



Complitবর্তা

E-newsletter of

Centre for Comparative Literature, Bhasha Bhavana
Visva-Bharati

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From The Office Desk

Dr. Dheeman Bhattacharyya

“...এস হে দীশক্তিসম্পদ মুক্তবন্ধসমাজ হে।
বীরধর্মে পুণ্যকর্মে বিশ্বহৃদয়ে রাজ' হে...”

This song re-drafted several times by Rabindranath on several occasions (1904, 1917, 1925, 1940) is a rare case study in understanding how the school founded by Rabindranath negotiated and realigned itself like its founder over the years. It is a complex journey. The history of this *visvavidyatirthapangan* is thus layered with Rabindranath's idea of an institution that would emerge and function as a response to the several 'contact hours' and 'contact zones'. Comparative Literature in India emerged as a discipline to read how these 'hours' are reflected in the literary process. The Centre for Comparative Literature, situated within the greater knowledge domain of Visva-Bharati, has also emerged as a response to 'doing' Comparative Literature in India over the years. A space to re-align personal and collective choices around knowledge production, the Centre has been working towards accommodating our pluricultural ethos through its curriculum and academic activities. Our students have continuously extended this pattern of outreach.

This edition of our E-newsletter is edited by Soma Mukherjee and is being released on a significant day in the history of our land. Hope knowledge is free. Every sapling planted here on *Baishey* may branch out singing “*ashibe sudin ashibe*”.

চর্চা: গৌড়ীয় বৈষ্ণব ধর্ম এবং বিষ্ণুপুরের রাজ পৃষ্ঠপোষকতা: গ্রন্থ ও মন্দির

সুপর্ণা মণ্ডল

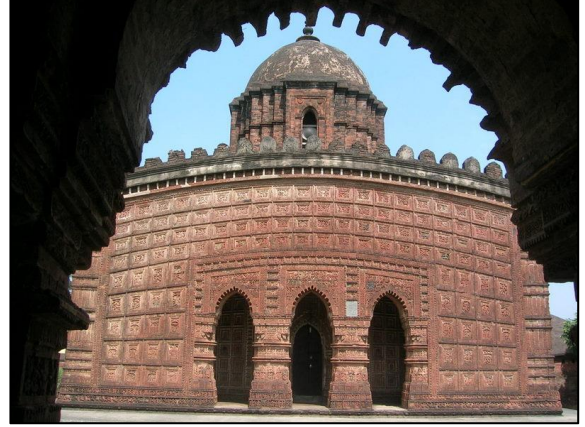


দীর্ঘ দিনের বিরতির পর তুলনামূলক সাহিত্য কেন্দ্রের চর্চা বক্তৃতামালা অনলাইন মাধ্যমে আবার শুরু হল ২২ জুলাই, ২০২২। এইদিন বক্তা ছিলেন বিশ্বভারতীর বাংলা বিভাগের অধ্যাপক ড. শ্রীলা বসু। বক্তৃতা শুরুর আগে ড. নীলাঞ্জনা ভট্টাচার্য আলোকপাত করেন এই চর্চা বক্তৃতামালার উদ্দেশ্যের উপর। যে কোন বিদ্যাচর্চার ক্ষেত্রে আন্তর্বিদ্যা অধ্যয়নের গুরুত্বের কথা তিনি উল্লেখ করেন। এরপর তিনি এ দিনের বক্তার সংক্ষিপ্ত পরিচয় প্রদান করেন।

ড. শ্রীলা বসু তাঁর বক্তব্যের শুরুতেই বিষ্ণুপুর রাজবংশের উপর বৈষ্ণব ধর্মের প্রভাব নিয়ে আলোচনা শুরু করেন। তাঁর মতে, এই বিষ্ণুপুর রাজবংশই প্রথম এমন রাজবংশ যাঁরা বৈষ্ণব ধর্মের পৃষ্ঠপোষকতা করেছিলেন। চৈতন্যের মৃত্যুর পর বৈষ্ণব ধর্মের মধ্যে নেতৃত্ব নিয়ে সমস্যা দেখা দেয়। অন্য দিকে বৃন্দাবনের ষড় গোস্বামী বৈষ্ণব ধর্মকে একটা তাত্ত্বিক কাঠামো দেওয়ার চেষ্টা করেন। ষড় গোস্বামীর অন্যতম জীব গোস্বামীর শিষ্য শ্রীনিবাস আচার্য্য একবার বৃন্দাবন থেকে বৈষ্ণব পুঁথি গাড়িতে বোঝাই করে নিয়ে আসছিলেন। তখন বিষ্ণুপুরের তৎকালীন রাজা বীর হাঙ্গীর ধনসম্পদ মনে করে সেই পুঁথিসমূহ হরণ করান। পরে শ্রীনিবাস সেগুলি ফেরত আনার জন্য আবেদন করতে যান রাজদরবারে। শ্রীনিবাসের সংস্পর্শে এসে বীর হাঙ্গীরের ভাবান্তর ঘটে এবং তিনি বৈষ্ণব ধর্ম গ্রহণ করেন। এইভাবে প্রচলিত গল্পকথার মধ্য দিয়ে বক্তা বিষ্ণুপুরের রাজাদের সঙ্গে বৈষ্ণব ধর্মের সংযোগের সূত্রটি ধরিয়ে দেন।

