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**Invitation for writing in Folklore and Folkloristics**

This e-journal Folklore and Folkloristics publishes write ups in different sections specified as follows:

- **Article Section:** Research based articles are published.
- **Reflection Section:** Short write up is published.
- **Young Scholar Section:** Contribution of Young Scholar (students belonging to UG, PG, M. Phil level) is published.
- **Highlight Section:** Short write up is published.
- **Book Review Section:** Book Review is published. Books must be sent to the Editor-in-Chief. He will get the book reviewed by competent person.
- **Advertisement Section**
  Advertisement of books and journals relating to folklore and allied subjects are published. Advertisement of any institute working on culture and society is also published.

- **News and Information Section:**
  News and Information relating to any activities of culture in general and folk-tribal culture in particular is published in this section. Contributors are requested -
  1. to mention the name of exact event, incident, occasion
  2. the exact date, time and place of commencement
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- **Video Section:**
  Any significant video document on folk and tribal culture is uploaded in this section

- **Reader’s Response Section:**
  This section will start from June 2012 issue. Letters of the readers or the response of the readers are published in this section. Mention the name, phone, e-mail.
Who can write in this Journal?
Persons belonging to any discipline of pure science and social science may write in this journal. Students, teachers, research scholars, interested persons in any discipline like – language and literature, linguistics, anthropology, sociology, folklore and folkloristics, economics, social work, physics, chemistry, medical science – so on and so forth may write in this journal. The only thing is that the write up should address culture, tradition, folklore or tribal-lore. Interdisciplinary approach is highly solicited.

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1. No remuneration is paid to the contributors.
2. No printed version of this journal is published.
3. Send write up by 31st March for June issue and by 30th September for December issue.
4. Please save the PDF copy of the journal for your personal record. Data uploaded on the website may get lost due to technical error.
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Editorial

The June 2014 issue of Folklore and Folkloristics (Vol-7, No-1) is now uploaded. This issue contains many interesting articles. Carola Lorea’s article on Baul Song namely “Why did you go swimming in the river full of algae? - Conception and contraception in Bauls’ songs and oral teachings” is really an important contribution to this issue. Anuradha Bhattacharyya’s article titled “A Sociological Discourse on Euthanasia” has addressed another important issue of contemporary society. The article titled: “Portraits of Plantation Slavery in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century India: Real and Fictional Accounts” rendered by Amrita Bhattacharyya has touched the historical reality of plantation slavery of India. Mili Dutta (Pal)’s thought on “Moral Crisis and Relevance of Swamiji’s Notion of Love” gives us the scope to understand Swami Vivekananda from a different angle. The paper “Uses of Copper: Some scientific explanation of traditional belief” written by Abhishek Das really presents an interdisciplinary thought on metal and culture. There is another write up on Swami Vivekananda in the Highlight Section, titled: “Religious Harmony in the light of Swami Vivekananda and Islam”. Srijita Bhattacharyya’s article on ‘Power of Madness: Rosemary’s reply to the Question “Aren’t you His mother?”’ dwells on the unconventional approach to a malady.

I should extend my note of gratitude to all the contributors. I must acknowledge all the members of editorial board, advisory board, all representatives of International and National (State) level as well as district level for their untiring effort to bring about this journal.

I am thankful to NFSC and M. D. Muthukumarswami of giving their cordial assistance to this e-journal.

Sk. Makbul Islam
Editor-in-Chief
Folklore and Folkloristics

June 2014
Articles
Why did you go swimming in the river full of algae? - Conception and contraception in Bauls' songs and oral teachings
- Carola Lorea

