.

KALYAN- (laughs)

BABUL- Guru!

KALYAN- I am beside myself with joy, Babul--almost out of my mind. He who is going to die tonight at twelve even now he is intoxicated with lust for a female.

BABUL- What arrangements did you make in Darjeeling?

KALYAN- By bribing *a maid-servant of the convent* with five hundred rupees, I have made her agree. She will mix poison with the food and thus will kill Lotus.[2]

P.165 BABUL- Lotus dies there---

KALYAN- Projesh dies here---(laughs)

BABUL- Oh, please do stop, Kalyanda!

KALYAN- Oh, again you are calling me Kalyanda! That day I *only managed to escape with great difficulty.* Now, where is the bottle?

BABUL- (bringing the bottle out from behind a chair) Here you are, Guru.

KALYAN- Fun 'til eleven-thirty and then the murder.(Drinks) Oh,*the special room* of the Hotel Helen will turn red with flowing blood. Mourning for two days, *in foreign style*,[3] and then I will be married to that beauty, Ivy.

BABUL- And then?

KALYAN- *England returned* Goutam Mukherjee will be the owner of all the moveable and immoveable property of the barrister, Shankar Narayan Chatterjee. And then---

BABUL- You will go your way and I will go mine. But I might lose the gypsy girl Sania.

KALYAN- If not Sania, then you will have Champa Chaudhury.

BABUL- Mairee[4].

KALYAN- I have told her to come here(consulting his watch) Go and see if she has come-she may come at any time and may say---

Enters, Champa Chaudhury, putting on her dress for the cabaret dance.

CHAMPA- *May I come in?*

P.166 KALYAN- *Yes, Miss Champa Cahudhury.*

BABUL- Guru! Give me the bottle.

KALYAN- *Shut-up.*

BABUL- *Oh, I see, O.K.*

KALYAN- Miss Champa Chaudhury! Projesh will be here in no time. When he comes, you won't be available to us any longer. So I say---

BABUL- I, too, say---

CHAMPA- What do you want to say?

KALYAN- A cabaret dance, *I mean, a cabaret dance*, let it be done by you.

BABUL- *Here you are Miss....Have a drink and then start.*

CHAMPA- *Thanks.* (pouring the wine down in her mouth) Oh!

BABUL- Better than Sania, she is indeed---

KALYAN- *Shut-up.* (Drinks)

BABUL- *Oh, I see. O.K.*

CHAMPA- Do you know Goutambabu--the cabaret dance is my favourite.

KALYAN- Is it?

CHAMPA- *Yes, Mr. Mukherjee.* While dancing I begin thinking I am Urbashi, the heavenly dancer who dances at the royal court of Indra, the King of the Gods.

BABUL- Urbashi![5]

CHAMPA- The fire of love and passion burns in the mind of Urbashi. And before the innumerable eyes of the Gods who have assembled in the royal court, Urbashi is demonstrating her beauty, the beauty of every limb, her maddening beauty.....

P.167 Champa dances the cabaret dance. Babul and Kalyan drink glass after glass of wine.

KALYAN- How lovely-----

BABUL- How sweet----

Enters, Projesh.

PROJESH- Champa, you here?

CHAMPA- I just came here. You haven't called me for a long time.

PROJESH- I felt no need to.

CHAMPA- *Is all need exhausted, darling?*(She rushes to catch Projesh).

PROJESH- Oh, go away! *Friends. Why did you allow* her here?

KALYAN- As she is your *old lover*, so we thought---

BABUL- We should allow her to come and I have been enjoying the cabaret dance.

PROJESH- Strange! Champa-you go away from here.

CHAMPA- *Why, darling*...[6]Why have you developed such antipathy for the spring?

PROJESH- Don't disagree with me, Champa. Go down and get out of this hotel.

BABUL- *Why that, friend?* Don't just put her down.

KALYAN- *Shut-up.*

BABUL- *Oh, I see. O.K.* All right.

PROJESH- Champa!

CHAMPA- Won't you come with me?

P.168 PROJESH- No.

CHAMPA- Then, I will come tomorrow?

PROJESH- You needn't come any longer.

CHAMPA- Projesh, don't you love me?

PROJESH- Love you -(laughs) Listen Miss Champa Chaudhury, I never loved you. By pretending to love you, I drank the nectar of your beauty.

CHAMPA- Projesh!

PROJESH- Today , since I have a new flower, your place is now *in the dirty dust-bin.*

CHAMPA- (laughs)

KALYAN-
BABUL- Miss Champa!

CHAMPA- Projesh Chatterjee proposes to throw me away in the *dust-bin*. Listen Projesh! I too never loved you, even a little bit. In exchange for fifteen thousand rupees I also, play-acted love with you.[7]

PROJESH- Champa!

CHAMPA- Though Champa may appear stale to you, she may appear in another garden, with a new name.
(Exits)

BABUL- Miss Champa Chaudhury is a bit tipsy--Let me take her back home.

KALYAN- No.

P.169 BABUL- Why no, your majesty? Why are you saying 'no' to all that this servant of yours wants to do? Be graceful to your servant, and say 'yes', even once.

PROJESH- All right, you can have your liberty *friend.*

BABUL- Since I got the permission of His Majesty, I have no more fear. Don't you worry, I swear I will be back to *you again, after the work is complete.*[8]
(Exits)

PROJESH- (laughs) I have removed Shobhan from here, by playing a trick on him--*by playing a trick.*

KALYAN- I am also leaving, *friend.*

PROJESH- Goutam!

KALYAN- The bottle is there. In the next room is the gypsy beauty, Sania, I wish you well. Let tonight bring

to your life, a sweet honey dream.[9] So long----
so long----so long.
(Exits)

PROJESH- (laughs) A secluded room. No one to stop me, nothing to be ashamed of, there is only this full bottle(drinks from the bottle). Oh now is the time for the rising sun in the horizon to shine over the sea of Sania's youthfulness. (laughs)

Sania enters with her hair dishevelled--on her face and in her eyes in the rage of a trapped female snake.

SANIA- Babuji!

P.170 PROJESH- Who is there?[10] Oh you! So you have come, voluntarily my darling.

SANIA- Priya (she says in a slurred way)

PROJESH- Yes, Sania. Believe me, Sania, I won't turn you into a mere play-thing.

SANIA- What do you propose to do with me?

PROJESH- I will marry you.

SANIA- Don't lie.

PROJESH- Sania!

SANIA- I know perfectly well, you will never marry me.

PROJESH- Don't make a mistake, Sania

SANIA- Yes, babuji. I made a mistake in the beginning, I fell in love with you mistakenly, and taking advantage of that you have abducted me, here.

PROJESH- Sania!

SANIA- Sania is a gypsy woman. She believed you, she loved you, and with faith she delivered her heart to you--putting faith in your words Sania sacrificed her heart. But how and in what way, are you showing respect to my prestige, showing any respect to my prestige.(weeps)

PROJESH- Don't you be hurt, Sania. Wipe your tears and look at me. I promise that I will compensate all your losses.

P.171 SANIA- Will you do that, babuji?

PROJESH- Of course, darling. Can I refuse anything you ask, I will give you anything you ask of me.

SANIA- Then you will give me whatever I ask?

PROJESH- Won't I? You, by whom my slumbering youth has been awakened, you have filled my dreams with the green oasis of the Sahara, filled by desert-like heart. I can give you anything and everything. Tell me, darling, what do you want? Money?

SANIA- No.

PROJESH- Expensive jewellery?

SANIA- No.

PROJESH- Then, what do you want?

SANIA- My honour, my prestige.

PROJESH- Your honour, your prestige?

SANIA- Yes, babuji! Let me go back to my granddad with my honour intact.

PROJESH- Sania!

SANIA- Don't be apprehensive, babuji--I won't let anyone know you abducted me and brought me here. I swear by Khoda, the Lord of the World, I won't say what happened to anyone in the world. Be merciful, my master, be merciful and set me free.

PROJESH- That just can't be done. (he embraces her)

P.172 SANIA- Look out, you devil. You don't know what a venomous she-snake I am.

PROJESH- I know it.

SANIA- Oh no, you don't. For all these days, you haven't truly known me. I was intoxicated by loving you, and so you could abduct me. When you smiled, I also smiled, and that made you think that this girl is very sweet. But remember, you devil, in my heart there is a poisonous warrant for your death.

PROJESH- I will break your poisonous fang-you female snake.

SANIA- Oh for, shame. I have seen men like you. Many devils like you came to have fun with my body, with my mind. they were rebuffed by the strength of the pure heart of this girl called Sania, and they all went down to hell.

PROJESH- Is that so, my pretty? Then let me see if I can find the pearl of my mind by exploring the sea of your body.

Suddenly he embraces Sania, and Sania forcibly extricating herself, says in a harsh tone---

SANIA- Take care, you beast. I will kill you.

PROJESH- Before that, I would like to do with you----

As he steps forward, Nigar Hosan suddenly enters.

NIGAR- You intend to violate her chastity, you son of a swine?

SANIA- Granddad!

P.173 PROJESH- Nigar Hosan! You----here----?

NIGAR- (laughs) Taken aback, like you were seeing a nightmare, you devil?

PROJESH- *Shut-up, you rascal.*

NIGAR- If you are so obsessed with women, don't you have a sister in your house, you Satan?

PROJESH- Look out you dirty gypsy, I will take the hide off your back--I will whip you.

NIGAR- (laughs) Take the hide off my back by whipping, will you? It is so--take off my hide by whipping (he brings out a dagger).

PROJESH- Nigar Hosan!

NIGAR- (laughs)

SANIA- Granddad.

NIGAR- Don't be scared, girl. That son of a swine, doesn't know what type of a man Nigar Hosan is. That Satan doesn't know that Nigar Hosan has washed the streets with the blood of so many beasts like him.

PROJESH- Forgive me, Nigar Hosan.

NIGAR- Forgive you! (laughs)

SANIA- Granddad.

PROJESH- Sania, please save me.

NIGAR- No. Stop. No more words. I want to see the colour of your blood.

P.174 While Nigar moves toward Projesh, Sania steps between them and says---

SANIA- No, granddad. Forgive the babuji, he is asking for forgiveness for his faults--forgive his fault.

NIGAR- The Satan--did he not abduct you, you shameless girl?

SANIA- He is a worthless mean man, granddad, but why should you make yourself mean too?

NIGAR- Get away, I certainly want to kill him.

SANIA- Then kill me first, granddad.

NIGAR- Sania.

SANIA- Take my life, see the colour of my blood, plunge your dagger into the heart of Sania.

NIGAR- Get away, you shameless hussy.

SANIA- No, granddad. Sania is not shameless. Though that babuji wanted only to have fun with me, I, for my own part, really fell in love with him.

PROJESH- Sania!

SANIA- Be a good babuji, by taking all the good there is in my heart.

NIGAR- Oh, my granddaughter.

SANIA- Let us go granddad. We won't stay any longer in this country. We will go somewhere else (in a pained voice) In this country everything is false, and everything is artificial, nothing here is genuine.
P.175 Babuji! You are my sweet babu. I gave you my heart and I am going away now, with my heart back. I bid you adieu, and salute you.
(Exits)

PROJESH- Sania!

NIGAR- She is dead, sweet babu. By saving you, she died herself.

PROJESH- Nigar Hosan!

NIGAR- Nigar Hosan doesn't tell lies. He has never, in this life, dishonoured his promises. I will certainly have your blood, and would have killed you--

Gypsy Nigar Hosan, who has travelled half the world showing his BhanuMatir Khela, has been defeated by the love of Sania, the magic of love.
(Exits)

PROJESH- This strange incident is like a nightmare. But how could Nigar Hosan come to the Hotel Helen? Who could have brought him here?

Enters, Kalyan.

KALYAN- Anjan Bannerjee

PROJESH- Anjan! He wants to kill the dada of Ivy, since he failed to win her. All right. *Within the week*, I will make him understand that I am no less of person than Projesh Chatterjee. *It will not take much time* to punish a devil of a communist like him.
(Exits)

P.176 KALYAN- Because of that she-devil, Sania, many of my dream webs have been torn.[12] Many moves of dream chess games have been baffled. All right, let the play which is going to be performed day after tomorrow, begin. I think, by moving in that new way I will be able to realise my dream. (laughs)
(Exits)

ACT IV, SCENE III -- House of Maheshbabu*

Enters, Manjusha.

MANJUSHA- I never thought it, even in my dreams that I would have to remove the vermilion mark.[1] No, no, I won't do it, by no means will I do it.

Enters Malay.

MALAY- Why won't you be able to do so, Chaudrani?

MANJUSHA- No, no, I can't remove my vermilion mark.

MALAY- Such a little thing carries so much value for you?

MANJUSHA- You don't don't know, Malaybabu. That little bit of vermilion is the balm against all my pain...the only momento of my lost past.

P.177 MALAY- What is the good of keeping a false memory alive? Kalyan never extended to you the prestige due a wife.

MANJUSHA- He may not have, but I did.

MALAY- This is self-deception.

MANJUSHA- Self-deception is not so bad in a world full of chicanery.

MALAY- Listen to me, Manju. The most valuable and most essential thing in this world in money. If you can wipe out that mark of vermilion, and be a maiden again you will be able to earn money, beyond your wildest dreams.

MANJUSHA- Malaybabu.

MALAY- Moreover, the same mark you wipe out, I will put on your head again.

MANJUSHA- What do you mean?

MALAY- I will marry you, Manju.

MANJUSHA- Get out---I say, get out! Get out of this room immediately.

MALAY- No good insulting me, Manju.

MANJUSHA- She, whose life is only full of losses, does not expect any profit, whatsoever.

MALAY- All right. I am going to inform Malaboudi.

MANJUSHA- Malaybabu!

MALAY- You must remove that vermilion mark, my beauty. *In the market there is a great demand* for you, As soon as you become a maiden again, money will come flying like the pidgeon, and it will make its nest in your pockets. After filling your pockets for a year, I will take you away from here---and then taking you into my arms, and playing with your graceful body, I will announce that Chaudrani Devi *is out of market.* (laughs)
(Exits)

MANJUSHA- None of them is a real human being---none of them.[2]

Enters, Maheshbabu.

MAHESH- Beasts!

MANJUSHA- Jamaibabu, is there no remedy for such things...a beast torturing over thousands of men, a monster of a man passing evils all over this country-this mad outburst of animal forces all over this country?

MAHESH- Yes, The time for remedies has come.

MANJUSHA- When? When will these things be put right? Who will uproot this vicious circle of vice, and when?

MAHESH- The time has come. In the dark prison-cell of the spirit of five hundred million oppressed people, gradually the child of revolution has grown.[3] And very soon he will be on the field of battle, with the weapon of a political movement in his hand.[4]

MANJUSHA- Jamaibabu, the time is not so near, it is still rather far off. And meanwhile the homes of so many Manjus will be broken, the breasts of so many Manjus will be flooded with tears, and so many Manjus will have to wipe out their vemilion marks, and be maidens again.

MAHESH- What do you mean?

P.179 MANJUSHA- I have got to wipe out my vermilion mark, and pass myself off as a maiden again.

MAHESH- Who asked you to do so?

MANJUSHA- My didi.

MAHESH- No.

MANJUSHA- No, what?

MAHESH- There is no question of you removing your mark.

MANJUSHA- I have got to do so, Jamaibabu.

MAHESH- Listen to me, Manju. I have given up drinking, at your request, and now you should listen to my request.

MANJUSHA- How can I, Jamaibabu? If I listen to your request, I shall have to listen to harsh words from others.

MAHESH- Manju!

MANJUSHA- Please bring me some poison. Let me put an end to the pang of my life--I will take poison. Let me be saved by dying, Jamaibabu.[5]

When she breaks down crying, Mahesh tries to console her, by gently patting her back.

MAHESH- Do, please stop, Manju, please stop. I promise I will see to it that your vermilion mark isn't wiped out.

Enters, Manimala.

MANIMALA- How could you say that? Being a literary man, whose mind is full of imagination, and with a beautiful sister-in-law?

P.180 MANJUSHA- Didi!

MAHESH- She is not your true didi--even though by blood relation she is.

MANIMALA- Her co-wife.[6]

MANJUSHA- Oh God!!