এরপর বক্তা বিষ্ণুপুরের রাজাদের নির্মিত বৈষ্ণব মন্দিরগুলির শৈলী ও মন্দিরগায়ে খোদিত চিত্রগুলি নিয়ে আলোচনা শুরু করেন। এই আলোচনাকে আরো আকর্ষণীয় করে তোলে অধ্যাপক অত্র বসুর তোলা মন্দিরের ছবিগুলির উপস্থাপনা। প্রথমেই বক্তা একরত্ন, পঞ্চরত্ন, নবরত্ন ইত্যাদি মন্দির নির্মাণের বিভিন্ন শৈলীর বিষয়ে আলোকপাত করেন। বিষ্ণুপুরের এই মন্দিরগুলির গায়ে বিভিন্ন ধরনের চিত্রসম্বলিত মোটিফ পাওয়া যায়। এর মধ্যে বৈষ্ণব ধর্মের সঙ্গে সম্পৃক্ত কাহিনী বেশি পাওয়া যায়। কৃষ্ণের দানবদলন, বাল্যলীলা, বস্ত্রহরণ, রাসমণ্ডলী, পারিজাতহরণ ইত্যাদি বিভিন্ন লীলার চিত্র বিষ্ণুপুরের মন্দিরগায়ে পাওয়া যায়। এছাড়া দশাবতার, চৈতন্যের ষড়ভুজ মূর্তিও কিছু কিছু মন্দিরে পাওয়া যায়। এছাড়া রামকথার বিভিন্ন কাহিনীও মন্দিরে চিত্রিত হয়েছে। মহাভারতের

কাহিনীর মধ্যে পাওয়া যায় ভীষ্মের শরশয্যার চিত্র। দেশীয় কথা-কাহিনী ছাড়া কিছু বিদেশী মিথের চিত্রণও মন্দিরগাত্রে দেখা যায়। তার মধ্যে একটি নবনারীকুঞ্জর মূর্তি যা সিংহলের মিথ থেকে আগত এবং আরেকটি হল শাহনামাখ্যাত সিমুর্ষ পাখি। এছাড়া মন্দিরগাত্রের নৃত্যরত মূর্তিগুলির ভঙ্গিমা থেকে গৌড়ীয় নৃত্য ঘরানার বিকাশ নিয়েও আলোচনা করেন অধ্যাপক শ্রীলা বসু।



বক্তৃতার শেষে উপস্থিত শ্রোতাদের কাছ থেকে প্রশ্ন ও মন্তব্য আহ্বান করা হয়। শ্রোতাদের প্রশ্নের মধ্য দিয়ে আলোচনা আরো অগ্রসর হয় এবং বাংলার মন্দির বিষয়ে বহু কৌতুহলোদ্দীপক তথ্য উঠে আসে।

Pre-submission Presentation by M.Phil Student Mohammad Arif Uddin Mondal

Ankana Bag

Mohammad Arif Uddin Mondal, M.Phil student of the Centre for Comparative Literature, delivered a talk on his research topic "Creation of Binaries and Stereotypes of Kashmir in Hindi Cinema (1961-2020)" on April 20, 2022. He began by explaining how 'Bollywood' as an industry that produces films, depends on certain narratives and discourses that in turn constructs stereotypes. Then he went on to discuss generalisations in depictions of Kashmir as a symbol of natural beauty in Hindi films of the 1960s, such as *Jungle* (1961), *Kashmir ki Kali* (1964), etc. These films featured Kashmir as a romantic destination full of serenity and natural beauty, while the people of Kashmir were mere props. Traces of the turbulent political scenario of Kashmir emerged only in later films. Even so,