Abstract

The proposed paper treats a particular aspect of the oral tradition of Bauls and Fakirs of Bengal: the ideas on conception, contraception and control of fertility transmitted by the practitioners through oral teachings and songs. A consistent part of Bauls' lyrics deals with body-centered practices that aim at controlling sexual desire. The esoteric knowledge of conception and contraception is revealed in the lyrics of the songs through an enigmatic language that needs to be decoded by the guru in order to be understood and experienced. Thus Baul gurus are regarded as the guardians of the “secret of both suppression and enhancement of fertility, for knowledge of conception is also knowledge of contraception” (Jeanne Openshaw 2004: 207); they are teachers of sexual education and awareness about the initiates' body. Attracted by the practical benefits of the esoteric teachings regarding birth control, a wide group of followers among the rural population joined the practice of jugal-sādhana (esoteric practice to be performed by a couple). However, with the diffusion of healthcare and modern contraceptives, it is possible that the role of a Baul guru has, or is going to, drastically change. How does the impact of modern, governmental healthcare interfere with the transmission of esoteric knowledge? To what extent are medical technology and the diffusion of modern contraceptives threatening the transmission of the traditional sādhanā? These problematic developments have not been researched thoroughly, and many of these questions are still to be satisfactorily answered. Here I will try to offer possible solutions employing an inter-disciplinary methodology that combines folk literature with ethnography, based on the approach proposed by the contextual theory of the study of oral traditions.

Key Words
Conception, contraception, Baul songs
Introduction

Kumirdaha is a little village deeply hidden in the remote countryside of Behrampore, in the district of Murshidabad, West Bengal. Most of its inhabitants are initiated and practice the sādhana of the microcosmic body (deha-sādhana) under the guidance of a guru, Bajal Fakir. The population of Kumirdaha is very proud of the practical results of their esoteric practice: compared to the other Muslim villages surrounding it, Kumirdaha has very small families, of maximum one or two children; the girls are very educated compared to the average: many of them completed their master's degrees and are now teaching in local schools and colleges; there is not even one case of polygamy in the entire village, and there has never been a case of divorce. The practitioners are eager to remark on what they perceive as signs of social achievements and social harmony. They ascribe it to the widespread and cultivated endeavor in deha-sādhana.

When the women of Kumirdaha came to know that I had no children, though at the time I was living with my partner for several years, they all looked at me with respect and offered congratulations, for they believed I was doing very well with my sādhana. When I tried to explain that there were other methods, in my country, for avoiding child birth, such as pills and condoms, they reacted as if they were absolutely unaware of the existence of different methods of contraception.

This episode made wonder if the strong presence of sādhakas (practitioners) had anything to do with the lack of medical infrastructures and the scarce availability and awareness of family-planning methods and devices in the area. If this is the case, then what would happen to the oral transmission of the secret sādhana once modern systems of birth control are effectively established in rural Bengal?

The question led me to a deeper exploration into Baul and Fakirs' ideas and practices concerning child-birth, pregnancy, embryology and contraception as these are transmitted through a vast repertoire of songs – among the genres of folk songs that are generally known as bāul, mārphati, and dehatattva – and through the oral teachings of the gurus of different esoteric lineages that share the same beliefs on the liberating use of the microcosmic body.1

Though similar ideas and practices appear in the literature of medieval Bengali Sufism, Buddhist Sahajiya songs, Vaishnava Sahajiya verses, Tantric treatises and other sources, this article does not aim at historically reckoning the validity of a set of ideas and their diachronic variation; it rather witnesses their modalities of existence in the present days

1 Not all of the gurus and practitioners of deha-sādhana would call themselves “baul” or “fakir”, since the same techniques and systems of beliefs are shared by a wide range of fundamentally tantric lineages who would most preferably identify themselves with a more precise connotative name (i.e. darbeś, bālī bāṣṣa, abadhū) or with a more general categorization (such as bāiśab). The problematic use of the term “baul” in relation to the self-defined identities of practitioners and performers has been widely explored by Jeanne Openshaw (2004: 19-72). I will still use the terms Baul and Fakir in this paper for their common use conveys a more immediate understanding to the readers.
in West Bengal and their interrelation with coexisting/competitive views on birth, body and health.

The oral sources that support the discussion of the above mentioned topics have been gathered during a two-year period of field-work in West Bengal, predominantly in the districts of Birbhum, Bardhaman, Nadia and Murshidabad, from October 2011 to September 2013, when I was collecting songs and oral traditions related to the literary production and teachings of Bhaba Pagla (1903-1984), an influential guru for many Bauls of both Bengalis, whose songs are still widely performed and transmitted among esoteric groups. The extracts from recordings and interviews that I am going to use are but a very little part of the information provided by my informants, selected for its significance and clarity for the purpose of this article.