MAHESH- How dare you say such things, Manimala--how dare you say such things. Don't you dare take such liberties. Do you think that I am a bloodless imbecile[7]? Do you think that the dam of my patience is made of iron? It is due to you, that I have deviated from my ideals, and also began drinking. Your rapacious mind ahs turned my pure white heart blue by its poisonous bite--tell me how much lower than this you want to drag me down?[8] (strangles Manimala)

MANJUSHA- Stop it. Let go, let go Jamaibabu. Why should you make any mistake?

MAHESH- I am not making any mistake, Manjusha. I am, rather correcting my mistakes.

MANJUSHA- Jamaibabu.

MAHESH- The sea of my patience has overflown. I decided to do today, what I should have done along time ago. (Exits)

MANJUSHA - Please listen.

MANIMALA- Stop, you shameless hussy. You are the cause of my insults. You she-devil, black serpent of a girl, if you refuse to take off your vermilion mark, on the advice of your darling, Jamaibabu, then--then I swear that you damn your dead mother.[9]

MANJUSHA- Oh my mother! Can't you realise the sorrow of your poor
P.181 Manju? Can't you call Manju back to you?(weeps)

MANIMALA- You she-devil, so you are weeping. Take off that mark of vermilion, from your part (she is slapping and dragging Manju by the hair)

MANJUSHA- Oh God!

MANIMALA- Even God won't be able to save your vermilion mark. Take off that mark, you wretched girl. Take off your vermilion mark.

Re-enters Malay, as Manimala is beating Manju.

MALAY- What are you doing boudi? Manju herself---

MANJUSHA- Wiping off my vermilion mark, I will turn into a maiden again.

MALAY- That is fine. *That is what is demanded in the market.*

MANJUSHA- I have got to be in the market. I am going to do it, didi. As you have sworn by my deceased mother, so to bring lots of money to you, to be in circulation in Malay's *market* I am wiping off this vermilion mark of my marriagehood, of all the dreams of my life. (she is wiping off the mark) Manju is no longer a married girl. Manju is no longer the mother of the deceased Khokan. Manju from this day forth is a 'kumari'--kumari.[10]

Enters, Anjan.

ANJAN- What are you doing, Manju? What are you doing?

MANJUSHA- Wiping away my past.

ANJAN- Maladi, aren't you a human being?

P.182 MANIMALA- Anjan!

ANJAN- Don't you even have a drop of human being in your veins? Have you sacrificed all humanity to the feet of that inhuman beast?

MALAY- *Shut-up.*

MANIMALA- Didn't I ask you not to come here again?

MALAY- Get out, immediately, get out of this house.

ANJAN- Surely, I will get out. I have not come to stay here long.

MANJUSHA- Please leave this place, Anjanda! They aren't going to give you any prestige..

ANJAN- Prestige! (laughs)

MALAY-
MANIMALA- Wonder, what laughter.

ANJAN- I am feeling like laughing, Maladi, feeling like laughing. Nobody keeps the prestige of others. Prestige is an old word, from the by-gone past. In the modern world, there is prestige for only those with money.

MANJUSHA- Anjanda!

ANJAN- I have not spoken untruly, Manju. Look at who those persons are. They, who speak loudly at religious conferences "Sacrifice your life for religion." They who are at a meeting of the unemployed say "Bengalis are inimical to working hard." Listen carefully, for whose trumpets are being blown in villages, in market-places, cities, in social gatherings,etc? Aren't they so many Kalyan Majumdar's? Aren't they using make-up and darkness to serve their day-light self-seeking disguises as son many Goutam Mukherjee's? Aren't the anti-socials of today pretending to be dedicated to social services? On the stage of the
P.183 bourgeois society aren't the directors like Malay Roy directing naked plays?[11]

MALAY- How dare you?

Suddenly Malay punches Anjan so that he falls down, and from a cut on his head, he begins to bleed.

MANJUSHA- Anjanda! Anjanda! (sits at the head of Anjan) Oh, so much blood! What have you done, Malaybabu! What have you done?

MANIMALA- This is only the beginning. We will kill him.

ANJAN- (gets up holding on to Manju) No Maladi, you won't get that opportunity again. I told you that day that I would come again, and so I came today.

MALAY- Why have you come?

ANJAN- To take Manju, away.

MANJUSHA- Anjanda!

MALAY- Manju can't go. Tomorrow she is to appear in 'Panch Paiser Prithibi'.

ANJAN- She certainly will act tomorrow. Manju, get prepared to leave with me.

MANJUSHA- I am already prepared, Anjanda!

ANJAN- Then, come away.

MANIMALA- No. You should not take her away.

ANJAN- I certainly will take her away.

P.184 MANJUSHA- Come, let us go, Anjanda!

MANIMALA- Look out Manju! You mustn't go away with him. He is no relation of yours.

MANJUSHA- (laughs)

MALAY-
MANIMALA- Manju!

MANJUSHA- You don't know--you just don't know--he is my nearest one---

MANIMALA- Manju!

MANJUSHA- Very dear---

MANIMALA-
MALAY- Manju!

MANJUSHA- Dada, whom I respect.
(Exits)

MANIMALA- Malay Thakurpo, do hold her back.

MALAY- Certainly, I will do it (about to leave).

ANJAN- Take care, Malay Roy!

MANIMALA- Call the police, Malay Thakurpo!

ANJAN- I have already called the police, Maladi.

MANIMALA- Called the police!

ANJAN- Don't fear, Maladi. The police will not raid your house. The police are in search of Kalyan Majumdar and by handing him over to the police, and by removing the darkness of Manju's life, and by seeing you another day, I will prove to you that those who
P.185 you worship, they are not Gods, but rather beasts, mad dogs.
(Exits)

MANIMALA- He went away with the girl, and you are still standing like a blinking idiot. For shame, Manju went away from you.

MALAY- Manju may be gone, but there is still Mala.

MANIMALA- Malay Thakurpo!

MALAY- You shouldn't be shocked, I say. I have paid a lot of money. Come---

MANIMALA- Where to?

MALAY- Why, to replace Manju (taking hold of her hand)

MANIMALA- What, how are you so cheeky, how dare you?

Enters, Maheshbabu.

MAHESH- Wonderful! (laughs)

MANIMALA- Save me, please save me.

MAHESH- I have no time to do so. I am going to sell something.

MANIMALA- What?

MAHESH- My cheap love stories.

MANIMALA- No, Oh no, you mustn't do that any longer-don't sell such stories.

MAHESH- Then, should I make the blood flow from the back of the neck of this cheap story director, Malay Roy? I could beat him thoroughly with this stick.

P.186 MALAY- What do you mean?

MAHESH- *Get out--get out, loafer, scoundrel.*

MALAY- I am going. But before I leave, I warn you not to believe this lady called Manimala-she is not Manimala she is Mahamayabini.[12]
(Exits)

MANIMALA- Will you please forgive me?

MAHESH- You asking forgiveness, now when the proper time is over. My ink for writing is now exhausted.

MANIMALA- I will bring new ink for you. From my mental factory I will bring to you the blood of my repentence.
(Exits)

MAHESH- By the blood of Anjan by book jacket has been painted. The tears of Manju, the wolfish eyes of Malay, the professional acting of Manju, all have given birth to a wonderful new literature, and with that literature as the key I will open the gate of false literature. Anjan, Kalyan, Malay, Manju, Mala--in the mirror of life they will reflect the cruel whip of criticism of middle-class society.[13] (Exits)

ACT IV, SCENE IV--- The Kabita Cottage*

Enters Ivy, busy with her toilet.

IVY- After being whipped *that loafer* Anjan never dared to come again to Kabita Cottage. But secretly he is conspiring against us. Entering into a *contract* with that Gypsy Nigar Hosan he wanted to *murder, dada. How could that idiot* be so daring?

Enters, Projesh.

PROJESH- To hell with his daring. *A loafer, a scoundrel.*

IVY- Have you mentioned it to the police?

PROJESH- That goes without saying.

IVY- That he has an illicit love-affair with Manjusha-- has that been---

PROJESH- *Informed the police, repeatedly.* Had there not been a performance of our drama today, I would have had *him definitely arrested* by the police. Let me have that mirror, once.

IVY- Wait, let me put on my lip-stick first.

PROJESH- No need of adding further to your charms- you have got your *contract complete.*

IVY- How strange, because my marriage *contract* with Goutam has been entered into, is there any reason why I should not be properly dressed up? Do you know how many eligible men will come to see the play?

P.188 PROJESH- I am also taking a *strong make-up* for the same reason, because more girls will be there than boys. I have taken a strong fancy to Ishita Sinha, the sister of *your boy-friend* Amal Sinha.

IVY- Amal Sinha is *nice* looking, isn't he?

PROJESH- Ishita, too is *beautiful.*

Enters, Shankarbabu

SHANKAR- But you have not seen Ishita's mother.

IVY- Daddy.

SHANKAR- You can rarely see such a *fine figure* as she has, now-a-days. *My girl,* let me have your powder puff.

PROJESH- Are you going to the dramatic perfromance, too?

SHANKAR- *Sure, my boy*. A special *invite* came from Goutam.

Enters, Babul.

BABUL- The play will begin, very soon.

IVY- Let us go, Shobhan. *We are ready*. Oh daddy, hasn't finished putting on his *scent on his collar*.

Shankar is putting scent on his collar.

SHANKAR- You could add a little more *rouge* on your cheeks, Ivy.

PROJESH- How do I look?

SHANKAR- *Well, well...*

IVY- Shobhan, please ask the *driver* to bring the car.

SHANKAR- *Blunder, blunder*, before getting into the car, we *must drink something*.

P.189 When they are about to leave, suddenly enters Mr. Chakladar, a police officer, and he says---

CHAKLADAR- *Good evening*, Mr, Chatterjee!

SHANKAR- Good evening---What is up Mr. Chakladar?

CHAKLADAR- Probably you are going out.

SHANKAR- *Yes*.

PROJESH- Today a play will be performed at our *club*.

IVY- Why don't you come, Mr. Chakladar. *Very nice drama*.

BABUL- Mr. Chakladar--written in an entirely new *technique*.

SHANKAR- Come along, let us enjoy the play together.

CHAKLADAR- Most probably, you won't be seeing the play.

PROJESH- Talking about yourself only?

CHAKLADAR- No. All of you can't go to see the play.

PROJESH-
SHANKAR- What do you mean?
IVY-

CHAKLADAR- A play will be enacted here, at your place.

SHANKAR- What are you talking of, Mr, Chakladar?

CHAKLADAR- (Brings out a photograph of Kalyan and shows it) Do you know this gentleman?

ALL- Let us see the photo. (all look at the photograph)

SHANKAR- *Yes*. Yes he is my would-be son-in-law, Goutam Mukherjee.

P.190 CHAKLADAR- (laughs)

Meanwhile Babul tries to run away..but Chakladar thunders---

CHAKLADAR- *Halt!*

BABUL- Calling m....e....me! I me...an, mean, if I don't go--

CHAKLADAR- Then the play will not be in good form, is it? Constable!

Enters, a constable.

CHAKLADAR- *Arrest!*

When the constable arrests Babul--all cry out--

ALL- How strange! *How strange!*

CHAKLADAR- Reality, Mr. Chatterjee, is stranger than a play.

IVY-
SHANKAR-
PROJESH- Mr. Chakladar!

SHANKAR- Shoot the devil, Mr. Chakladar.

CHAKLADAR- Oh not yet, Mr, Chatterjee. Don't get excited. There are more things to come. Go ahead Babul Das--what will you say?

BABUL- The conspiracy to murder Projesh was hatched by Kalyan. Under his orders I took Nigar Hosan to the Hotel Helen.

PROJESH- I will shoot you to kill, *you scoundrel*.

CHAKLADAR- Mind you, Mr. Chatterjee, he is now under *custody* of the police.

IVY- But I wonder, what is the relationship between Kalyan and Goutam?

BABUL- Goutam Mukherjee is really Kalyan Majumdar.

IVY- Daddy, daddy.

PROJESH- That is what this *scoundrel* called him the other day.

BABUL- *Listen, sir.* I never wanted this sort of life. I wanted to live decently and in a civilised way. I feel no regret at being caught today. So I want to lay everything out in the open.

CHAKLADAR- Go ahead.

BABUL- I don't know the real identity of Kalyan Majumdar. I know that Kalyanbabu passes with different names in different strata of society.

P.193 CHAKLADAR- Now it is my turn--a few days ago, from a gentleman named Anjan Bannerjee, we came to know something about this Kalyan Majumdar. I.B.[2] department this evening got *detailed* news about Kalyan Majumdar. Then the dispatch from the Darjeeling police reached us. Now we know everything. Tell me, where is your future son-in-law, Goutam Mukherjee?

SHANKAR- I have lost my tongue, Mr. Chakladar--Barrister Shankar Chatterjee is speechless.

IVY- Daddy-----and what about me----

CHAKLADAR- Take Babul Das to the police van, constable.

BABUL- I am going to voluntarily *sit.* But before I go I want to say this, that those who put anti-social elements and unemployed gundas[3] like us to work, they should never be pardoned.
(Exits)

CHAKLADAR- Where is Goutam Mukherjee, alias Kalyan Bannerjee, alias Kalyan Majumdar?

PROJESH- In the green room of the Oriental Theatre.[4]

CHAKLADAR- *I see.* You were to go to the performance there? All right. Let us go, but not to the *show*, but to see a different drama. Please come, I will wait outside.
(Exits)

IVY- What will happen, daddy?

SHANKAR- *Don't fear, my girl.* you need not be afraid. Anjan is gone, and Goutam too. I will get you married to a different young man.

P.194 IVY- No, daddy, no. You needn't worry about my marriage any longer.

SHANKAR- Ivy!

IVY- You cared so much for my marriage, that I am tired of it. I am also tired of the kind of education you arranged for me. Being proficient in your ideal of education, I learned to flirt with new and newer men. Like a sweet sandesh[5] I sold my mind to different males. Goutam Mukherjee, selected by you, has played havoc with my body and mind. Now please leave me alone. (weeps)

SHANKAR- You are weeping, Ivy?

IVY- You caused me to cry, daddy. Hurt by your harsh words our granddad left for Benares[6], whipped by you Anjan left our house trembling. You have made innocent weep by trapping them with your trickery. And as a result today, the only darling daughter of barrister Shankar Chatterjee is weeping, bearing in her heart the pain of many others.[7]
(Exits)

SHANKAR- My child, Ivy, who never cries, she is crying. But what about me? I am not weeping---(laughs)

PROJESH- Father![8]

SHANKAR- Who is there? Oh, Projesh! Have you heard, *my boy*, Can you hear the voice of your mother? Listen, Projesh, listen, your mother is, as if, saying in a sobbing voice "Marry Ivy to a good boy. See that she has not to weep, she has not to weep, she has not to weep."

P.196 SHANKAR- Who! Anjan! You too are saying "You will get back, a thousand-fold the pains you inflicted on me."

Who! Father! You too are saying "To win in falsehood means to lose the truth."

(laughs loudly)[9]

PROJESH- Father! father! Please keep quiet. Please rally yourself.

SHANKAR- *Wait, my boy. Just a minute.* let me explain to them. Kabita! Anjan! Father! You all listen. The Shankar Narayan Chatterjee who has been practising barrister for such a long time, and who has been able to play so many legal tricks--in making others win their lawsuits, Shankar Narayan Chatterjee has failed miserably, in winning his own case, filed against himself, by himself. (laugh loudly)
(Exits)

PROJESH- Will father turn mad? Ivy is crying, granddad is in Benares, and if father really goes mad, then?... No, no no time to lose in such speculation. Anjan told the truth---"truth never dies" Yes, yes, taking Anjan with me, I will rush to the stage where the play 'Panch Paiser Prithibi' is being performed, Mr. Chakladar.

(Exits)

P.196 ACT V, SCENE I -- The stage at the Oriental Theatre.*

Enters Manjusha dessed up in the rôle of Manika.

MANJUSHA- Five paisa worth world....five paisa worth world. For my being a slum girl, he has robbed me of my feminine dignity, chastity, and prestige, and has thrown me on the rubbish heap like a used leaf-plate. In answer to my questions, drenched with my tears, he just told me..."This dirty slum of yours is to me....."