the region was presented as a conflict zone and narratives were torn between heightened nationalistic fervor and 'terrorist' activities, as in the case of *Fanaa* (2006). Arif deliberated upon how the 'mainstream' is shaped by favoured narratives and when the mainstream acts as the centre, it creates 'dominant' discourses in an effort to erase the multiplicities of Kashmir. Arif also mentioned *Aroodh* (2010) as an exemplary narrative that talks about the multiple dilemmas in the lives of Kashmiri people in a context shaped by violent conflict. It shows how film-making becomes an important tool in portraying the region's plurality as opposed to a singular idea of Kashmir. The presentation ended with suggestions from the faculties of the Centre for further improvement of Arif's research.

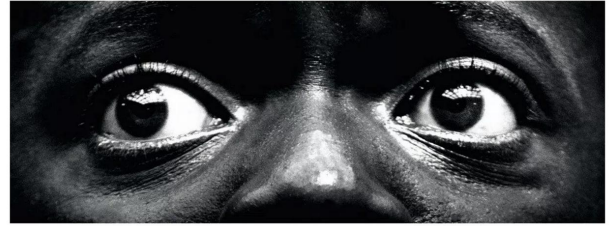
Cine Carca: Screening of *Get Out*

Ritwika Pal

After a hiatus, the Centre for Comparative Literature was back with a new edition of Cine Carca on the 19th of May, 2022. MA first year student Twisham Singh introduced Jordan Peele's directorial debut film, *Get Out* (2017) for first Cine Carca of 2022. The film had won the Best Original Screenplay award at the 90th Academy Awards. Although it is categorised as a horror film, it challenges what counts as horrific within the genre. It is often described as a satirical horror, but Peele, being African American himself, once joked that the film is a documentary.

**CENTRE FOR
COMPARATIVE LITERATURE
PRESENTS**

CINE CARCA
A MONTHLY FILM SCREENING



GET OUT

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY JORDAN PEELE

DATE: 19.05.22
TIME: 15:00
VENUE: ROOM 305,
BHASHA BHAVANA

Get Out follows the protagonist Chris, an African American photographer based in New York. When he visits his white girlfriend Rose Armitage's family in an isolated suburban area, they seem at first to be progressive, but soon their deep-rooted racism begins to show. He notices that all the workers on the estate happen to be black, while all the guest they entertain are white. When Chris meets the only other black guest, he realises the strangeness of the situation. He finds himself trapped in a medical project that turns African Americans into puppets, in the hands of a white person who is controlling their mind and body. The film unlike traditional horror thrillers does not utilise jump scares, or paranormal elements such as ghosts or zombies, rather it portrays how racism can be gruesome in the twenty first century.

After the screening, Twisham initiated a discussion about the metaphors and imagery used in the film, pointing to the use of cotton as a reminder of slavery, which finally helps Chris to escape from the clutches of Armitages. He further talked about negrophilia as a form of racism and the objectification of Chris by the Armitages as the "beast". Others talked about how the white characters' passive racism and bigotry became evident through their civilised facade and how the film used the effects and framework of a horror film, without using any of the elements expected of it.

Farewell of the Outgoing Students of the Centre

Twisham Singh



On 27th May 2022, Centre for Comparative Literature, Visva Bharati, bid farewell to its outgoing MA, GE and M.Phil students. organised by the MA first year students, the event was attended by students, Research scholars and teachers of the Centre. Proceedings began with outgoing students being welcomed with Visva-Bharati's traditional greetings. The programme started off with MA first year student Arnorti Majumdar's dance performance followed by Purnima Singh's solo song. After that Sneha

Chatterjee read a short story. The second dance of the day was performed by Sanghati Ghosh Chowdhury. Among the Research scholars, Arjyarishi Paul enthralled the audience with his mellifluous songs and Suparna Mondal recited a selection of her poems. MA first year students then performed a Rabindrasangeet. MA second year students Anupam Roy, Ujaan Pal Chowdhury, Souya Chowdhury and Sombuddha Das sang few Adhunik Bangla songs. GE student Bishnu Mondal read out a section from *Rabindranath o Santiniketan* by Pramathanath Bishi.

Dheeman Bhattacharyya also graced the occasion with a rendition of Rabindrasangeet 'Sobare aami nomi'. As a parting message, Nilanjana Bhattacharya fondly emphasized that the gates of the Centre will remain open to everyone at all times. Soma Mukherjee regaled all with her reading of "Dashur Khepami", by Sukumar Roy.