In the first part of the article the cosmogonic and soteriological importance of the bodily substances involved in human reproduction will be discussed in the context of Bauls' practices. That will lead us to the consideration of the social role of Baul gurus as teachers of theories and practices concerning conception and contraception. After a very compressed description of the steps and goals of deha-sādhanā, which has been already discussed in detail in previous works on Bauls, I will focus on the system of beliefs about the mystery of procreation and the formation of human life in the womb that is transmitted up to the present day, the ideas concerning the ideal birth of a child, and the set of practices including seminal retention and ritualized sexual intercourse during menstruation that result in contraception as a natural development rather than a goal for itself.

In the second part of the article the issue of Bauls' methods of contraception and their diffusion will be examined in the broader context of family planning in Bengal: what are the other methods employed in folk-medicine? What is the impact of the diffusion of modern contraceptives and Western medicine? What are Bauls' views on the use of new devices for contraception?

Finally, the clash between the two perspectives on the use of the human body and its relation toward sexual life and procreation will be looked at through the lens of social change, in order to reflect on the possibilities of either persistence or disappearance, or a coexistence of both, in the contemporary landscape of Bengali esoteric lineages and their strategies of resistance against political and religious establishments.

### Ontogenesis and cosmogony

Ye bastu jibaner kāra

tāi bāul kare sādhan

(That substance which is the cause of Life, is the center of Bauls' sādhanā)

Duddu Shah²

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² Duddu Shah, disciple of the famous composer Lalol Fakir, presumably lived during the second half of the 19th century. The reported lines of one of his songs appear in Sudhir Cakrabarti’s Bāčlā dehatattver gān (p.15).
In a simple couplet, Duddu Shah explicitly said that the most crucial doctrinal paradigm of Bauls revolves around the substance from which creation is achieved. In a substantially tantric conceptual world where all macrocosmic realities have their counterpart within the human body, bodily substances responsible for reproduction are the holiest and purest types of substance. Thus all questions about the Creator, the origin of human life, its aim and its end, are to be answered by looking at the dynamics that take place in the process of human procreation. Ontogenesis replicates (and is identified with) cosmogony: in *The Cosmogonic Riddles of Lalon Fakir*, Salomon explains: “The conditions that were present when the universe was created are recreated every month in a woman’s body when she menstruates” (Salomon 1991: 280). As observed by Morris Lee, among the mārphati practitioners of Bangladesh “it is almost impossible to separate ontogeny and cosmogony […] the one is a reflection of the other. The broader issues of the origin of the universe are integrally related to the reality that is within the human body, particularly as it relates to the activities of procreation” (Lee 2008: 189).

The substances Duddu Shah is referring to are bij (male seed) and raja, menstrual blood, which is understood as a congregation of the female reproductive components. The core practice of sādhakas deals with the knowledge, control, manipulation, union and intake of bastu, the fundamental substances of human life. Sex is thus given the utmost importance as the act of re-conjunction of two polar cosmogonic principles embodied in the microsphere of mankind: “From bāli to kāli: from ba to ka. ‘Sex’ hacche param satya, sex is the highest truth. There is no duality there, no distinction, no hunger, no passing of time. In the same way, one has to perform sādhana”\(^3\), commented a member (and descendant) of the Bhaba Pagla lineage. In the Bengali script, the letter “ba” has the shape of a triangle and represents the female sex organ, while “ka”, the initial letter for “Kali”, looks like a “ba” with a curl on the right that comes after the triangular part in handwriting: the pun suggests the idea that the Mother Goddess can be found through the union of man and woman as an act of transcendence of duality.