Enters Mohan singing, dressed up as a Baul singer.

The Song

MOHAN

Five paisa worth world.
Here there is neither light nor goodness.
And every picture has been darkened by blackness.
Those who lick the left-over leaf-plates
like dogs scavenging in the gutter.
And the life-stories of those who have not been
accounted for in history
They, the proletarians, not taken account of
Who can make a claim for anything.

While about to go, Manjusha says---

MANJUSHA- Listen.

MOHAN- Who!- Oh, Manika! What makes you stand here?

P.197 MANJUSHA- I am here on business.

MOHAN- What business?

MANJUSHA- I will tell you later.

MOHAN- Standing alone in the darkness of the evening---

MANJUSHA- Well, Palashda! What about me committing murder?

MOHAN- Murder----are you---

MANJUSHA- You mean to say, mad, isn't it? (laughs) Well, have I gone mad or what.

MOHAN- Didn't I tell you then, not to believe the sons of rich men, as they are capable of doing anything and everything.
(Exits)

MANJUSHA- They really can and do indulge in every kind of devilry. But can't we do anything? Can't I do something? Here comes Joyanta Chaudhury, the lewd chap, and I am going to teach him a lesson.---

Enters; Kalyan dressed up in the role of Joyanta Chaudhury.

KALYAN- What lesson do you intend to teach me, Manika?

MANJUSHA- Stop. Don't you dare to address me by name.

KALYAN- *What! Do you think me a coward.* Do you think me a coward. (he recognises Manjusha!)

MANJUSHA- Not only a coward, but a beast! (she also recognises Kalyan)

KALYAN- Ma--ni--ka!

MANJUSHA- No, I am not Manika, I am Manjusha---

KALYAN- Manju----my---

P.198 MANJUSHA- Where will you run away, you robber! You led me to ruin, you stripped me of everything. After robbing the honey of my mind, you said smiling "this dirty slum is worth no more than the paltry sum of five paisa.

Suddenly Manjusha plunges the dagger truly on the breast of Kalyan, and Kalyan utters a cry of death pain, and goes out, bleeding profusely.

Enters, Projesh and Chakladar.

ANJAN- How could you do it, Manjusha?

MANJUSHA- That which I could not do on the day of rehearsal, I could do today, Anjanda. (laughs loudly).

PROJESH- Kalyan Bannerjee *death*[1].

CHAKLADAR- What a regret! We could have caught the criminal alive.

MANJUSHA- Here, why aren't you *arresting me*. I have closed the drama of life, when just the first scene of the first act started...(laughs loudly)[2]

ANJAN- Ladies and Gentlemen! I announce it with great regret, that due to a fatal accident, we have been compelled to stop the performance of the play today, "Panch Paiser Prithibi".[3]

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CURTAIN[4]

ANNOTATIONS

The following 45 pages are a detailed annotation of the play. It is the intention here not only to make plain the Bengali sensibilities that are unfamiliar to Western anthropological readers, but to also indicate the meaning and representation of the main themes of the play. I hope that these annotations will help the reader appreciate some of the subtleties and the power of this and other similar jatra plays.

NOTES FOR *PANCH PAISER PRITHIBI*

Throughout the play words and phrases in italics are words and phrases that are said in English. The frequent use of English is a very interesting phenomenon; one could easily use this text for an analysis of code-switching. English is used by Bhairob mainly ironically. What follows is an explication of the meaning of some Bengali words, phrases and concepts; ones that I knew would be unfamiliar to a common Western reader.

ACT I, SCENE I- This play opens with a play within a play. The similarity of the play and the life portrayed in the jatra play gives important insight into what Bhairob sees as the relationship between the jatra and life in general-they are constantly interwoven, and dialectically relate to one another. Using the play within the play as the opening scene gives Bhairob a chance to foreshadow the play, and to build more irony than usual into the placement of appearance and reality, knowledge and ignorance.

* It is very common, in the Bengal countryside and in district towns, to have a number of clubs that put on dramas. They put on dramas of a theatrical type and a jatra type. In fact, many actors and actresses have been discovered by being seen in an amateur performance in an outlaying area. Most clubs (samiti) do have a room, usually in a market area.

1 Banana leaves are frequently used, in rural areas, as plates. On ceremonial occasions, leaves are the most common plate. After being used once, they are thrown away and they become food for dogs and wandering cattle. In this instance the meaning implied is that Manika, after being used, is thrown aside by Joyanta.

2 The word Bhairob uses here for proletariat means bereft of any and all possessions. Usually the words that translate as proletariat mean the working class, or the whole body of workers. He is making a stronger point than Marxists usually make here. This song, sung by Mohan as a mendicant beggar (a baul singer), seems to sum up much of the leftist jatra position with regard to the place and current fate of the majority of the Bengali population, rural and working class.

3 Da is an ending frequently placed at the end of a personal name. It is the shortened form of the kin term *dada* which means elder brother. In this case, and most of the other times it is used throughout this play, it refers not to people who are blood relations, rather people who stand in the relationship to the speaker as brother. A speaker, by using an ending that indicates elder brother, shows respect to the addressee as well as places a claim of protection on the addressee.

4 Names are very important to Bengalis, and misuse of them is quite an insult. Here Joyanta uses Manika's name to indicate familiarity and her inferiority. Manika's objection has to do with her anger and refusal to accept his intimacy.

5 The phrase 'honey of my mind' in this instance means 'the feeling I had of love'. Love and honey are frequent metaphors for each other, in Bengali prose and poetry. Krishna (the paramount divine lover) is often referred to as the bee sucking honey (or love) from the gopis (the cowherdesses who are his devotees). Also Krishna, as a child, killed the ogress sent to kill him by suckling and sapping her of her poison. Using this image, from the mouth of a woman, is one example of the constant reversals, inversions, and double meanings that Bhairob builds into his plays.

6 With this line on we are drawn from the play within the play to the play itself. Manjusha is speaking as herself here, rather than as Manika.

7 The use of the English word 'beauty' here is doublely ironic. Stabbing and killing here are given beauty to English users, as well as the intention of saying that this is 'icing' to the Bengali plot being unfolded here. Bhairob has a tendency to milk these double entendres for all they are worth. He tends to 'suck them into power' rather than suck them dry. It is precisely for usages such as this that many people say that "Bhairob has a powerful pen, no doubt".

8 The implied subject, here meaning I can't help it, is a very common Bengali usage. Bengali as a language, and Bengalis as people, focus on action and hence on verbs. Subjects very often 'go without saying'.

9 Mithua- here is a complicated word to explicate. Here the reference is to a person, a go-between. But, the word plays very nicely on a contrastive set in Bengali between a retroflex and a dental aspirated th. Mitha(dental) is a sweet and delicious thing, sweet-words in a positive sense; Mithya(retroflex) is a lie, a falsehood or sweet-words in a negative sense. This kind of usage of natural contrastive elements is also frequently used in plays, particularly if it points out a relationship that connotes an opposition. There are many other instances of this in this, and other plays.

10 Here the term used is the kin term for father's younger brother, *kaka*. Here it refers not really to a person in that relationship to Manjusha (as we shall see later) but to the person Manika, in the play. Father's younger brothers often play an important role in arranging a marriage--although the decision is not up to them alone, they are in a position to feed the desired information to the father, or father's older brother, *jetu*, the person who makes the decisions most often.

11 Here Manjusha shows Manika really stepping over the usual boundaries of a faithful wife. The speed with which she accepts and grasps the role she is cast in is shocking, even to Kalyan and Anjan. Partially this is true because of what becomes apparent later, that she is to really marry Kalyan-in everyday life.

12 The word for brother-in-law is Sala, the babu is a term of respect frequently added to the end of personal names. Anjan is most probably a cousin brother of Mahesh's wife, not a blood-brother. This term is also used liberally in insulting. It suggests that you are in a position to sleep with the addressee's sister-if you are actually not, then you are implying something about her purity and your access. I have seen two fights begin by tossing this insult. Here it is not a 'fighting insult' but there is a hint of a possible slam, here at Anjan, not Manimala.

13 Even outside the constraints of a jatra play, where action must be speeded up for a variety of reasons, the participants (meaning bride and bride-groom) can be informed of a wedding with this little advanced warning. Also, if a decision were made with this little preparation it would be a time and money saving decision--one would not have to invite as many people, therefore one would not have to feed as many people. Decisions about marriage are not usually left to the immediate parties involved, therefore there need not be much warning. An auspicious day is more important. An auspicious day would be found by consulting an astrologer (jyotish) and the priest (purohit) who would perform the ceremony.

14 Jamaibabu- here refers to Mahesh, since Anjan has placed himself in a position of brother to Mahesh's wife. The term is a kin term referring to sister's husband.

15 Maladi- here di is the shortened form of *didi* the kin term for elder sister. The usage of di is as the usage of da outlined in footnote 3.

16 'blowing the conch-shell' is a sign of an auspicious occasion. Times, such as weddings and other life cycle ceremonies, are marked by the use of the conch-shell. The conch-shell is also the source of a kind of bangle that is worn only by married women--the shell and marriage go together. The conch is blown also every afternoon just at the moment of sundown-a very special golden moment known as sundaebaela.

17 Bhairob is again ironically foreshadowing what is to come later in the play by weaving into the play the author's relationship to Manjusha, the heroine. Mahesh is her sister's husband, as well he is figuratively and literally the writer of her fate.

18 Anjan again ironically foreshadows Manjusha's fate, also by indicating his role in the writing of her fate as well.

19 Anjan here has been placed in the position of Manju's elder brother. He refers to her father here as kaka, uncle--even though he is not a blood brother. Could be that Anjan was a friend's son or a neighbor's son--that would be common usage. If he had known what Manjusha reveals, his position would be even more difficult when he finds out that his suspicions are true.

ACT I, SCENE II-- The house of Maheshbabu.

This scene is done at a faster pace. The dialogue is shorter and more rapidly spoken. There are several basic feelings that are portrayed in this scene--humour and pathos, bitterness and despair. More characters are introduced in this scene as well.

* With this scene we have moved to Calcutta. Since there is no scenery to indicate this, the change is indicated by a faster pace, and references to people who would be found in Calcutta.

1 Malay indicates his status, educated person, by reading a book as he enters. Few characters do this, unless they are used to make a statement about literacy or social status.

2 The word which translates as 'retail' here is a word meaning dealing in commondities (kuchera). It also means a very small amount of money. Clearly it is important to indicate a commercial image, particularly as it is intorduced by the character Manimala who is obsessed with money--having it and measuring everything in terms of it.

3 Boudi is the Bengali kin term that means elder brother's wife. This relationship, as put here in the play, is another 'fictive' one. Malay is not related, but places Manimali in this relationship--one which is an affectionate one in Bengali terms. A boudi is often called upon to intercede with the older males in the family. Messages once told to a boudi, are assured of reaching the desired person. This is used by younger men, particularly in the areas of schooling and marriage desires.

4 Thakurpo is the form of kin address for a person who is a husband's younger brother. Manimala's use of this term indicates that she accepts the relationship that is asserted by Malay's use of boudi.

5 The word for 'wholesale' (parikari) is necessary here to carry the commercial metaphor through to its conclusion. The commercial metaphor of 'love and money' is as common in Bengali as it is in English.

6 Khana is a legendary prophetess, a wise-woman particularly good at astronomy and mathematics. She is associated with knowledge about predicting crops, plantation, etc. Sayings that are placed in the "panjika". The panjika is an almanac, just about all Bengali households keep one; the jatra parties consult the panjika frequently when they are deciding whether to book in a particular place around a particular time. It indicates what are the auspicious times and directions for any undertaking. Khana, the ancient prophetess, is frequently a patroness for astrologers.

7 His name means, literally, the sea of astrological knowledge, the master of Tantra (ontological, theological, spiritual knowledge), expert in general knowledge. From his general character portrayal, Bhairob must be poking fun at such people here. He is, by usual technique of reversal and playing with reality and appearance, at least exposing the fake and pretentious astrologers.

8 Brahmadaitya for Brahmadatta is a definite play on words. Daitya means, monster, ghost, or the spook of a dead Brahmin--a being particularly used in folklore. In Lal Bihari Dey's Folk Tales of Bengal, there is one story using this play. The audience found this very funny--a lot of laughter followed this quip.

9 420 refers to a section of the Indian Penal Code. It is said in English, partly because most of the penal code was written when the British were in control, and for the added impact of code switching. Section 420 is the section dealing with crime and punishment for cheating and thievery. Another common legal reference is to a Section 144, which has to do with the prohibition of the gathering of more than 5 people in a public place. This one is usually used when there is a feared public riot, or mass mischief. Some jatra performances were cancelled due to a Section 144 being in force.

10 Again, here, Bhairobi is playing with the idea of identity, true identity versus false identities. The addition of a notion of proof is important here. If identity is changeable and not necessarily permanent, what can be called in as evidence or proof?

11 An ashram is a religious retreat or hermitage. Usually there are one or two resident leaders and a number of devotees.

12 'DashaKarma' is , literally, the 10(dasha) actions(karma); the ten action ashram. From birth to death there are ten major ceremonies or sacraments that one should undergo- these are essential to progessing through one's life cycle. They are known as samskaras. For a more complete account of Bengali samskaras, see Nicholas and Inden, 1977:35-66.

13 The notion of an auspicious moment is fundamental to Bengali ceremonies. There is definitely a 'right' time for an event to take place; there are also , then, 'wrong' times for things to happen. The correct moment is calculated by an astrologer, and in so far as it is possible, it is adhered to by the celebrants.

14 The audience laughs uproariously at Brahma's actions. When doing a correct palm reading for a woman the left-hand should be read. Even though this is poking fun at the palm reading and pointing the fraudulence of the reader there is a lot of culturally meaningful information in this reading. According to the Koshthi Darpana(the mirror of horoscopes) and the Saral Jyotish Shiksha(the complete learning of the astrologer's art) the Crab nature, if inherited by being born under that sign, can be classified as that of a Sudra. In the astrological system in Bengal, there is a nature to men and women, almost as though they are separate species, and this is due to the influence of the stars and the planets. It is classified similar to the four caste divisions-the varna divisions-Brahmin, Khshatriya, Vaisya, and Sudra, the man given to knowlegde, the man given to noble action, the man given to worldly gains and economic activities, and the man given to menial jobs and a lowly nature. The Rakshasha Gana are of the genus demons--and are demonic in temperament. Men and women are divided into three categories of human beings- the Deva or godly, the Manusha or man-like, and the Rakshasha or the demonic. So his reading does indicate where he is placing the character of Manimala, even if he is doing it with the wrong hand. This also foreshadows a couple of statements that are made later.

15 Rahu is the eighth planet-I believe that there is no English equivalent for this planet. It is evil in nature, and contact with it has detrimental effects.

16 Here he again adds another epithet to his name-Bhairob is showing the fluidity of identity here again.

17

17 Brahma, add the author Bhairob, is making a serious point about illusion and reality, the reversals and inversions of life in the modern age-let alone the Kali Age. The world can't be 'taken-for-granted to be the way it appears-things are topsy-turvy, upside-down etc. What the meaning of this is a combination of the reversal and a statement about maya (explained before in Part 1).

18 Using Patni, which means the female spouse, to refer to the spouse of Manimala, who is the male Maheshbabu, is a definite statement of reversal. Here Brahma is implying that since the world is topsy-turvy and females are dominating males, the terms of reference should just as well be turned around as well.

19 The marriage of political and religious references was a very common thing in Bengal at the time this play was written (1971). Here the link is Kali and Indira Gandhi-and only incidently Shiva and Morarji Desai. This seems a strange thing for a CPM (Communist Party of India-Marxist) writer to do. In fact the cosmic upside-downess and reversal could strengthen the right relationships on earth--but this is more complex than that. When I asked Bhairob about this, he shrugged his shoulders and said that he needed an example that the people in villages would understand, even if it may not be politically correct, from the party's point of view.

20 Here Bhairob is using the notion of shortened names to indicate economy and speed--things he sees to be associated with life in Bengal in its present negative aspects.