Souvenirs were given to the outgoing students at the end of the programme. Shambhabee Bose of the MA first year batch was the host for the day.



MPhil Viva of Md. Arif Uddin Mondal

Avipsa Mukherjee

Mohammad Arif Uddin Mondal, M.Phil student of Centre of Comparative Literature, explained his MPhil thesis titled "The creation of binaries and stereotypes: Kashmir in Hindi Cinema (1961-2020)" in an open viva which was conducted by the Centre of Comparative Literature on June 29th, 2022. Arif demonstrated how Hindi Cinema has perpetuated stereotypes and binaries about Kashmir for a long time. He showcased a diachronic journey of Hindi cinema's relation to Kashmir and how such a trajectory visibly shift from early depictions of Kashmir as "paradise on earth" in the 1960s to a murky cauldron of 'terrorist' activities by the 1990s.



Arif discussed how love stories like *Junglee* (1961), *Kashmir Ki Kali* (1964) showcased the snow-capped mountains of the Kashmir Valley and *shikara* rides as a romantic setting, presenting an earlier stereotype of Kashmir. The trend of equating Kashmir with 'militancy' as contrasted with mainstream Nationalism – later served as lens through which popular cinema viewed the political turmoil in Kashmir. Beginning in the early 1990s with Mani Ratnam's *Roja* (1992), followed by movies like *Mission Kashmir* (2000), *Fanaa* (2006) etc., a common narrative of militancy becomes a dominant trend in the Indian film industry's representations of the region. Kashmir becomes no more than a backdrop for insurgencies and counterinsurgencies, paving the way for sweeping generalisations about Kashmiri people as a whole. Later in his discussion, Arif cited films like *Harud* (2010) and *Half Widow* (2017) as examples where Kashmiris are talking about their own problems.

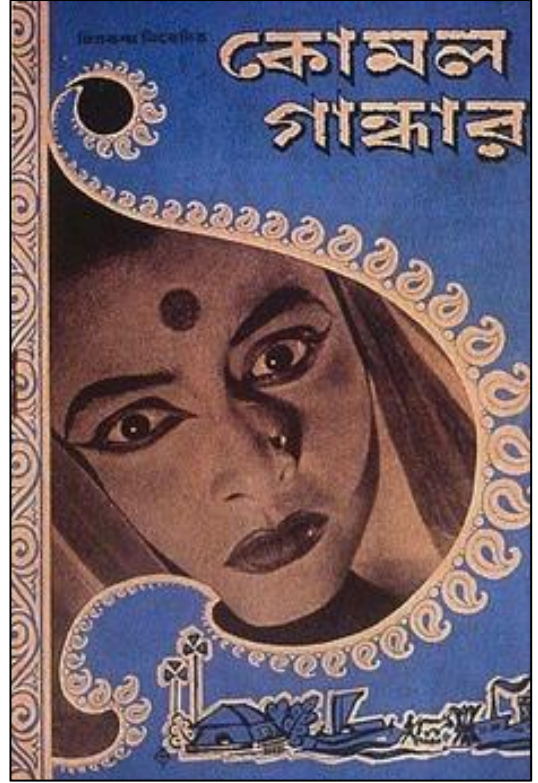
At the conclusion of his presentation, Arif once again reiterated that such stereotypical images played a significant role in shaping dominant perceptions about Kashmir.

Professor Madhuj Mukherjee, Department of Film Studies, Jadavpur University, was the external examiner who engaged with Arif in a meaningful question-answer session, post his presentation.

Screening of Komal Gandhar at Cine Carca

Twisham Singh

On 29th July, 2022 Cine Carca, a monthly film screening event was organised at the Centre for Comparative Literature, Bhasa Bhavana. The film for this month's screening was *Komal Gandhar*, written and directed by Ritwik Ghatak. The film was presented by Suparna Mondal, a Junior Research Scholar at the Centre. She mentioned that this film was considered to be part of a trilogy (*Meghe Dhaka Tara* and *Subarnarekha* being the other two films) as it shares a common theme of the 1947 partition, Ghatak has however denied such claims. This film depicts how the partition created adversities for two rival theatre groups and how they navigate the turmoil of the partition. The film deals with the Indian People's Theater Association which gained popularity during the 1930s and 40s and came to be known as "Gananatya Andolan". Suparna Mondal highlighted the allegorical use of *Abhijnanashakuntalam* to portray the somber atmosphere of partition.