**Background: the reverse process of creation and ideas on body and health**

*Yā āche brahmāṁṁe, tā āche dehabhāṁṁe*  
(Whatever is in the universe is also present within the body.)  
Baul proverb

If man and woman, with their opposite potential power of creativity, are representatives of cosmological duality\(^4\), then the highest goal of Bauls’ sādhana is an inversion of the

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3 Recorded from a conversation with the second of Bhaba Pagla's grandsons during the fair of Jaydev (Birbhum district), on 15/01/2013

4 The tantric couple of opposites represented by Shiva and Shakti is more commonly identified in the Bauls and Fakirs' terminology with “puruṣ” and “prakṛti”, “rādhā” and “kṛṣṇa” (where “kṛṣṇa” and “rādhā” stand respectively for semen and ovum) “nara” and “nāri”, or “nur” (light,
process that leads to reproduction: the process of creation leads to the manifested multiplicity in the realm of māyā, while the perfection of the union that precedes duality is reached with the encounter of the two principles of potential creation in their firm, unproductive and blissful form. If the natural process of reproduction is a process of fragmentation and descent, the cultural process for the creation of a perfected man is a reversed (ujān) process of integrity (akhaṁṁa) and ascent. While in the animal world of common men fecundation is achieved through the secretion of the male seed in the female's womb, in the yogic world of Bauls' practices it is the female secretion which is absorbed and drawn upwards in the body of the male practitioner.

“The goal of Baul sādhana is to unite the dual polar principles of the Supreme and to reintegrate them into the Supreme in order to regain the original state of cosmic unity […] the sādhaka draws a drop of menstrual blood into his penis [...] thus uniting blood and semen into his own body. Then using yogic techniques of breath control he takes his semen along with the drop of blood back to the sahasrā or ājñācakra via the middle one of the three nāṁīs (channels), the suṁunma.” (Salomon 1991: 272).

The basic sexo-yogic practice here discussed consists of seminal retention (coitus reservatus) during a particular moment of the female partner's menstrual period: “bringing together the male seed together with female menses is the most secret aim, because its fruit is the origin of life, of human life, the most excellent among creatures” (Sudhir Cakrabarti 1990: 17). The mystery of the creation of life in the womb is a recurrent theme in Bauls' songs, where human creation is interpreted as the key to an understanding of the true nature of the Creator, and – for what those of us acquainted with the work of feminist psychoanalyst Karen Horney would be tempted to call “womb envy” (Horney 1967) – the male practitioner attempts at re-creating the same conditions for the development of a fetus within his body. “The fetus is created by the union of bīj and raja, and then by the four elements. The practitioner knows how to hold bīj and raja in his body and nurtures it with căricandra. He can produce a liṅgadeha inside of his body and create, in the same way as women create. He creates a fetus without giving birth to a child” (Jha 2010:341). The idea of a pregnant male and the creation of a golden embryo in the practitioner's body are well documented in the doctrines and iconography of Taoism (see fig.1); while it has no visual representation among Bauls and Fakirs, stories of pregnant yogis are widespread in the oral tradition.

5 The four secretions of the body that represent the four elements (stool, urine, semen and menstrual blood) are regularly ingested by the practitioners for their beneficial properties for bodily health and for facilitating the performance of a successful dehasādhana. See Jha 1995.

6 According to D.G.White (1996:53), India's fascination with alchemy and its developments into inner alchemical processes on the bodily elements probably originated with early contacts with China: Taoist speculative alchemical tradition may have reached India through maritime routes as far back as the 2nd century A.D. The mercurial preparations of hatha yoga as well as some yogic techniques, such as
Since at least the dawn of the common era, according to White (1996:4), Indians have known that the miracle of conception occurs through the union of male and female vital fluids: semen and uterine blood. With early tantrism these procreative fluids came to be conceived as “power substances” and with the treatises on alchemy of the Rasasiddhas they came to be identified with metals: the Goddess' sexual emission took the form of mica, while her uterine blood was identified with sulfur. Both mica and sulphur are two important reagents in the purification and activation of the mineral equivalent to divine semen: mercury. The complementary and interpenetrating disciplines of alchemy and yoga, chemistry and theology, are still reverberating in the Bengali songs of the Bauls. For instance, among the lyrics of Bhaba we find the verses: “Se ye agnih mukhe pārā rakh sādhak yārā / rākhe kebal tārā phulor dvāre”: those who are sādhakas place the mercury in the mouth of fire, only at the entry of the fissure. The verses are drawn from a song on the correct performance of jugala-sādhana and they allude at the practice of ‘cooking’ and refining the semen bringing it close to the fire of the yoni, regulating its movement to avoid an undesired and uncontrolled discharge.