21 Between the announcement of her marriage (Act I, Scene I) and now (Act I, Scene II) Manjusha has given birth to a son. Normally this would be the highest honour and a thing of joy. Here the lines portend ill. This device is used both to indicate time passing, and to strengthen the parallel being drawn between life (the jatra play) and the play (here the play within the play).

22 This is definitely a statement about the importance of limiting children-but also a statement about the current impetuosity of modern boys and girls.

23 We are only in Act I Scene II and the deception of Kalyan is being pointed out. This helps further the plot and the play that Bhairob has with notions of true and false identity.

24 Manimala is here referring to the fact that her father remarried when he was quite old and produced another daughter late in life, when he was becoming too old to care for her. Step-mothers and step-sisters, at least in Bengali literature, are suspect people, and said to cause a lot of competitive harm.

25 Bhairob is here again emphasising the interplay between life and drama, play and play-within-play, illusion and attachment-making this thread and theme in the play no mere accident.

26 For most Bengali families in Calcutta there is a rice ration per week of 2 kilos. One applies for a ration card, and one buys one's rice, then from the ration shop. It is cheaper, but lower in quality, than the rice one would or could buy in the regular market.

27 This is probably one of the most important lines in this scene. Bhairob's claim here is essentially one of the main messages of the jatra, and life in general. The paradox is very basic one that is echoed elsewhere in this play and many others.

28 This statement, as well as the others like it in this scene, is Bhairob's way of beginning to make the equation of money=evil, westernised business practices=money, western= evil. His anti-Western comments grow stronger as the play progresses.

29 The truth that everything is turning around and is upside down makes one, especially a writer like Mahesh in the play or Bhairob the playwright, write a play that 'lifts the veil of maya'--the play reveals all-but does so in a play so that the power is disguised. This circle becomes here a wheel (chakra) of meaning.

30 The literary man, Bhairob himself as well, is portrayed as a seer for the common man using common images. The common images here, iron-gates, etc. are rather new common images brought and popularised in Bengal by the Marxists. He claims that literary men must be revolutionaries and philosophers. Brojen De (the previously discussed playwright) uses this image of the writer far less than Bhairob does, but then he has no overt connections with a particular political party. Bhairob puts himself into his plays far more than some of the other playwrights.

31 Again here we see the reversal, inversion theme that Bhairob is beating us to death with throughout this play.

32 The play on words here is the five paisa, five hundred rupees contrast. The number five is a very important symbol of Bengali <u>life</u> in process, rather than the structures and constraints of life which would be fours or even numbers. Poverty is a five paisa life; Wealth is a five hundred rupee life. Elsewhere in the play he uses other five images.

ACT I SCENE III -- The House of Panasar Chatterjee

The pace of the scene is fast-indicated by the short dialogue. It becomes slower, however, by the frequent and somewhat awkward use of English in large supply. The main message of this scene is that too-Western behaviour is bad, anti-Bengali values, and dangerous. This is achieved by introducing another set of characters.

* The house of Panasar Chatterjee is obviously a large and impressive dwelling. It seems to be located in the traditional wealthy section of North Calcutta. That it is called the house of Panasar here, and is changed in later scenes is a significant statement of younthful and Westernised disrespect for traditional and the elderly.

1 Premik is the Bengali word for lover. Ivy lapses into English, and using English to say lover carries more weight because the word lover in English has implied along with it, far looser behaviour. Ivy, as a character, is definitely portrayed as an sexually eager, forward and non-Bengali girl.

2 A little bit of education is a dangerous thing. A little bit of English education is even more dangerous. With the character of Panasar, Bhairob is uniting the old and the poor and the virtuous; the young and the rich westernised few and the licentious. This theme runs throughout the play as well.

3 If to be human, in Bengal terms is to be Bengali; traditional using the Bengali language, reading the traditional stories and religious doctrines, adhereing to Bengali values, etc.. with Westernisation as rampant as Panasar indicates, clearly they are becoming less than human. In addition here, Bhairob could be playing with reversals again.

4 Panasar indicates that Western education is not necessarily the truth. Seeing through Western education may be more true; lifting the veil of maya around Western values may be getting at the truth.

5 This is the essence of the anti-Western message and philosophy. Vidyasagar was one of the leading figures in the 19th century in Bengal. He was a Sanskrit scholar, social reformer, and a philanthropist. There was a jatra play about his life playing during the time I was doing the research on the jatra. Bhagabah Devi was Vidyasagar's mother.

6 Lotus' song is revolutionary. Here we have old, young, Bengali and revolutionary put together as a set.

7 The word for common person is 'chotolok'(small people). The contrasting term is 'bhadralok'(good people). Chotolok usually refers to the common people.

8 Shankar here clearly refers to the Western-oriented and informed legal system operating in Bengal. The use of the English word again makes the point even stronger. For Shankar, Projesh, Ivy, Kalyan, Babul and Champā, the use of English is a positive thing--but also for their own gain associated with deception. For Panasar, Anjan, Manjusha, Mahesh, etc. the use of English is a negative thing-it is used ironically, cynically or pejoratively.

9 Panasar again points out his message by stating paradoxes.

10 Mahesh, in the first two scenes, and Panasar here, are sounding very much alike. Bhairob has put together the modern litterateur and the old Brahmin-progressive and conservative; but they are saying much the same thing. Certainly a mixed political message.

11 Ivy is showing Anjan, who she is overly fond of, how sophisticated she really is--even calling her father by his first name (something that good Bengali girls would never do). This is really an important indication of Ivy's character; a younger person using an older person's first name, especially a father's. It is another negative reversal of Bengali practice.

12 Indications of how forward Ivy is are given here with her inuendos and suggestions. I would like to speculate a bit on the possible meaning here: I believe that this is a play on the word used earlier in the scene for law-ain. The word for mirror, or looking-glass is ayna and the word for law is ain-they are both 'clangs' or 'homonyms' for mother and being. Ayna is related to words for income, earnings and possession (in both of the senses that the word is used in English). The statement here seems to be that the mirror can show what you 'ought' to be; a person who follows the rules of being a householder, making a living and reflecting Bengali laws and traditions.

13 Additional behaviour is diplayed here by Ivy, clinching her image of non-Bengali behaviour--or loose Bengali behaviour.

14 'Season of mind' refers here to love. The underlying reference here is to the common Bengali images of Krishna, the bee, and the paramount lover.

15 These lyrics could be from a Vaisnava padaboli(devotional song), but from the lips of Ivy, they are indeed suggestive.

16 In Bengali parlance and calculation pregnancy is spoken of as 10 months long (lunar calculations). Here Anjan is saying that she was immediately pregnant, and that she therefore has known no happiness, save her son. It is also used to indicate how much time has passed from Scene I to Scene III.

17 Basil tree in Bengali is the Tulsi tree. This tree is very important in women's religious life. It insures pregnancy, protection for children and husband, and good health for all. Most rural compounds will have a tulsi tree within their confines.

18 The main point of this, I believe, is to put Ivy and Manjusha in contrast-opposition. Bhairob's views on women are at best mixed. Creepers entwining trees is a common poetic image for the relationship of wives and husbands. It is a male image, but also used by women.

19 "I shall tell daddy and write an article about it tomorrow". Bhairob used to tease me and say that this is what I was doing (little did he know how long it takes me to write an article). What he intends here isn't too clear. By having Ivy say it, is he suggesting that rural women should not be awaken or changed; or is he playing his usual reversal trick and suggesting that they should be awakened, but not in a Westernised way?

ACT I, SCENE IV -- In the streets.

This scene is the most important in the first act. All the other scenes have merely setting up situations and introducing characters. This scene moves the play on to the second act. This scene is linked to the first scene, in the way that the last scene is-- the relationship between 'life and drama', illusions and attachments. In this scene Manjusha lives the life of Manika; Kalyan is Joyanta; and Mohan is Palash.

* In the streets, Bhairob sees most of the dramatic life of Bengal taking place. This scene is full of pathos. Manjusha enters here showing the typical stage way of indicating grief and hard-times; Manjusha's hair is loosened and she has dark-circles under her eyes. she is clearly distraught. Unbound hair, in Bengal, is symbolic of a life out of control; dark-circles are symbolic of a life without sleep and dreaming.

1 This song is full of typical Bengali images, ones everyone knows. Bengal is known as the 'golden province' and Lord Chaitanya is known as the 'golden one', in

contrast to Krishna, the dark one. Here the light (being the child Khokan) is placed in the night context (being the life they are forced to live), and made powerful by the jewel of of the cobra. Snakes are powerful in Bengal. Putting marks on a child is important, in order to ward off 'evil eye'. It is a common practice to put dark dots on a child so that he/she will not be so attractive, therefore less susceptible to coveting.

2 Khokan, in this case the name of the child, also means a boy child. It is usually used as a term of endearment to children under the age of 1 year. By using this name Bhairob says that he was writing about all the children born into similar circumstances.

3 Here Bhairob is setting the background for a contrast between fantasy and 'reality'. Hard realities are those things that seem unchangeable; there is no category of 'soft realities'.

4 The theme of step-sisters and step-mothers being difficult to get along with is not just the Cinderella theme of European folklore--it is a very common theme in Bengal. Many folk stories deal with this theme. There is expected jealousy between siblings of different parents, and between the natural offspring of one parent and not the the other. Step-father's are, of course, uncommon--since the occurence of widow-remarriage, or divorce is still rare. A similarly negative theme is the competition among co-wives--this theme is taken up later in the play.

5 Women frequently put aside and save jewellery. Wedding jewellery or jewellery given to a woman by any family member is considered 'her property'; it is the only outside monetary security a woman has. Here Manjusha has been saving these, and now she is willing to spend them-put them up as collateral to get medicine and food for her child.
Sylvia Vatuk has written an article about the saving practices of women elsewhere in Northern India; she found that usually there would be an old woman that other younger women would entrust their jewellery and other meagre savings to.

6 Mohan, as the introspective character, is asking the audience here, to keep the links with the older generations--it is the continuation of the anti-Western themes that run throughout this play.

7 Bhairob makes a great deal of changing names and changing identities. This is the first major change of many--it indicates that Kalyan is not to be trusted, just by the change of name. Usually he will use changes that are consistent-social strata-wise, but later we learn that he doesn't always.

8 Prestige, shame and fear of not acting correctly are three very important markers of a 'true identity' for a Bengali. Here Bhairob is making another of his statements of inversion.

9 Another inversion; this time not about identity but about truth. Kalyan tells the 'truth' while inebriated; while sober he tells lies. His drunken life is 'true' to his character; his sober life is a duplistic fabricated one.

10 This is the most frequently stated Bengali ideal; women, who hold the purity and reputation of a family, are believed to be able to turn wrongs to rights. Ideal wives would easily identify with the statement made here by Manjusha.

11 These characters, Sita, Sabitri, and Behula, are cultural models for Bengali women. These and a few other models in combination make up the 'ideal' Bengali woman's character. Sita, in her refusal to deal with Ravanna and remain faithful to Rama in the epic The Ramayana, is the ideal of chastity; Sabitri, in her clever dealings with Yama (the God of Death and the Underworld) and her steadfastness, saved her husband Satyaban from death; Behula, in dealing with Manasha (the Goddess of Snakes) saved her husband Lakindar, because of her purity and willingness to serve Manasha. *Bratas*, special womens' rituals in Bengal, frequently refer to these particular model women.

12 *Pronam*, indicating obeisance and respect to someone higher in status by bowing down before them, is a common way to greet someone. Part of the act is to take the dust off their feet. This act of deference here indicates Manjusha's true and pure feelings.

13 Another instance of inversion and duplicity; Kalyan says that by the play he found someone as steadfast as Manju, so he was made a man, playing playing in a play.

14 Manjusha also uses inversion and paradox. Bhairob likes to see life that way--a series of inversions and paradoxes.

15 Since a husband is an object of veneration for a wife, if a husband asks forgiveness from a wife he is, in effect, involving her in the sin. He can make her appear sinful by merely asking her to forgive him--placing her in a higher position than he; again a reversal that a wife cannot stand.

16 Bhairob is again using the number 5. For Bengalis, five indicates total, all, process, and humanity.

17 Kalyan is full of duplicities; here is yet another one. This one sets up the opposition between 'acting' and 'living'.

18 Bhairob is using common Bengali Vaisnava themes, the bee, sucking honey, etc. for opposite intentions; instead of it being a venerable theme it becomes rather an insidious action.

19 A wife is not allowed to say her husband's name in public. Usually her husband would be refered to as the 'father of so-and-so' but here she is not giving him that respect, rather she is refering to the character he played.

20 Madness is a common outcome of anti-social action in a jatra play. It is indicated by loud, uncontrollable laughter, unbound or dishevelled hair, wild and rapid speech, etc. It is particularly expected from a parent when I child is lost or changes drastically.

21 Callysium is a dark black sootish powder that is used around the eyes and elsewhere on the face. It is believed to have medicinal powers (to strengthen the eyes) and powers against evil eye (see note 1).

22 Weeping is seen, in Bengal anyway, as the externalisation of sorrow, which is an inner experience. If emotions are not externalised, even positive ones, it is believed that they bottle up and cause you to go mad.

23 Here is the confusion again between life and the play--Manjusha recognises the parallels and she also tries to extricate herself from them.

24 Anjan's reference here is to the story about the relationship between Shiva (one of the three main male deities) and the River Ganges (daughter of the Himalayas). Shiva, when he wanted to meditate rather than have a relationship with Ganga, was called to his senses when she threatened to send a flood--he caught the river on his head.

25 In poetry, or poetical allusion, the body is not like a temple, it 'is' a temple. Here Anjan is refering to her temple and to its maintenance--which he willing to take on as his chore.

26 Bhairob is using a metaphor here. The cow/calf relationship is a very sacred one, but more than that it is a very organic one--a cow bereft of a calf must adjust physically to not suckling. Bhairob wants the image here to be very physical--these are physical tears Manjusha is crying. Songs are such an important part of Bengali life, that singing a song can 'bring one back to life'; can bring Manjusha back from the brink of madness.

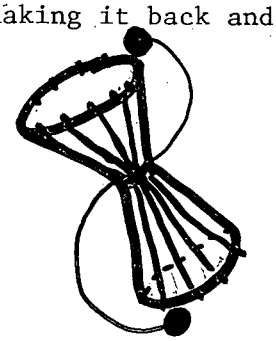
27 Another common image; in sorrow the heart becomes empty. If one can at least fill it with tears, it can begin to stop aching. Shells, in this instance, are just that; empty insides.

ACT II, SCENE I -- The Meadow in Calcutta (Gaur Math)

By the end of Act I all the characters, except those introduced here, have been created, all the emotions have been introduced, with the exception of 'real happiness'. In this Act the themes introduced in the first Act are elaborated further.
This scene begins with comic relief--especially following immediately on the sorrow of the previous scene.

* This meadow, in North Calcutta, is a plce where gypsies are thought to hang-out when they are in Calcutta. In a North Calcutta meadow or garden it is common to see all kinds of transients living.

1 This drum is called a *dooli*, and is particularly associated with itinerant performers. Sometimes this drum is called a dooldool. It is played by holding it in the middle and shaking it back and forth.



2 Bhanu Matir Khela is a kind of magic play. BhanuMati is a legendary female juggler and magician. She is the patronness of those who do magic as a business.

3 Babuji is a formal address word. Babu is common is Bengal as an honorific title; ji is a common Hindi suffix indicating respect or honour. So babuji is a doubly respectful form of address to a superior by an inferior.

4 One of the meanings of having your heart overpowered is lechery. Brahma is lecherous, another way of poking fun at the sacrosanct is to have them leching.

5 He couldn't admit to feeling overpowered by Sania, so he refers to the ox in the city. Bhairob gets a lot of mileage from putting these two together, Not only is Brahma lecherous, but he is a 'bumpkin' too.

6 When addressing a Muslim woman the word 'bibi' is used. Generally it refers to a married woman.

7 Again Bhairob is playing with the lecherous thoughts of Brahmadatta, who, of course, would rather see Sania perform the magical acts, rather than Nigar Hosan.