After the screening, Nilanjana Bhattacharya initiated a conversation about the context of the film which included a brief discussion about the historical context for the "Ganatya Andolon". She also shed light on many aspects of the reception of Rabindrasangeet in that time, with a special emphasis on renditions by Debabrata Biswas. She added that Ghatak's film was one of the first to use Rabindrasangeet throughout its course.

Students and research scholars also joined the discussion. MA first year student, Avipsa Mukherjee, spoke at length about music composition and effective use of Rabindrasangeet, and how in the context of Ghatak's films it helps bring out the agony of separation from one's country and the traumatic nature of the partition. Suparna Mondal carried on the dialogue with an elaborated discussion on IPTA, the oldest association of theatre artists in India. The two rival theatre groups in the film propagate ideologies on pivotal subjects ranging from state corruption to class struggle and production of art in post-independence India. She also highlighted how idealism and patriotism have been portrayed in the activities of the rival theatre groups and decisions taken by the female lead Anusua (played by Supriya Devi). The discussion concluded after MA first year student Twisham Singh pointed out how Ghatak's idea of country challenges the conventional notions of political borders. Arbitrariness of the partition, its adverse effects on people as shown in the film were some of the points he focused on.

Students' Achievements

- Ritwika Pal (MA, Sem II) played a role in the upcoming Bengali movie Lokkhi Chele directed by Kaushik Ganguly.

Ongoing Research Work at CCL

- Anita Gua Hembrom: Contemporary Santali Literature: A Historiography from "Below"
- Rakesh Kaibartya: উপস্থাপন-শিল্পে লিঙ্গবয়ান ও 'প্রান্তিক' শিল্পীর শরীর: আলকাপ, বহুরূপী ও গম্ভীরা শিল্পমাধ্যমগুলির একটি বহুমাত্রিক পাঠ
- Ishani Dutta: Of Recitals and Performances: Reading New Literary Trends and Genres in Contemporary Indian Nepali Poetry in the Darjeeling Hills and Sikkim (1980-Present)
- Sounak Dutta: Translation-based Reception of the 'Soviet' in Bengali Literature in the Post-World War II Era (1945-1965)
- Mrittika Ghosh: "Contextualising the 'Canon' and 'Periphery': Historicising the Works of Select Nigerian Women Writers (1960 - 2020).

Students' Publications

মণ্ডল, সুপর্ণা। "ঘুড়ি।" রুআক মাসিক কবিতা পত্রিকা, বৈশাখ, ১৪২৯।

মণ্ডল, সুপর্ণা। "আলোকধন্বার কবিতার অনুবাদ।" অপরজন, মে, ২০২২,

www.aparjan.com/2022/05/29/may2022-sumotr/

মণ্ডল, সুপর্ণা। "এ মাসের কবি: সুপর্ণা মণ্ডল।" যাপনচিত্র, জুলাই, ২০২২,

www.yapanchitra.org/suparna

Tumulayan: A Literary Initiative of the Students

Sounak Dutta and Ankana Bag

The students of the Centre for Comparative Literature, Bhasha Bhavana, Visva-Bharati have been publishing *Tumulayan*, their annual literary initiative, for the past six years on the occasion of ‘Anandabazar’, organised by Visva-Bharati. The upcoming issue of *Tumulayan* will engage with the idea of *Sahajata – On the Innate*. The first thing that comes to mind when thinking about ‘innate’, are innate talent or innate inclinations/tendencies. This term refers to those aspects which are inherited by birth. On the other hand, things belonging to a very personal domain also gain an almost innate quality with the passage of time. When we talk about the innate talent of an author or an artist, the effortless expression of her/his artistry in her/his own field is implied through it. But is artistry truly an effortless endeavour? Perhaps the stories of a lot of practice, hard work and battle remain concealed behind a work of literature or art.

We invite original, unpublished thoughts on the idea and the changing notions and nuances of ‘innate’. Sub-themes may include ‘Literature and society’, ‘Self and society’, ‘Self of an artist’, ‘Journey behind the literary process’, ‘Literature/Art and the pandemic’, ‘Shifting notions of the innate’ etc. Please send your contributions, along with a short bio-note in a single word document (not PDF), to tumulayancl@gmail.com. The last date of submission is **August 22, 2022**. The full CFP, in Bangla and English, can be found at: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/16cOmGtpzXBezyNT89h3ih4JUjR-uvE1lHQ3IBiUxE74/edit>

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