The fundamental importance attributed to the substances of creation derives from a view of body and health that we can trace back to the conceptualization of the digestive process in the ayurvedic body: according to this view, the food that enters the body is serially refined over the seven fires of digestion into the seven bodily components (dhātu), in order: chyle (rasa), blood (rakta), flesh (māṁsa), fat (meda), bone (asthi), marrow (majjā), and seed (śukra, for men, and śoṁita for women). In the words of the Bengali guru Satpurnananda Kulavadhuta, “one tenth of the ingested food goes to the blood, one tenth of the blood goes to the flesh, one tenth of the flesh goes into the bones, one tenth of it to marrow, then one tenth of it to the brain, and one tenth of it goes to the formation of reproductive cells. For men, with one ejaculation one million of reproductive cells are lost; but for women, ejaculation is not linked to the loss of reproductive substance. The loss of their reproductive substance is not as weakening as it is for men: in one periodical cycle of ovulation, women only lose two cells.”

6 urethral suction, show striking similarities with physiological alchemy of Taoism (nei tan). The influences of Taoism on Tantrism and Yoga have been discussed by Needham (1983:257-288) and, for the specific context of Bauls' practices, by Upendranath Bhattacarya (see the chapter on Taoism and Bauls in Bhattacarya 1958: 523-528).

7 The verses are taken from the song “Sādhan samare yeo nā ebāre”, transcribed from the personal notebook of the guru and singer Subhananda Giri of Batur (Murshidabad district) on 2/12/2012. The bhaṁita (the last verses where the composer mentions his name and/or the name of his/her guru) of the song says “Man ke bale Bhābā yābi yadi ra[e...]” (Bhaba says to your mind: if you want to go to the battlefield...); according to different performers, the song is attributed to Bhaba Pagla or to a previous composer named Bhaba. The topic of overlapping authorships and the existence of more than one “Bhaba” will be more extensively examined in my thesis dissertation.

8 The recorded conversation took place in Shantiniketan on 19/01/2013.
his semen. In the ancient classics on religion, medicine and sexology, hatha yoga as well as ayurveda, emphasis has been laid on the preservation of śukra. The relation between semen preserved in the body and strength, power and longevity has been transversally remarked, from the Suśrutasaṁhitā until Bengali medical journals of the Renaissance period (see Pradip Kumar Bose’s Health and society in Bengal, p. 148-164): in the words of White, “semen is the raw material and fuel of every psycho-chemical transformation the yogin, alchemist or tantrik undergoes” (ibid. p.27).

The concept is highly valued by the contemporary practitioners of dehasādhanā. The Bangladeshi fakirs interviewed by Morris Lee informed him that “one drop of mani (precious stone, euphemism for semen) lost results in eighty huqba (eighty thousand years) in hell” … snakes, insects and other biting creatures are created through wasted semen (ibid. p151)”. The storage of seed is inside of the brain and it is metaphorically referred to as the “full pitcher” or the “deposit” or “patrimony” that has to be guarded, for uncontrolled ejaculation “will result in a forty days setback and such a person is not able to receive any revelation from God during that time” (ibid. p154).

As we will see more closely in the next paragraphs, Bauls’ methods of contraception are mainly based on basturaksā, preservation of “the” substance par excellence, achieved through different practices, essentially consisting of respiratory techniques, techniques of concentration on a bij-mantra, sexual techniques, gymnastic techniques, alchemical techniques, dietary regulations and consumption of marijuana. References to such techniques and to the related performance of jugala-sādhanā are so pervasive in Bauls and Fakirs’ songs that the Bangladeshi folklorist Anwarul Karim declares: “The whole of Baul songs sing the glory of birth control (!) and the quality birth” (1979:38).