8 This is quite a 'base' swear word in Bengali. It dates, as close as my informants could tell me, to contact with Christians. It means 'by Mary' and in the Bengali context it is used to mean 'I'll be God-damned'.

9 Pakka literally means 'ripe'. It also means precocious or experienced; with reference to Sania it means good, experienced and 'ripe for the picking'.

10 Here the word for wife is 'bibi'(see note 6). Also there is a funny exchange, from an audience point of view, a wife rather than a granddaughter--it hints at possible illicit behaviour.

11 Venus, in Bengali, is Sukra. It is a rich polyseme meaning Venus, semen and a king of demons. Here it also refers to Venus as a beauty,and Saturn as a lecherous planet.

12 This word, 'bosh' , is used commonly in Bengal. It means balderdash.

13 This was one of the funniest scenes from the audience response. Brahma gets to place his hands on her breasts as a way of telling whether she is a male or a female.

14 Rahu, the eighth planet is associated, always, with negative forces. Here he puts it with 'evil eye'.

15 Polson's butter is a commercial brand name. Reference to a commercial brand, rather than merely butter is a way of emphasising her 'pakkaness'.

16 This is reference to family planning. Bhairob frequently makes reference to too many children, etc. Here it is combined with beauty--a woman is beautiful when she becomes a mother, but too many children is thought to take away from a woman's beauty.

17 A Dom is a low-caste Hindu, a domani is his wife, usually associated with keeping the cremation grounds. All the other things she sings of are inversions, or unlikely occurences; things that could only happen by magic. The word Maya(that I have refered to many time) is related to the English word magic--mayajik.

18 A guru is a teacher. It is a very special type of teacher however, one that requires complete surrender of the student to the will of the teacher.

19 The language that Babul speaks in was difficult to translate. Tridip, the original translator, simply said that it was language used by the 'underworld' in North Calcutta. It seems to me to be an admixture of Hindi, Bengali, and the bazaar language. Probably close to an 'argot' for underworld types.

20 Not only are the words 'to know' and 'to catch' different, here they have an important meaning; to know something phenomenally does not mean that one could demonstrate it. Here criminals or criminal practices can be known to everyone, but they are not easily caught. As Nigar says this here, it foreshadows a lot of what Anjan says later in the play about adulterated goods, and catching people at doing it.

21 Namasthea is a Hindi expression of greeting and departing. The Bengali is Namaskar. Using this indicates again that the gypsies here are not 'true' Bengalis.

22 Sania is very perceptive here; she knows the hidden motives of Babul and Kalyan, and indicates this with a clever turn of phrase.

23 This song again focuses on the paradox of 'truth'; can we really know anyone? What is 'inner' to a person's

identity is hard to 'know', but there is a sense of people having an inner sense of 'truth'.

24 Bhairob puts an important statement in Babul's mouth. Life and Drama are placed together here, not as a metaphor but as the same thing. Kalyan's life, as far as Babul can see, is episodic, like a drama--things are left out but the thrust and the pattern are visible. For jatra people, the jatra is the 'really real' and life is an 'illusion' a series of attachments.

25 This is the gesture of pronam referred to in note 12 of Act I, Scene IV.

26 This is a reference to the epic the Ramayana. Hanumana, the Monkey God, who helps Rama regain Sita from the clutches of the demon Ravanna, is here Babul. Hanumana is the deity who epitomises loyalty and companionship.

27 Babul is given a new identity by his guru Kalyan. When one is in religious tutelage to a guru, it is frequent to take a new name, signifying the new relationship and knowledge you are coming into. Here he gives him a name of a higher caste than Babul is; also the name Shobhan means beautiful or debonair-clearly the opposite qualities of Babul's. Bhairob is making a reversal statement here again--the world is becoming more backwards as the play progresses.

28 As Babul reacts to his new identity we learn more of his other identity--his past. His life is hardly beautiful or lovely.

As this scene ends we get the opposition between Manjusha and Ivy being drawn. Manjusha is a sweet Bengali girl, whose life is horrid; Ivy is a not-so-sweet Bengali girl who is too Westernised, whose life is a 'bowl of cherries'.

ACT II, SCENE II -- The drawing room of Maheshbabu's house

This scene is full of social criticism and commentary on Bengali life in the 1970's. The focus here is on the relationship between the city and the country, the rulers and the rules, the rich and the poor, and the evils of capitalism. Life and drama are again explored and the thin line between the jatra and life is barely maintained.

*

By moving the scene to Maheshbabu's house, the lowly and miserable status of Manjusha can be easily established. She enters in tattered dress and she visibly demonstrates misery.

1

This starts a long series of social criticisms-this one about inflationary prices. Rice and fish are culturally essential food items--their eating defines being healthy and being fed.

2

Mahesh is referring to finding out people's life circumstances. In doing that, he then is able to create the 'persona' or new characters of the new literature he is intending to create. People and persona, in the jatra view and in Bhairob's view, are not very easily separable.

3

Rabindra Kanan is a park in North Calcutta, bordering on Rabindra Sarani and Beadon Street (see map of jatra area). It is a large park located just across the street from the booking office of the Loka Natya, the jatra party performing this play. In the park there is a statue of Rabindranath Tagore, the Bengal poet laureate, and a physical culture club.

4

Tyrelene and Tyrecott are synthetic fabrics, not manufactured in Bengal, rather in Bombay or Ahmenabad, As fabrics they are expensive and prestigious. Mahesh is complaining here about the creation of outer images that are not consonant with the social status or inner resources of a person. The clothes become another expression of inversion or falseness.

5

Clothing, the outward signs of position and identification, and various 'modern' and 'Western' styles are seen as eroding factors. Mahesh here is making not only an anti-capitalism statement, but also an anti-Western in general statement.

6

Anjan again states the backward nature of the modern world-or at least life in modern Bengal. The opposition here is truth and falsehood again. A statement of social criticism seems to be statement of the 'looking-glass' mirrored world.

7

Fish is an important cultural symbol in Bengal. It is essential part of the diet, even for Brahmins. Stylised fish are important motifs in alpana (rice paste drawings used for ceremonial occasions) paintings --the identification with rivers and river produce is very strong.

8 An almirah is a free-standing closet--much like a wardrobe. It is used for storing things other than clothes as well, particularly things that are put under lock and key. Provisions and household products are usually locked up.

9 Howrah is the city across the Hooghly River from Calcutta. Howrah is the travel centre for West Bengal; it has the busiest railway station in India and the bridge which links the two cities, the Howrah Bridge, is the most travelled bridge in India. It has been said that over three million people cross that bridge a day, in a wide variety of vehicles and on foot. A Maidan is an open park. Circuses frequently set up on maidans; Calcutta and environs ahve about three or four large travelling circuses perform each year. There are hosts of smaller travelling circuses. Indian circuses are very interesting since they seem to be modelled after Western ones, but with specifically Indian touches; acrobatic acts and animal acts involving only bears and horses seem to predominate, although there are clowns and comic diversions they do not dress as Western clowns--facial distortion and costuming is very different.

10 Mahesh is again criticising 'modern' Bengal; here the reference is a money-grubbing woman rather than self-sacrificing wife. For Bhairob money seems to be the root of all evil, and certainly the basis of a decadent Bengal. Equating money with truth is not alien to Bengali thought, in fact there are direct links, semantically; but acquisitiveness is definitely being emphasised here as a negative quality.

11 Betel nut is the nut of the areca palm, which when shaved and placed with lime and spices inside a leaf, is chewed by both Bengali men and women. Shaved betel is called 'supari' and the leaf that is chewed is called 'pan'.

12 Likening human life to other organic forms, particularly trees, is common practice in Bengal. A jatra play is also in the form of a tree.

13 Not only is life a tree, life is a drama. Bhairob, particularly, uses this theme. Life is also a journey; as one is journeying through life, making a living one is on a 'jibon jatra'. The main difference between life and the drama, for many of the jatra playwrights, is one of intensity and compression. The jatra's task, then, is to demystify or lay bare the basic constraints on life as it should be ideally lived, and to recollect and suggest corrections such that 'real life' and 'ideal life' could be consonant. Anjan here talks of the construction of a new society based on the demystification and understanding of the 'current' society.

14 Sar Bhage is a famous sweet identified with the locality Krishanagore, in Nadia district of Bengal. Nadia district is the home district of the Vaisnava saint Shri Chaitanya. Things that come from this district, for the most part, are very prestigious. This sweet is made from cream and sugar, with either rose-water or cardamon flavouring. The cream is boiled down, sugar added, and then it is fried until it can be formed into balls, then it is deep-fried and stored in a syrup.

15 All life is the acting life, if you are either 'poor' or 'modern'. This is said by Manimala as a matter of fact; if it were said by either Anjan, or Mahesh it would have been said as a social criticism.

This scene is quite a short one. Bhairob compressed and emphasised his social criticism, in order to 'hit' the audience with the basic things they need to know for the climax.

ACT II, SCENE III -- Kabita Cottage

This scene is a further examination of the conflict between 'traditional' and 'modern' values. The audience is introduced to the dances of the Westernised Calcuttan, more English useage, and more leftist rhetoric.

* Panasar's House has been renamed Kabita Cottage, in a more'modern' fashion. Ivy enters, dressed in Western dress and quite heavily made-up.

1 This is a reference to Sania, the gypsy girl.

2 This has many references to life in Calcutta in the late 60's and early 70's. This is a reference to the practice of processions and marches by striking or protesting workers. At the time I was in Calcutta there were about two or three processions, 'michil' per week, some of them incorporating thousands of marchers. Various unions and political parties would participate. Also, marhces were held in protest of foreign government practices as well; an example was the protest outside the American Library, against U.S. practices in Vietnam. References like this to the city-life are both instructive and interesting to village audiences.

3 Falgun is the 11th month of the Bengali calendar. It runs from the middle of February to the middle of March. It is the month associated with implanting and budding, in both the agricultural and social calendar. It is the month of lovers, in a Vaisnava sense.

4 This is both a 'modern' and 'traditional' reference. In Bengali and Hindi films this is the image that means sexual connection. In Vaisnava imagery this refers to the relationship between Krishna and Radha--Radha is shy and coy and Krishna comes and goes silently.In Bengali social practice the third night after the wedding is the 'flower bed' night, the night when there is ritual consummation of the marriage. This takes place at the groom's house, or the bride's sasubari (father-in-law's house). This event marks the onset of a 'true' married state. The bed is decorated with the flowers of the season, whatever flowers are out at the time of the wedding. For a more complete account of this and marriage from a Bengali woman's point of view see Roy, 1975: 73-123.

5 Baba means 'father'. In Bengali there is a practice of the reversal of kinship terms for reciprocal relationships;e.g. baba is used to address a child by a father and a father by a child.

6 Monkeys are very close to human beings in Bengali classification, but they get human movements backwards sometimes;they act a bit non-human--they can turn the world upside-dwon.

7 A bearer is a common household servant for middle and upper-middle class families in India. Bearers serve, run errands, and supervise the running of the household.

8 Being 'foreign returned' or having been to 'foreign' is a prestigious characteristic in Bengal. Those who go for training abroad are particularly good potential mates--much saught after males for upwardly mobile families. Foreign usually means England, but it occasionally refers to North America or the Continent. Here Kalyan is trying to break into the 'upper-middle' class by claiming to have been away and by claiming to know 'true foreign ways'. It becomes part of his disguise--his dissimulation. The association then, for spectators, could be one of foreign and feigning.

9 The most formal forms of address are 'you politie' which is 'apni' and the associated verb structures. You use this form to address anyone superior in status, or for whom you want to create a relationship of some distance. The form 'tumi' or 'you informal' is used when addressing peers or persons of lower status. It is a more familiar term. Kalyan is being 'super well-mannered' after his supposed return from England--as though he has forgotten the more familiar Bengali ways.

10 Ivy, the plant, is known for its perpetualness, its sense of long-lasting; so the creeper is used to indicate steadfastness, particularly of the kind a woman shows to a man, a wife shows to a husband. Here it is a flirtatious reference to Ivy the person and Goutam's hints at a potential relationship with her.

11 Drinking milk is seen as a 'foreign' custom, particularly for adults. Most milk, in Bengal, goes for making the sweets for which Bengal is famous. Only small children actually drink much milk. Ivy shows her knowledge of foreign ways, hence her sophistication, by offering milk to Kalyan.

12 Didimani is a common form of address used by menials to address the young girls of middle and upper-middle class families.

13 Memsahib is also a form of address, more formal, used for foreign and upper-middle class women.

14 Bhairob does not let ud forget that the play 'Panch Paiser Prithibi' as the play within the play and as the play, is what links all these characters together--in some way or another. This is another reference to the life/drama relationship that Bhairob draws throughout the play.

15 Singing this song here, reminds us of Manjusha's plight, as well as Goutam's (Kalyan's pseudonym) part in the whole thing. Also this song links leftist ideas with proper action, and 'modernist' ideas with improper action. This kind of contrast is very true to the kind of contrast one experiences in Calcutta. Seven-storied houses are abutted by tents and shack-like dwellings. Rich and poor are constantly juxtaposed.

16 This is the song of 'hope' that Bhairob likes to put in a play from time to time. People will win out, if he can have his way. This is pretty close to much of the rhetoric used by the Communist Party of India, Marxist.

17 Shankar's solution to the 'poor' is to get rid of them. This is the stereotypic image of the bourgeois given by most leftist. This whole section is meant for consciousness raising.

18 Burdwan is one of the districts in West Bengal. It is one of the most industrialised areas as well.

19 This is the first formal reference to Anjan's being a communist. It is a strange thing to ask the person you are betrothed to--it seems as though it is a recent decision on Anjan's part.

20 A 'bhadralok' is a Bengali gentleman, much like the British notion of gentry. Projesh is saying that someone born into that class, could certainly not be a communist. Bhairob intends to show here that people are joining the communist cause, regardless of their class background--an important message for villagers to hear. The composition of the Bengali communist parties, however, has always been primarily from this group of urbanites(see,for example Broomfield 1968: 1-20; 282-310, Franda 1971:5-41, and Mukherjee 1970:33-78.). The opposite term is 'chotolok' or lesser people.

20a Ivy, here, means herself beginning to bloom.

21 This is another link between the revolutionary and the 'traditional'.

22 Most of the people who profess communistic ideas have a very 'puritan' view of the relationships between men and women. Women are to be the paragons of 'traditional' values and ideals. As many of my leftist informants told me, "We have to be very careful about our behaviour if we want villagers to listen to our message", they believe that if they transgress social norms and ideals too much no one will buy their political message. Bhairob also is putting poison and nectar in opposition here--another inversion.

ACT II, SCENE IV -- By the side of the Ganges(Hooghly) River.

This scene is the one that leads into the climax. With this scene all the themes and conflicts that come to fruition in the climax are introduced and set. The pace of the scene is fast, and it has a mixture of emotions; from amusement to anger.

* The Hooghly River, between Howrah and Calcutta is the local branch of the Ganges River. Many of the activities in North Calcutta take place near the river. There are two burning ghats for cremations, several potters clay sources, and a number of brothels all located along the northern section. In the morning people go down to the Ganges to bathe, attend one of the several shrines and to meet others doing the same tasks.

1 I.B. refers to an employee of the Intelligence Bureau. Apparently this area is a known area for 'gundas'(hooligans) and the I.B. has people stationed in this area to catch criminals or keep them under surveillance.

2 Mahesh is refering to finding people about whom to write. This means character in the sense 'persona'.

3 Here Bhairob, and in this case through the mouthpiece Mahesh, is using the word character in a double sense. He means both not having any people or ideas to write about, and no sense of personal worth. 'Chaitroheen' means characterless; it is also the title of a famous novel by SaratChandra Chatterjee, a well-known novelist of traditional Bengali themes. People would recognise this allusion as well.

4 Mahesh here is making both a 'realistic' and paradoxical statement. What Bhairob is saying is that you can find people and stories everywhere, but only a few will sell-- in this 'modern' decadence only titillating love stories will sell.

5 He is making the gesture of respect called 'pronam'. It is common for pupils to greet teachers in this fashion.

6 Bhairob is trying to set up his image of human nature here. According to him people are basically good, and their normal potential is to be good, but circumstances force people to become criminal, force people to turn bad.