Baul Gurus as masters of conception and contraception

_Through the lessons of my guru I will learn the rules of love
Das Kamal says, I will no longer tend my ancestral line_9.

Having briefly described the basic assumptions of Bauls’ sādhanā, it is not surprising that Baul gurus are generally expected to have no children, at least not after receiving the final initiation into sannyās (renunciation)10; on the prohibition of procreation, Duddu Shah explains in one of his songs: “śarik karo nā re man, kari bāro / śarik e baṅo jvāla, bāre bāre habe janam / nījērye putakanya janma di e še e kāmnā ...” (in Sudhir Cakrabarti p.27). Oh mind, I prohibit you to take a partner (one who owns a share) / he will give you lot of trouble, you’ll have to reborn again and again /Sons and daughters are born of your

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9

A song by Kamal Das reported by Kristine Hanssen (2001:124). As a comment to the last lines of the song Hanssen adds: “in learning how to retain his seed by taking lessons from a guru, he will abstain from procreation, which has the added implication that his lineage (baṁśa) traced through males is broken”. In the Baul context, a sadhu avoids procreation.

10

The rite of passage that transforms a householder into a renouncer; the ceremony for vaishnava bauls and for fakirs is respectively known as bhek or khilāphat.
own seed and finally cause lots of crying...”. Satyananda Das Baul, who took jukta sannyās (conjugal renunciation) with his consort from a Baul guru of Bankura, is vehemently opposed to procreation for those who are initiated into the path of sādhanā. Talking about Bhaba Pagla's personal life as a practitioner and father of two sons, he said: “By practicing this sādhanā your soul should be akhaṁṁa (whole, not fragmented) but he fell. We came from our fathers, fathers' fathers, grandfathers' fathers, and so on. We remain akhaṁṁa, and our soul is not disintegrating, as far as we don't have sons, we don't produce sṁṁṁi (creation). The more you are involved in sṁṁṁi the more you get weak and disintegrated”

Nevertheless in many lineages it is recommendable to have at least one child so that the successful practice of sādhanā cannot be confused for barrenness. One may wonder how the stance against conception is related to socio-economic factors and how the aversion toward progeny may be related to historically specific political reasons. One possibility is that, being mainly composed of adepts of very low caste and class, who often speak of themselves as kāṁāl (miserable) or dīnhīn (extremely poor), contraception was an actual necessity for a couple who would not be able to sustain a child. Another hypothesis may interpret the refusal to contribute offspring to society as a stance against the dominant system, and that would be indeed in tune with Bauls' all-pervading antinomianism and resistance against religious and political establishments. As the verses of Kamal Das quoted at the beginning of the paragraph say, the practitioner, through the instructions of the guru, aims at interrupting his patrilinear baṁśa of descent. Another possibility would put Bauls' reproductive behavior in the frame of society's innate mechanisms of population growth: according to Dash and Basu (1968:11-12) the prohibition to procreate applied to certain groups, ages (i.e. celibacy for brahmacaryas for the first two varṇas), or sub-communities within a society operates as a method of spontaneous control on demographic growth. In the view of Sudhir Cakrabarti, the desire of control over conception and mastering fertility has to do with the agricultural society in which Bauls' socio-cultural background is rooted: quoting James Frasier, he assumes that a coercive infertility may be believed to have an effect on the fertility of plants and crops ensuring agricultural prosperity: “...he [the practitioner] may imagine that the vigor that he refuses to extend in reproducing his own kind will form as if it were a store of energy whereby other creatures, whether vegetable or animals, will somehow benefit in propagating their species.” (Cakrabarti 1990: 22).

Due to their practices, Baul and Fakir gurus are well known as healers, granters of fertility, 'folk consultants' for family planning and experts in the field of sexology. A number of scholars who dealt with their tenets and practices realized the importance of Baul gurus within their local community as masters of conception and contraception. According to Openshaw, in an environment where there is generally very little awareness (if any) of methods of contraception, new adepts take initiation from a Baul guru primarily to prevent the birth of further children, since “it is widely known that the gurus possess the secret of both the suppression and enhancement of fertility” (2004: 207).