7 Babul speaks in paradoxes too. He has to be bad to live well. One gets a somewhat sympathetic picture of the pick-pocket.

8 Another example of Bengali love for paradox.

9 The days of the week are named after astrological figures. Brihaspatibar is Thursday as well as Jupiter. This exchange and the few that follow are plays on the words for days. Friday is Sukrabar or Venus's day(Venus and semen are the same word) and Saturday is Sonibar or Saturn's day (this also means utter ruin). Robibar is the Sun's day and known as a bright, fruitful day.

10 On Sunday Babul will get some 'gain'. This is a delightful exchange and pun on the Bengali word for gain and the English word 'love'. The word for gain is 'labh', a word pronounced like the English word 'love'. With a series of humourous transformations we get from 'gain' to 'progressive love'. What Babul will gain is a sexual encounter with someone, Brahma predicts anyway.

11 Mulgram is the name of the village that Bhairob himself is from-- he has fun poking fun at some of his fellow villagers.

12 By saying that the Apollo IX charm costs only two rupees there is an intended humourous slam against the moon-shots. The moon walking was phenomenally popular in Bengal. There was a lot of talk about the real probability of people actually having done it. I was constantly asked if it were 'true'. This news was covered on All India Radio, and so many villagers were very aware of this event and the meaning of these sections.

13 The word for wife here is not the one usually used in reference. Instead Brahma uses the word 'gini' which is a somewhat derogatory word. There is a stereotype in Bengal of the Bengali housewife--sharp-tongued, no nonsense, and a bit of a hen-pecker--almost our derogatory stereotype of the 'fishwife'. This is not in competition with all the ideal models that have been given elsewhere in the play, but merely one of the additional stereotypes of Bengali women, actual women.

14 Social criticism and realistic statements are here put in Brahma's mouth. This indicates how pervasive the fact of and knowledge of unemployment is in Bengal. I recall one newspaper article that said that 40,000 unemployed engineers applied for 2 engineering jobs with one Calcutta firm--this kind of information is Bhairob's source as well.

15 P.A. refers to a personal assistant.

16 'Night' men refer to men who are able to supply others with women. It is like a 'pimp' but instead of merely getting a percentage, they seem to reap all the proceeds.

17 The champaka is a flower that is used frequently in Bengali imagery. It is a golden flower with a particularly strong perfume, thought to drive people to sexual desire.

18 This line is said in a strange admixture of Hindi, Bengali and probably Urdu-it was very difficult to translate. but this is probably quite close to the intended meaning.

19 This useage is Arabic. It is used frequently by Bengali Muslims; not very frequently used by Bengali Hindus.

20 This is another play on the number 'five' and its relationship to Bengali life in general and to this play in particular.

21 'Bidis' are local cigarettes. They are about 2 inches long and a brown colour-very strong. They seem to be made of raw rolled tobacco.

22 The significance here is that 25 is five times five. Again the sense of an intensified five.

23 There is the 'appearance' that Projesh may be doing an act of charity. Charity is well-thought of in Bengal. What it does, however, is to foreshadow thought about Projesh's 'real' motive, which is Sania.

24 Thirsty here has two meanings; 1) requiring liquid refreshment and 2) sexually hungry. Sania means both. Projesh needs liquor and sex.

25 She is reacting to the impossibility of inter-class marriage, as much as inter-ethnic marriage here.

26 Projesh thinks that Nigar will not be able to do this. Also the emphasis on numbers that mean 'totality' is very important. 24Rs. and 95p. is too fractionated.

ACT III, SCENE I -- The House of Maheshbabu

This scene begins the climax of the play. The 3rd act is canonically the place where all the various themes and characters come together. In this scene Manjusha is forced to go into acting again, Mahesh writes literature and also to drink, and many people change identities again.

* It is important that the scene take place in Mahesh's house, since it draws to our attention again the plight of the heroine, Manjusha, and brings other characters into her world. From an aesthetic point of view it is important as well, it provides a link with Act I Scene II, and Act II, Scene II.

1 'Sarbat' means sherbat. However, it is not a sweet like ice cream, as it is here, rather it is a sweet drink much like a cordial.

2 Malay explains his violation as 'part of his job', as what a director must do. To define it in this way is consonant with the Bengali notion that a position has certain recognised duties, and to perform them well in itself has merit. Malay's motives, I would add, were undoubtedly different from this, but nonetheless the statement would be believeable.

3 Manipur is a state just on the otherside of Bangladesh, that is known for its distinctive culture; dances, costume, jewellery, etc.. This would be a prestigious gift.

4 Chaudrani is literally a title of honour, being the feminine of Chaudhury, the title for a feudal prince. This makes Manjusha a Queen or Princess. Single word names are common for film stars and actresses--they rarely use both a first and last name.

5 Equating a house with a theatre is the same as equating life and drama. This is another statement about the intermeshing of the two worlds within the world of the writer. This is another place where Bhairob uses Mahesh as a mouthpiece.

6 The lichi nut is a delicate fragrant fruit. The season is short and it is a delicacy. The wild arum is very common. Another juxtaposition that high-lights opposition.

7 This is a reference to a specific playwright, who was said to have taken government bribes to write specific plays, and then is held up as the paragon of bold and free writing. This was a particular story at the time I was in Calcutta. How true the allegation is, I don't know, therefore I will not elaborate the story with names.

8 For Mahesh all Bengal is one large play. Life and acting are not separated.

9 The President's Literary Award is called the "Rashtrapati Puraskar" and is awarded annually to writers from different states in India. It is very prestigious to win this award, and it carries with it a monetary prize as well.

10 'Dharmatantrabad' is a word coined here by Bhairob-it probably means religionism or something like that. At first I thought that this was 'Dhanatantrabad' which means capitalism. This seems to be where Bhairob is using the knowledge of the word capitalism and turning it cleverly into capitalist religionism--the worship of money. Bharatratna means chief writer of India, and Padmabhushan means lotus blessed one--both would be great honours.

11 'Go to hell' means literally 'jump in the oven or furnace'.

12 Urbashi is one of the heavenly dancers at the court of Indra, the King of the Vedic Gods. She is known both for her beauty and her dancing.

13 Please see the note 9 for Act II, Scene III about the use of the formal and informal 'you'.

14 Love anurag means a kind of love-anger. It is usually jealousy or teasing between people who are in love. It usually indicates a very close relationship, certainly closer than Manjusha feels to Malay.

15 The sensitive state he is talking about is the mental anguish and aggrevances felt by being hurt by someone you are very close to. It is difficult to translate because there are no word-for-word equivalents.

16 'Abhiman' is a complicated word meaning everything from pride and self-respect to the process of having your feelings hurt by others. It is etymologically related to the word for acting as well.

17 The Rajdhani Express is a fast air-conditioned train going from Calcutta to Delhi. It takes 17 hours, when it runs on time, and it is a most comfortable train even if it takes longer.

18 The image of the river and the sea is very common in Bengal, and they usually have the same sexual connotations that they have here.

19 Malay has designs on Manjusha, and will thwart her relationship with Anjan, if at all possible,

ACT III, SCENE II -- The Garden House of the Chatterjee Family.

The placement of this scene in the climax is necessary for the juxtaposition of Bengal and Western values. It brings Anjan, the communist and social critic and Shankar, the Westernised crooked barrister together in a clash over the social conditions prevailing in Bengal. It also places Anjan and Kalyan, the disguised deceiver, together in opposition. The third clash in this scene is the one between Shankar and his 'traditional' father, Panasar. What comes out of here seems to be the strange marriage of communist and traditional Bengali ideals; Anjan and Panasar.

* The number of houses a family has in a variety of locations seems to be very important status consideration. Having a garden house demonstrates their social status. But it does more than that; they can isolate Panasar. Bhairob

is rather associating Panasar with 'nature' or living in a natural setting--that gives him even more symbolic power.

1 All the items that Ivy refuses to wear are traditional symbols of Bengali married women. The vermilion, or 'sindur' was explained to me as meaning that the woman is now a fertile sexually operating woman. It is put in the centre part of her hair at an important point in the marriage ceremony. For a more detailed explanation refer to Inden and Nicholas 1977:49-50. They say, "In this action the husband symbolically enters his wife's womb and activates her uterine blood for the purpose of producing a son for the family." The bangles are supposed to bind the wife to the husband. It is interesting that they are made of iron and conch-shell. The conch-shell bangles are cut from a single shell and are figuratively supposed to mean(or so I was told) that they are an outward reminder that the relationship is something painful to not be in, or to be in. The iron bangle is a reminder of the firmness of the bond of one blood; 'loha' the word for this bangle also means iron, metal, blood and tears. Ivy, by refusing all this, enhances her image of pro-Western and anti-Bengali practices--making her even a better contrast to Manjusha, who slightly later in the play refuses to remove the 'sindur' from her part, and refuses to give up the symbols of marriage, even though she has been deserted and is being encouraged to start a new life.

2 Bhairob also explained the iron bangles, with quite a twinkle in his masculine eye, as shackles or handcuffs.

3 Many of the actresses that I came to know, who were married, in fact did this. Quite frequently they were to play the part of a 'kumari' or unmarried girl, and then they would comb hair over the 'sindur' in their part. Here, in addition, the practice is not explained as 'practical' but rather a 'modern practice'.

4 A wife is not supposed to address her husband in public by his name. The word for this practice means' withholding the name'. There are other relationship for which the name is taboo. I watched very young girls, just married, be afraid to say anyone's name, not knowing which were permitted and which were not. Addressing a husband by his name indicates equality rather than the proper relationship of domination that should obtain between them.

5 Lotus, the young jewel of a person as yet not completely Westernised in his ways, begins to chide Ivy for her un-Bengali ways. Bhairob is again emphasising the importance of the opposition between Western ways and Bengali ways.

6 A high compliment, is to be referred to as 'simple'. When it was first applied to me I was quite offended, thinking that it meant dull-witted in much the way out word 'simpleton' does. I was reassured, however, that it means forthright and not given to duplicity or prevarication. In fact it has much the same meaning as the word 'honest'.

7 By reinstating Anjan, and being in collusion with Shankar, the manager believed that Anjan's loyalty could be bought. Anjan, being true of purpose and pure of heart, of course, would not comply.

8 Anjan quite openly states what he sees to be the wrong values of the 'modern Westernised' age. Things are backwards. His optimisim about the consequences of awakening people and politicising them, places this long speech well within the terms of leftist rhetoric.

9 The anti-Western sentiments are very clearly stated here. The prophecy about the future of profit-making among what Anjan believes to be the evil bourgeois, is that the poor will overcome and reduce their(bourgeois) lot to that of the poor. The world will 'turn around'.

10 Symbolically Ivy's gesture is very important to this play. Not only is the world a five paisa worth world, but Ivy decides her life with the toss of a five paisa coin. A total decision must be a decision with five parts.

11 The imagery used here, again, is the same as that used in Bengali Vaisnava poetry. Krishna is the bee and Radha is the flower. In this case the bee is Kalyan and the flower is Ivy.

12 This is one of the biggest reversals of all. A young daughter rarely has control of her father's bank account. In this case the message is even more than this; not only is she a daughter controlling the money of a father, but she is also a woman controlling a man.

13 Agarwala is a Marwari name. The Marwari population in Calcutta is known for its astute use of money and shrewd business sense. They often are the ones, in life and in jatra plays, who loan money to people as well as own a lot of property. They are viewed as touchable (in a monetary sense) outsiders and reside primarily in an area of the city that is directly between the old British section and the North Calcutta Bengali section.

14 Namaste is the Hindi form of the salutation which in Bengali is Namaskar. Using this to Mr. Agarwala (as Babul is playing that role) is a recognition of his different ethnic status. He speaks Bengali with a Hindi accent.

15 The intention behind Goutam's line is the opposite of its surface appearance. This 'good' deed is 'good' only from his and Babul's point of view.

16 This is another reference to life in Calcutta in the late 60's and early 70's. The 'gherao' is a form of worker's protest where the management is surrounded by the workers, given their demands, and kept within the circle of workers until they comply with the demands or until they can agree to negotiate. This was very much the situation in Bengal.

17 Also at this time it was common for non-Bengali business people to try to move their businesses from Calcutta, because of these various forms of worker protest. The marches and processions I referred to in an earlier note are another example of the same civil state. Many Marwaris moved back to Rajasthan, many Parsis moved back to Bombay or Gujarat, and many wealthy Delhites moved back there. By the time I left, in 1972, after the Congress government took over in Bengal, some of the business people were again returning to Bengal.

18 Hindi speaking Marwaris refer to the avatar of Vishnu, Rama the hero of the Ramayana, rather than to Krishna the lover. Of course Marwaris do not only refer to Rama, but it has become an identification point with Bengalis.

19 A 'sayambar sabha' is a custom whereby the ruler would invite all the eligible men in the realm to come to an assembly where his daughter would be introduced to all of them. Then she would choose one of them as her husband herself, from her own preference. The words literally mean to choose for herself from an assembly. Panasar describes it a bit in the dialogue that follows. This is also a literary allusion to the story of Bidya and Sundar. Bidya was a princess who was very intelligent. Her father wanted her to marry and kept sending suitors to see her; she said she would marry one who could defeat her in logical argument. She found no one. Sundar, who was himself a prince, stole into her chambers with the help of an old flower woman, Mala, and they fell in love. Bidya believed Sundar to be of a lower rank, and was afraid to tell her father that she had fallen in love. Soon, however, she became pregnant and could no longer hide her sexual involvement with Sundar. He was discovered and brought to court and tried. Ten through a series of interventions it became known that he was a prince and could legitimately marry her.

20 The choice of a husband by the princess, in the example given in the text, was made apparent by the placement of a garland or lei around the neck of the husband chosen.

21 A gate-keeper, while a very important person in Bengal, is a servant and an outsider. Panasar is rebuking Shankar by indicating that he is being treated as and accepts the status of outsider.

22 The word 'baba' is the traditional term for father. If Shankar uses this word, Panasar says he will lose prestige among the modernists, One insult that is common in Bengal is to call someone a dog. Dog's are street beings, with unknown fathers and unknown children.

23 That Shankar doesn't see the significance of his speech is part of the irony that Bhairob is trying make apparent here. In 'fact' Shankar has 'killed his father' in social and psychological terms.

ACT III, SCENE III -- On a street in a slum area

In this scene the Kalyan sets up the murder of Projesh by the gypsy Nigar Hosan, in an attempt to eliminate the heirs to Shankar's estate. Also there is the change in the character Brahmadatta; he changes from the astrologer to an 'empty box' salesperson. So by this third scene of the climax we again have seen the inter-relationhips among the various characters in the play, and the clashes among them as well.

* The word for 'slum' is 'bustee'. Many small areas in North Calcutta are designated as such by the bourgeois of the city. As before, in Act I, Scene IV, being out in the street is important. Most 'intense' and visible living is in the street.

1 'Thakurbabu' is a term of address or reference that puts the person in a position of respect. It can refer to any person in a master position, but usually refers to persons who are priests, teachers, brahmins or a father-in-law.

2 'Koutababu' means a box person, a seller of boxes. But, interestingly enough 'kuta' means guileful or crafty, wily and crooked. I believe that Bhariob is intending a play on words here. Brahmadatta is revealing his true nature.

3. The intention here is to understand both the literal and the figurative meanings here; 'real' boxes and 'human shells'.

4 If a Bengali loses people they are attached to, either by moving away or by death, they often refer to their situation as 'empty', and they do so with a variety of words. The words we translate as empty range from words that mean 'void' to words that mean meaningless. They have a rich vocabulary to express that concept.

5 Social criticism of the police in jatra plays is relentless. They are portrayed either as 'evil' or 'stupid'. At this time in Calcutta the police were particularly under attack for their bribe-taking and demanding. Most of the people who are policemen in Calcutta are not Bengali. Many of the policemen are Santhali tribals or people from the state of Bihar.

6 When a person is perceived as evil, it is common to call him a 'Satan' or someone demonic. There are other such evil epithets as well; chalak or thief, shylock or money-grubbing.

7 When a horoscope is cast the various houses are filled with information. When they are not completed or ill-completed astrologers refer to it as empty.