11 The reported conversation was recorded in Sonamukhi (Bankura district) on 19/04/2013.
In Shakti Nath Jha’s work, a guru is described as one who teaches “gurutattva, that is, how the mūlabastu (the fundamental substance) that resides in the brain is attracted downwards, how children born, how to prevent the descent of semen (Jha 2010:324)”. The guru is described as a human encyclopedia and an oral dispenser of physiological, gynecological, anatomical and ontogenetical knowledge.

Lisa Knight, in her recent field-work focused on the lives of Baul women, reports that since Bauls are seen as a good example for small families and successful birth control, they are often hired by NGOs to perform songs encouraging family planning and awareness of sexually transmitted diseases (2011:40). About Baul couples that take sannyās, Knight says: “Baul couples offer other things to their communities: such as music, advice, and for those who are interested, knowledge of methods to prevent pregnancies even within healthy householder life (without practicing celibacy)” (ibid. p.153). Considering that the competences of Baul masters in this field are supposed to be kept secret, Knight is surprised to notice that, instead, “it is well known that Bauls have methods for preventing pregnancy” and she was told that “many people go to them if they want to stop having children” (ibid. p.156).

Mimlu Sen, in her chronicles and travelogues with Bauls condensed in the book The Honey Gatherers (2012) tells the reader that “Baul couples practice natural contraception [...] restricting lovemaking to the few days of the menstrual period. This was [...] the secret core of their practice of ulta sadhana” (p113). Charles Capwell, in his comprehensive book on Bauls and their music, does not fail to notice the entanglement between dehasādhanā and contraception: “Radharani and Gopal Das Baul [...] are yogis, they have no children [...] They are adept at baul sādhanā, an effective means of birth control” (1986: 51). In the chapter dedicated to lokcikitsa (folk medicine) in the “Encyclopedia of Bengali Folklore” (Bāṁḷa lokaśākti biśvako) a little paragraph is dedicated to the method of contraception used by Bauls under the heading bindu sādhanā (p 440): “Bengali rural culture generally looks to contraception unfavorably. Yet some groups follow traditional practices of birth control derived from their religion and philosophy. The practice of birth control followed by Vaishnavas and Bauls is known as 'bindu sādhanā' [...] it was already mentioned in the language of the siddhācāryas in the songs of caryāgīti”.

Anwarul Karim adds an important point when, in his article on Baul practices of contraception, he remarks that “through their healing art they gain disciples” (Abdul Wali 1900, quoted in Karim 1979: 32) placing Bauls’ competences in the field of contraception in the broader spectrum of beliefs and remedies of folk medicine centered on the use of bodily substances: “during my association with the Bauls I have also been able to know some of their practices with regard to the curing of certain diseases. Urine, human milk and menstrual blood form the basis of their medicine. Birth control has been most successfully practiced by the Bauls...” (ibid. p31).

When I asked some gurus whether they mainly attracted neophytes for their skills in teaching natural methods for contraception, they all agreed it was indeed a predominant
reason, though they added a number of different factors related to the practice that results into contraception. Gosain Amulya Babu said the majority of his disciples were learning svara-sadhanā (love-making that does not culminate with seminal discharge) from him “mainly for atmarakśā (self-preservation), for learning how to hold the semen and receive the bodily benefits of it”. Replying that it seemed to me as if the techniques for atmarakśā were predominantly beneficial for men and did not involve any change in the physical or spiritual progression of the woman partner, he added that “there is a consequent beneficial result on women as well: the samudra manthana12 within the body during svara is like a factory of energy: you churn the water and as a result you get electricity13”. The woman partner has in fact a good amount of responsibility in the success of svara-sadhana in controlling the sādhaka’s peaks of passion, and the performance of the practice is correct and leads to the blissful joy known as mahānanda only if the two are equal (samān) and feel equally engaged in the same path of selfless love. For this reason svara-sadhana is said to be an effective way of fixing couple relationships and husband-wife domestic harmony: Satpurnananda Kulavadhuta replied to the same question by saying that “new adepts usually ask for initiation into this sadhanā because of problematic relationships”. For example, a householder went to him and said he was bored of his wife and had thoughts about other women, even though he loved his wife. The guru taught them jugala-sadhanā in order to “cure the natural manly unbalance between sex and love14”. In the village of Siur (Birbhum district), where he taught jugala-sadhanā to several couples, he was able to cure violent behaviors of men drinking and beating their wives. He is said to have attracted the antipathy of the most orthodox elements of the village since he taught his disciples to disrespect caste-based hierarchies.