8 The 'heavenly garden' in Hindu mythology is the Nandan Kanan. It seems to be a concept of 'paradise' close to the Christian idea of the 'Garden of Eden'. Projesh will feel like he is in paradise when he drinks of Sania.

9 When Babul makes a mistake and calls Goutam Kalyan, Kalyan 'acts' by saying that was the name he had in a 'play' once. By acting he covers up the mistake--but also this piece of information is necessary for setting up the meeting of Manjusha and Kalyan again, in the performance of a play.

10 Projesh refers to 'life' as 'acting' here. All intimations of love for him are 'acting'. This seems to be true of Kalyan as well. Goutam(Kalyan) replies by using the English word 'friend'. The relatively liberal use of the word friend by English speakers bothers Bengalis a lot. In Bengali, relationships between people are much more specifically characterised. A friend is a very intimate word--other degrees of association have special terms for them; e.g. known to me, acquaintence, well-known to me, etc..

11 Babul is a master of disguises. In this play he has been Agarwala and now is a Fakir. A Fakir is a Muslim religious specialist, a mendicant. Since Nigar is Muslim, a Fakir would be respected, believed and followed by him. Also though, Bhairob is again playing with words. In Bengali the word 'faki' means to 'hoodwink', trick or deceive.

12 'Khoda meherban' literally means God is merciful, and it immediately establishes Babul's disguise.

13 'Allah malik' means God, the lord of all.

14 This is another instance of 'love' and 'mind' being equated. Love, for Bhairob, seems to be a kind of mental preoccupation. Frequently he will refer to the 'honey of the mind' meaning sweet love, or the 'poison of the mind' meaning love gone sour.

15 Not only is 'love' a mental action, also 'seduction' is. Speech is powerful, often overpowering and by speaking mastery can be achieved.

16 This refers back to the very first scene of the play, where Manjusha is accusing Kalyan of treating her like a used leaf plate. Projesh is saying that his intention is to use Sania once and throw her away. The audience comes to know what a liar Projesh is by this direct statement.

17 This is the beginning of the plot Kalyan is hatching to kill off Projesh. By pointing out that by impersonating a religious person Babul 'hoodwinked' Nigar, Kalyan hopes to urge Nigar to get revenge.

18 We also learn that Kalyan is planning to kill off Lotus too. With all the male heirs out of the way he can get at Shankar's fortune. He plans to court and deceive Ivy, thereby getting access to the estate. The image here is a verbal one that matches and corresponds to the visual cinema image of playful love relationships. It is a metaphor for sexual intercourse as well.

ACT III, SCENE IV -- The drawing-room of Maheshbabu's house.

This scene is the climax of the climax. It is fast paced and full of the same uses of paradox, opposition and inversion that have been used throughout. Manjusha is accused of having an affair with Anjan; Mahesh drinks more; the play is arranged; and the two families (Projesh's and Manju's) meet.

* This setting links the following scenes directly together; the first scene of this act and the last--meaning that the climax is bounded by this setting, and also it links Act I, Scene II and Act II, Scene II, together with the climax.

1 As Manjusha is discussing the rewards of the acting life she makes an important allusion to a common theme in Bengali literature and popular images. There are two very important kinds of 'love' relationships; love in union or when they are together, and their is love in separation or love pains. These two types of love are also cross-cut by a dimension of legality of the relationship. The love between Krishna and Radha is thought by some Bengali Vaisnavas to be illegal and frequented by painful separations. Dimock (1968:41-63) has an important analysis and elaboration of the understanding of this theme.

2 'Rajanigandha' is a very fragrant small white flower that is used to make garlands that are either worn around the neck or in the hair, primarily of women. When these garlands are made (the season being primarily spring) and are being sold on the street the atmosphere is a dense heavy perfume. It is intoxicating.

3 Yet another statement of the reversal of appearances. Manjusha is stating an understanding much like our 'crying on the inside, laughing on the outside' image of the clown or the jilted lover.

4 Life and living is seen as a container. This image has been used throughout this play and many others. Shells, temples, empty containers, cups, etc.. have all been used to indicate the boundedness of a person's life. An actor or actresses life is a special or different container all the time--constantly changing with the various 'persona' they assume. None of it can be 'real' at one level because they are who they are not; at another level it is the 'really real' since they portray the existential dilemmas of all Bengalis.

5 Bhairob is using Mahesh as his special mouthpiece again. Literature is, in Georg Simmel's terms 'more life' and by its intensity and density it is 'more real' (Weingartner 1962:15-20). Life is a process, which when expressed in literature pushes itself to reproduce

and

6 itself with more awareness. It is also Bhairob's way of making his life more important since he writes literature.

7 Mahesh is chiding Manimala again about her backward's values. She puts money before people, herself before others, and now counts from the wrong end.

8 Manimala tries to get back at Mahesh by reversing his values, as he has said hers are backwards. Truth and truth-speaking are products of altered consciousnesses?

9 'A stage play of a marriage' is open to a great deal of interpretation, probably all of which could be 'true'. What I think that Bhairob is getting at is the following: 1) stage plays are of relatively short duration and are not involved with 'real' feeling, mainly with 'acting'.; and 2) that Manjusha and Kalyan were mere extensions of the play 'Panch Paiser Prithibi'.

10 'Shame' has been used throughout this play, and it seems that a note is in order. In Bengali the semantic load of the word 'lajja' or 'shame' is a very heavy one. It means bashfulness, modesty, hesitancy, and feeling disgraced. For a Bengali woman its positive meanings are a sense of propriety and caution, its negative meanings are diffidence and disgraceful behaviour. When Manjusha says that she no longer has any shame, it means that actions of a sexually agressive nature are no longer difficult to think or to do. Her character has been transformed; of course we in the audience know that she is the model of a pure but tormented Bengali woman. Lifting the veil of shame, is much like lifting the veil of maya--when the veils are removed we see life in its demystified form.

11 What Manimala is getting at, I believe, is if some people don't move lower down, how will others have the steps (other people's positions) to climb up to the top. She has turned other people into inanimate objects. It is Bhariob's way of giving further evidence about her unlikeable character, as well as her gullibility--she believes someone like Malay.

12 Basically the mind is 'pure' and interactions with other people will either enhance its pureness or will pollute it. Mind is like 'basic human nature' for Bhairob. A Lotus is a frequent image of purity, destroying its petals and shape is like destroying the purity of mind.

13 This was a very difficult passage to translate, as is evident from the prose in the text. It seems that what Anjan is saying is that I never dreamed that you, my sister and my flower, would cut me so, with harsh words and bad thoughts. By trying to stick more closely to the literal Bengali there is an additional insight that is gained. In dreams the kind of consciousness that we

have more imaginary and 'truer' experience. Dream-like reverie is creative; but in this case Manjusha's actions and words are beyond the limits of Anjan's creativity.

14 'Gentlemanly' here is not a gender reference, it is a status reference.

15 This is yet another attempt to play with identity, its truth and falsity. 'Real' identity is something that people cannot know from external appearances. Malay's question is answered by the introspective song of Mohan.

16 Placing this song here has many purposes: 1) Mohan is discovered by Malay, so that he can be incorporated into the second play within the play; 2) the content of the song is furthering the leftist message of the play; and 3) more reversals and inversions can be heard--grabage and gold, new and old society.

17 This is the first time that there is contact, directly, between these two families.

18 Palesh is the Baul character, the singer, in the play Panch Paiser Prithibi--it is the part that Mohan played in the opening scene.

19 This is the first reference in the play to reincarnation. It is interesting to note that this first reference is to and by characters of non-ideal types. People frequently feel that they have known someone in a previous life, if they immediately get along, or are open, at just meeting. People would tell me that I must have been Bengali in my previous life, because how else would I be able to 'live in Bengal as they did?'

20 We now know that the second play within the play will be soon, and will involve the same characters as the first scene of the play.

21 Darjeeling is a town in Northern Bengal, bordering Sikkim. It is the town for which our known 'Darjeeling Tea' comes. There are a number of boarding schools there for wealthy Calcutta children. It is a pleasant climate since it is in the Himalayan foothills. A place to visit during the deltaic monsoons.

22 Babul means that for the last few days he has been living to the hilt inside Projesh's harem. His life has been as a Mughul ruler; drinking, watching dances, and having sexual fun.

23 We learn that Goutam(Kalyan) will be playing in the play with Manjusha--we, as the audience, know what will happen, ironically the main characters don't.

24 Manjusha had many 'births' in that play. She was first born as an actress in that play, she was first born as a tragic figure and she was first born as a wife. The latter has social significance in Bengal. In a marriage ceremony there is a section of the ritual where a woman has a second birth into her husband's clan. Nicholas (1977:48) gives an interpretation of the meaning of this birth for a woman.

25 Manjusha has not yet lost her 'shame' she will not let Projesh hold her hands. And she reacts to the suggestion that Projesh makes about selling her body to Bombay. Bombay has the image, in Bengal anyway, of being a place where there is a lot of prostitution and 'loose' living.

26 Babul uses the word 'begum', which is the title of a Muslim queen, or wife of a Mughul ruler.

27 Manjusha can see through the hollow 'love' they all profess for her. She can even see the humour in it. Again she refers to containers and the size of them.

ACT IV, SCENE I -- The drawing room of Shankar's house.

This scene is also fast in pace. Ivy and Kalyan have a tryst; Anjan and Kalyan are placed in opposition; Nigar Hosan confronts Shankar; and Panasar gets ready to leave. This scene and the ones that follow are much shorter than previous scenes, after the climax the play rapidly reaches its new beginning.

* This setting is in juxtaposition to the previous one in Mahesh's house.

1 'Man of your heart' in Bengali translates as your near and dearest one. It is quite a common and traditional way of saying the man of your dreams. Ivy's reaction to this phrase is amusement, particularly since Kalyan has been playing the foreign sophisticate.

2 This is another instance of irony. Ivy telling Kalyan about Manjusha is another way of drawing the opposition between the two women as well.

2a A darwan is a gate-keeper, or household guard.

3 Anjan is trying to foreshadow the horrible scene that is about to come, because people have again been taken in by Kalyan. If Shankar were more aware of his own character, he would have learned that Goutam is of a similar character, that like attracts like.

4 Knowledge of 'crooked' people is 'crooked', or Anjan would say. Another instance of reversal or inverted knowledge.

5 This is an important reference of historical colonial significance. Blueblood refers to aristocratic classes just as it does to us, however it means much more than that. 'Nil Rakta' or blueblood, refers to the period in Bengali history when the Indigo planters were dominating and terrorising the Bengali peasants. The clashes and domination came to be known as blueblood. Anjan is likening Shankar to the colonial despots.

6 A prophecy that Shankar is forced to reiterate when it comes true later in the play. Also a good example of common Bengali leftist rhetoric.

7 Each community or neighbourhood in Calcutta will put on a collective Durga Puja (worship festivities in honour of the goddess Durga). These are known as 'barwari' pujas, and they are paid for by subscription from the members of the community. Usually the local priest presides, but any Brahmin can, hence Panasar's participation.

8 A 'namaboli' is a saffron or white cloth with red or black printing on it. The printing will either be "Hari Krishna Hari Krishna, Hari Hari, Hari Rama, Hari Rama, Hari, Hari" or "Kali Ma, Kali Ma". The priest wears this cloth around his shoulders both for identification purposes and ritual efficacy.

9 Panasar's speech could have come from the mouth of Anjan. This is another formal link with 'traditional' Bengali ideals and with 'modern leftist ideals' contrasting with 'modern Westernised' ideals.

10 Ranchi is a city in Bihar state. It is known for its mental hospital and its asylum for the insane.

11 Evidence is not usually called for in order 'to know that you know' in Bengali. The source of knowledge usually not external. Also the contrast is with the source of Western knowledge which Bengalis see as external and 'mere appearance'.

12 Usually Bhairob's English phrases are grammatical, but this one isn't. Whips were used by the British and whips were used by the Mughul regional rulers; the use of them here is a reminder about the nature of dominators.

13 On every day of the Durga Puja different things must be done. Panasar is horrified by Ivy's actions and immediately makes the connection between her and a 'loose' woman.

14 The dust from the doorway of a prostitute is important in a number of rituals. It is the union of 'opposites' in a number of ways, as it was explained to me.

ACT IV, SCENE II--- A room in the Hotel Helen.

In this scene Projesh succeeds in getting Sania into a compromising position; Projesh throws Champa away; Nigar Hosan attacks Projesh and Sania is killed instead. These are the consequences of things developed up 'til now in the play.

* The Hotel Helen is symbolic of a place where unsavoury things take place. It is outside of any special person's dwelling and not in public view, like street action is. It's privacy is what makes it suspect--it is what goes on behind closed doors.

1 'That third-rate party' is Projesh. Babul is letting us, the audience, know that he doesn't think very much of Projesh and people like him--those are the people he robs and dupes.

2 We learn of the method of killing Lotus. Poison is a common method of disposing either of oneself or of other people. Women frequently take poison if they can't stand their life, and others are poisoned if they get in the way.

3 Mourning, Bengali style, varies with caste, but is always more than two days. Death impurity last from 10 to 30 days, depending on your caste (c.f. Nicholas and Inden 1977: 113-115). The 'foreign practice' referred to is primarily a negative comment, and meant not necessarily to be accurate, merely to contrast

normal Bengali behaviour. Kalyan wants to speed up the marriage with Ivy, then he can continue his plan and murder Shankar as well.

4 Mairee here means something like-Is that really your promise? It is the same swear word referred to in Note 8 in Act II, Scene I.

5 Urbashi, is the archetypical dancer and female entertainer, in the court of Indra. Champa, herself, provides the explanatory note in her next dialogue. This makes me believe that Bhairob did not expect his audience to know what he thought they should know about this allusion.

6 'Spring' for Bengalis, is used to talk about young fresh love. The Champaka flower is known for its beautiful spring-time blossoms. Bees, the males, are very active at the time when blossoms are out.

7 Champa 'play-acted' for 5 X 3,000 rupees. This is Bhairob's way of saying that her whole life is one of being bought and selling herself. She lets Projesh know that she was playing the same game--that she too can play-act love. Most Bengali males would not be able to stand the fact that a woman could 'fake' a relationship--the image and the ideal is that women, whether prostitutes or wives, are genuine in their love for men.

8 'After the work is complete' refers to more than merely taking Champa home--it means that finally Babul gets to have a sexual liaison with one of the women he sets up. It has another meaning--people like Babul are still always going to get what people like Projesh are willing to give up or reject.

9 'A sweet honey dream' is sexual reverie. The height of sexual pleasure was explained to me, by many of the jatra actors, as a kind of 'dream-like ecstasy'.

10 'Priya' is the Bengali word for darling or beloved. It is a most positive word and important in Bengali relationships. It is used by women, about their husbands, more than it is used by men, however.

11 This is one of the worst insults that can be levied at a Bengali male. The relationship between brothers and sisters is considered to be one of the most important relationships Bengalis have. To suggest that he sleep with his sister is the kind of statement that could get him killed. Brothers, especially older brothers, should protect and account for their sister's behaviour.

12 Phrases like this, 'my dream chess game' are exactly the reason why I have emphasised elsewhere in this manuscript the importance of dreams, illusion, reality and the journey in Bengali conceptions. Alice's dream chess game would not be at all foreign to Bengali thinking. As Nietzche said, "The beautiful illusion of the dream worlds, in the creation of which every man is truly an artist, is the prerequisite of all plastic art...," and I would add the prerequisite of all schemes and plans (Kaufman 1966:34).

ACT IV, SCENE III -- The House of Maheshbabu.

We must go back to this setting in order to find out what this family's reaction is to the climax. In this scene Anjan takes Manjusha away; Manimala has an insight into the errors of her ways; Malay is thrown out of their lives; and the scene is set for this family's participation in the last play within the play.

* In each Act it is structurally necessary to have one scene in each of the main settings. This scene gives the reactions of the family, in their own setting.

1 Manjusha picks up on the word 'dream' from the previous scene, and while Kalyan can do anything and everything in his dreams, for Manjusha there are some things that can't be thought or fantastised, like giving up the outward symbols of her married status. This again puts Manjusha in direct opposition to Ivy, who claimed that she would never use these outward symbols.

2 A real human being is someone who holds almost sacredly all the Bengali ideals and values. Malay, Kalyan, Projesh, Babul, Shankar, and Ivy are too deceptive, duplistic, and 'modern'--they are not 'real' human beings. Anjan, Panasar, Mahesh, and potentially Lotus, could be seen as 'real' human beings, in Manjusha's eyes.

3 Mahesh, as the prophet of revolution, is Bhairob;s mouthpiece once again.

4 Soon the leftist parties will be able to form a revolutionary political movement. People will have the 'scales removed from their eyes', and this 'world of illusions, reversals, and domination' will be set aright. This is not far from the notion in Vaisnavism of the coming of Kalki, the messianic avatar of Vishnu, who will turn Dharma (duty or the principle of right action) back on his feet again. He is now, in this Kali age, resting on his side.

5 The practice of taking poison was/is a common way for women to be released from an unbearable situation. There are not many other paths available.

6 'Shatin' in Bengali means co-wife. Just as their is animosity and suspicion between half-sisters and between step-mothers and step-daughters, there is a great deal of distrust, suspicion and jealousy between co-wives. The practice of having more than one wife is not too common these days, but it is used as a theme in jatra plays. Manimala is making a totally inappropriate comment about the relationship between Manjusha and Mahesh. She is essentially accusing him of sleeping with Manjusha and taking her as favourite, rather than herself. She has previously accused him of spending too much money on keeping Manjusha.

7 This image of the white heart turned blue by poison is a reference to an episode in the life of Shiva. Shiva drank the poison of the world to save it, and he turned blue in the process. Nilkantha (blue neck) is one of the epithets used for Shiva.

8 Mahesh is railing Manimala for causing him to drink and write merely for money. His action of strangling is a bit extreme, but he has been drinking, therefore he has more license.

9 Manimala, by swearing on her step-mother's (Manjusha's real mother) dead body, literally stops any action for Manjusha. That accusation and damnation are unbearable for a young woman. It essentially says that the child could be the cause of a dead mother's inability to find peace or to be reborn into another body.

10 'Kumari' means unmarried girl, or princess. It also carries with it the connotation of virginity. Clearly Manjusha is not a virgin, so to play at one in 'real' life would be against her 'stri dharma' or duties of a woman's position. Giving up the vermilion powder means that she is giving up her life-hence her reference to death. When a woman gets the vermilion powder it is during a marriage ceremony, one part of which is a second birth for her.

11 Anjan is equating 'modern Bengali society and all its ills' with a stage play. People today are 'not real people, i.e. not real Bengalis', they are characters, they take on whatever identity they must. When the leftist position takes over, this will not be the case.

12 'Manimala' means a garland of pearls or a string of pearls, 'Mahamayabini' means someone who practices the black arts or sorcery. Malay is afraid that Manimala may tell Mahesh the nature of the schemes they have been up to, and naturally he does not want any repercussions on that basis.

13 This is another instance of Bhairob speaking through Mahesh's mouth. The drama is a 'looking-glass world' that reflects social criticism, that demystifies the relationships that become obscured. He gives a great deal of power to literature, considering the number of people who are still illiterate in Bengal. I believe he would extend his notion of literature to include the performing arts as well.

ACT IV, SCENE IV -- Kabita Cottage

This scene wraps up the consequences of the climax. In this scene we learn of Ivy and Projesh's unfaithfulness to the people they are supposed to be associated with; the Chatterjee's learn of Kalyan's 'true' identity; Ivy rebukes her father and his way of life;Shankar nearly goes mad. All of this is the set-up for the play within the play, which follows.

* This setting is again a contrast between the two families. The women in the play are nearly all 'good' people now. Manimala has repented in the last scene, and here in Kabita Cottage Ivy shows her change of heart.

1 From Bhairob's point of view' no truer words were ever spoken'. The play, even with its compression and intensification is 'realer' than 'modern everyday reality', since the play does lift the veil of 'maya' and lay bare the everyday attachments and sentiments with their illusory quality.

2 I.B. is the Intelligence Bureau. Using initials to refer to agencies and people seems very common in Bengal.

3 'Gundas' are hooligans. They were termed by the authorities in Bengal when I was there as 'anti-social elements'.

4 The Oriental Theatre is a theatre in North Calcutta, that is open for hire by clubs and organisations.

5 'Sandesh' is one of the sweets for which Bengal is famous. It is made from boiled milk and sugar, and put into press molds. It is flavoured usually with cardamon.

6 Older Bengalis frequently will go to Benares on pilgrimages--and occasionally they go there to die. Khasi (Benares in Bengali) has an important religious significance for all Hindus.

7 Ivy has finally seen through the position she was in, and is now aware of the wrong-headedness of her and her family's former position. Crying is important; it assures that people retain a balance. Ivy is becoming 'close' to a 'good Bengali girl' now.

8 Projesh is now using Bengali, and he is trying to bring his father back from madness by using the Language.

9 Shankar is behaving like he is 'mad' but his madness brings him closer to realising the 'truth' of the things that have been said to him in the past. Laughing loudly is associated with madness. Having his world collapse around him and his judgement proven to be so false, Shankar hears and appeals to the people who are not there. It frightens Projesh, who tries to bring him to his senses.

ACT V, SCENE I -- The Stage at the Oriental Theatre

In five acts we have come full circle; we are again watching the play within a play and drawing even closer relationships between life and drama. In this scene Manjusha finishes what she was unable to do in the first scene; we have a potential new drama.

* The setting is a stage, like the stage on which they are playing. Life is drama is life is drama....

1 Bhariob makes another grammatical error-he uses death instead of dead.

2 Manjusha sees a closure to the journey of her life. Her laughter indicates that she may be going 'mad' again.

3 Anjan, who arranged the first performance of 'Panch Paiser Prithibi' is now able to cancel its last performance. Having the last line in the play clinches his position as hero. The communist, leftist Anjan, survives and will go on to organise people and right wrongs.

4 They always say 'Curtain' at the end, but they don't use one.

EPILOGUE

If it be true that good wine needs
no bush, 'tis true that a good play
needs no epilogue. Yet to good wine
they do use good bushes, and good plays
prove better by the help of good ep-
ilogues...and, I am sure, as many as
have good beards or good faces or
sweet breaths will, for my kind offer,
when I make my curtsy, bid me farewell.

As You Like It

> ...That was a way of putting it--not very satisfactory; a periphrastic study in worn-out poetical fashion, leaving one still with the intolerable wrestle with words and meanings...
> ...each venture is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate with shabby equipment always deteriorating in the general mess of imprecision of feeling.
>
> T.S. Eliot East Coker

This thesis, from the first beginning to this present one, is an attempt to present a theatrical form and to explore its operation, meaning and significance. Realising the problems of the translation of meaning from one language and culture to another and the problems inherent in the nature of selecting some cultural features and elements as significant, I create a view of the centrality of the jatra in Bengali life and I explore the internal order and contradictions of the jatra life-style. Just as the jatra is resistant to presentation without more than lip-service (or typewriter-service) to its entanglement in social and cultural life, however, this thesis is resistant to anything more than a vacuous summary or concluding statement--I have said what I can say about the business aspect of the jatra phenomenon.

Throughout the document I try to 'meta-lyse' the journey of the demystification of a Bengali notion of reality and at the same time I feel impelled to try to find a 'metaphor' for the anthropological journey and quest for the discovery and experience of 'other cultural realities' or 'illusions' as they may be. Lewis Carroll's intrepid Alice and her journey through a looking-glass world seems both a constructive and imaginative personation through which the anthropological enterprise can be placed in relief. An anthropological stance, however metaphorically created, that is critical of both itself and its place within a certain

cultural tradition necessarily becomes a potential way of moving out of one of the main problems facing us now—being truly alienated from action and people, a peculiar position for anthropologists to find themselves in.

Even though...

> ...there is as yet only one possible choice, and this choice can bear only on two equally extreme methods: either to posit a reality which is entirely permeable to history, and ideologize; or, conversely, to posit a reality which is *ultimately* impenetrable, irreducible and, in this case, poetize.
>
> The fact that we cannot manage to achieve more than an unstable grasp of reality doubtless gives the measure of our present alienation: we constantly drift between the object and its demystification, powerless to render its wholeness. For if we penetrate the object, we liberate it but we destroy it; and if we acknowledge its full weight, we respect it, but we restore it to a state which is still mystified. It would seem that we are condemned for some time yet to always speak *excessively* about reality. This is probably because ideologism and its opposite are types of behaviour which are still magical, terrorized, blinded and fascinated by the split in the social world. And yet, this is what we must seek: a reconciliation between reality and men, between description and explanation, between object and knowledge.
>
> (Barthes 1976: 158-9)

I offer this Prolegomenon; a modest attempt at reconciliation and a place to begin to understand the jatra of West Bengal.

GLOSSARY
of
Bengali Terms and Concepts

This glossary is presented for the aid of people not familiar with Bengal and the Bengali language. Given this purpose, I have chosen to alphabetise the entries in accordance with the usual English language conventions, rather than keeping in consonance with Bengali phonemic distinctions. In parentheses following most entries is a reference to the section of the thesis where this term receives fuller treatment.

abhineta(Part Four)	an actor
abhinetri(Part Four)	an actress
abhinoy(Pro. Part Four)	acting
adhikari(Parts One,Four)	the person who holds the tradition of the jatra frequently the lead actor or production manager.
akar(Part Six)	the second act of a jatra pala, its shape or form beginning.
anata/anjoli(Part Two)	obesiance to a god or goddess
angika(Part Four)	gestural acting
artha(Parts One,Two)	money, political economy, and meaning
asara(Part One)	the arena or field for jatra performances
babu(Part Two)	a word that refers to a clerk or member of the bourgeoise--also a term placed at the end of a person's name to indicate respect.
bandhu(Part Two)	friend, in its most intimate sense
Baul(Part Five)	a nomadic religious mendicant, a mystic singer of the transcendental truths.
bhakti(Part One)	devotionalism, particular a kind of devotion that is exhuberant and achieved through singing and movement.
bharataka(Part Two)	rent or a rental fee for a jatra office
bideshi(Prologue)	foreigner
bij/bichi(Part Six)	the first act of a jatra play, its seed.
bir(Part Five)	a hero
biri/wala(Part Two)	a local hand-rolled raw tobacco cigarette, and its salesperson.
bola(Part One)	a word that in its various forms refers to speaking or speech.
byakhyana(Part One)	interpretation
byabsha(Part Two)	activities, for example business activity

byapar(Part Two)	events and activities, for example business
chakuri(Prologue)	job or occupation, work
chakure(Part Two)	worker, or one who is employed
cha/wala(Part Two)	tea and a tea salesperson
chomotkar(Part Three)	wonderful, a word frequently used by audience members to indicate appreciation of delivery of lines in a jatra play.
chuktikaraka(Part Two)	license, registration of the right to perform
chuktipatro(Part Two)	contract, legal agreement for a performance
dada(Part Two)	older brother, shortened to da on the end of a personal name.
dal(Part Two)	a party, in this case a jatra party
dalal(Part Two)	a middleman or broker, arranger of performances
desh(Part Six)	country or region--a spatial referent
dharma(Parts One,Five)	correct action, duties of a particular station in life.
didi(Part Two)	older sister, shortened to di on the end of personal name.
drishak(Part Two)	spectators at a jatra performance
gadi(Part Two)	a jatra office, literally a mattress
gati(Part One)	a word that in its various forms refers to motion
gayiak(Part One)	the singer in a jatra play
golik (Part Four)	acting through using the voice
golpo(Part Six)	story or jatra book
gondagal(Part Two)	trouble, a disruption in what is 'normal'
gunda(Part Two)	hooligan or anti-social elements
guru/ta(Part One)	teacher, spiritual leader, teaching master
hashya(Part Four)	the comic character in a jatra
ijaradar(Part Two)	lessee of a jatra party
ishta debata(Part Two)	personal deity or protector/ress
jalpani(Part Two)	money given in lieu of food
jama-kharacha(Part Two)	cash intake and expenditures, credits and debits
jamindar(Part Five)	a traditional landlord

jati(Part Two)	caste and/or sub-caste
juri(Part Five)	cymbals
Kabi(Prologue)	poet
Kabiwala(Part Five)	one skilled in the art of poetic dueling
kal boishaki(Part Two)	sudden, pre-monsoon storms
Kali(Parts One,Five)	the primary mother goddess of Bengal; the goddess of creation and destruction
kalpanik(Part Six)	imaginary--one of the classification of jatra plays
kalo nayak(Part Four)	the antagonist in a jatra play-black hero
kanda(Part Six)	the third act of a jatra play, the trunk
kaj(Prologue)	work
kara(Prologue)	a word that in its various forms refers to doing or making--action.
katha(Part One)	word
Kathakata(Part Five)	performer and performance of traditional stories
khol(Part Five)	a drum used in kirtan singing
kirtan(Part Five)	devotional singing, songs in praise of Krishna
Krishna(Parts One,Five)	the primary lover god of Bengal; the god who in Bengal is the paramount lover as well as singer, dancer and player. For some Bengalis he and Chaitanya, the putative founder of jatra, are the same.
labh(Part Two)	profit or monetary gain
lekha(Part One)	a word that in its various forms refers to writing
lila(Part One)	sport or play, particularly of the gods
malik(Part Two)	an owner of a jatra party
mancho(Part One)	a jatra stage, or any stage or platform
mastans(Part Six)	hooligans, like gundas but with hidden goodness
maya(Parts One,Five)	illusion, attachment, sentiment, a shroud
mela(Part Five)	a rural fair, occasion for peripatetic performances
mishti dhoi(Part Two)	a carmelised sweetened yogurt
mohina/betana(Part Two)	salary or wages
moksha(Parts One,Five)	release from rebirth, release into the cosmos as well as blood-letting
mot dena(Part Two)	contractual term for total costs

mot pharana(Part Two)	contractual term for total costs
mritya(Part One)	death
mukul(Part Six)	the fourth act of a jatra play, the blossom
murthi(Part Two)	an image, manufactured for worship ceremonies
natak(Part Six)	a play
nayak(Part Four)	a hero or the protagonist in a jatra play
nritya(Part Two)	dance and the dancers in a jatra party
pakka(Part Three)	ripe, prestigious and refined
pala/kar(Parts One,Six)	a jatra play and the jatra playwright
palla(Part Three)	payment given to a good performer by pinning money to his/her costume
Panchali(Part Five)	a performance of traditional religious stories
panjika(Part Two)	an almanac consulted for propitious days and before travel
para(Part Two)	part or section, refers to the jatra section of Calcutta
parichalak/na(Part One)	the director of a jatra play, often also the lead actor.
pesha(Prologue)	job, profession, or occupation
peshadar(Part Two)	professional, in this case the professional jatra
phul(Part Six)	the fifth act of a jatra play, the ripe fruit
prakriti(Prologue)	primal energy and matter
pran/jibon(Part One)	life
pristhapashak(Part Two)	backer, angel, or patron of the jatra
puja(Part Two)	worship ceremony for gods and goddesses
pukur(Part Two)	local, rural pond of multipurpose water
raga/inis(Prologue)	musical scales at the root of compositions
rasa(Part Three)	the basis of Indian Aesthetic Theory, tastes and moods or states of appreciation
rupa(Part One)	a word that in its various forms refers to form, shape, appearance, symbol. metaphor, and costumer
saj ghor(Part One)	the green room, dressing room for actors/resses
sakti(Part One)	power
samajik(Part Six)	one of the types of jatra plays, the social play
sangi(Part Two)	associate
sanskriti(Prologue)	primal structure, culture

shraban(Part Three)	another word for the spectators or audience
shantik(Part Two)	peaceful
shashan(Part Two)	management
shiksha(Part Two)	a word that in its various forms refers to learning and studentdom
shilpi(Part One)	artist, in this case a jatra artist
shrotimandäli(Part Two)	sponsors
stan(Parts One, Two)	place
uuomana(Part Two)	creditors
utpadan/no(Part Five)	interpretations and meanings
upadesh(Part Six)	morals
vivek(Part Four)	conscience, in this case a jatra character who is the externalisation of conscience

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