The method of contraception that is taught in Bengali esoteric lineages is not a mechanical instrument of infallible efficiency and it involves more than the pragmatic concern for stopping undesired childbirth: contraception, in the practice of bindu-sadhanā, comes as a result of a complex and sophisticated system of beliefs about the spiritual development of the practitioners, the composition of the subtle body, the control of the six enemies (the cha ripus, whose king is kām, that robs the sādhaka’s “deposit” of wealth), the attainment of equality and love devoid of selfishness and attachment between the couple. When the senses are controlled, selfish desire is refined and transformed into love and the disciple acquires the inner character of a woman: the realization of his androgynous nature and the development of his inner motherhood (mātṛbhāb) participate in the success of the sexo-yogic practice of prolonged intercourse known as jugal sadhanā. The path is not suitable for every common man: a typical Baul

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12 The mythical churning of the ocean of milk, here used as a metaphor for sexual intercourse, where devas and asuras are represented by kām, desire, and prem, pure love, who are alternatively pulling and pushing.

13 Conversation recorded on 2/02/2013 in Jugpur (Nadia district).

14 Conversation recorded on 23/01/2013 in Shantiniketan (Birbhum district).
proverb says “kāmī and lobhī (men trapped in desire and personal interest) are not accepted in this path”. The elective and elitist character of the teaching makes it an esoteric knowledge, protected by the initiatory secret. The discourse on restricted access to esoteric knowledge and the dynamics of secrecy and power\(^\text{15}\) that guarantee a privileged status to the gurus of esoteric traditions within unequal and strongly hierarchized societies is an extremely intricate and interesting topic that we do not have the space to explore in this context. It is enough to recall here that the esoteric techniques that involve conception and contraception are part of an exclusive set of practices transmitted from guru to disciple and jealously protected from the profane ears of the outsider that may misunderstand, dislike, and react with verbal as well as physical violence to a system of beliefs judged as revolting and obscene by orthodox, conservative and mainstream society. This is one of the reasons for which the texts of the songs that deal with sādhana are highly codified and extremely enigmatic, and their metaphorical language, known as sandhyā bhāṁā (‘twilight’ or ‘intentional’ language) or dhāṁdhā racana (a labyrinth composition)\(^\text{16}\), needs the interpretation of a living guru in order to be deciphered.

**On conception: ideas on child birth, embryology, and the birth of the ideal child**

In Bauls’ metaphysics of ontogenesis, the birth of a child and the development of the embryo are well-known themes, widely represented in the repertoire of the songs categorized as śādha-tattva (songs on the doctrine of creation) and mātā-pitā-tattva (songs on the doctrine of the mother and the father). Important gurus are supposed to have the power of granting fertility, not only through their knowledge on women period and gynecology, but also through blessings, amulets and mantras. Bhaba Pagla was particularly famous in the suburban area of Sodpur, where his close disciples built a Kali temple for him to perform Kali puja, for his powers to heal maladies and grant fertility to barren couples, who managed to have children after he gave them a leaf of bel or a jabā flower to keep under the pillow\(^\text{17}\). Kalyani Ma, a baulini of the bālā lineage from Nadia, receives many requests from barren couples every year during the ratha yātrā ceremony that she hosts at her ashram. She does not give any amulet for the conception to take place but simply talks to the women and inquires about their menstrual cycle, giving instructions on the proper days in which the fecundation has more possibility to occur. The couples are then generally successful to give birth to a child in less than eighteen months and reward her with a guru dakṣiṇā of hundred or even five hundred rupees, according to their financial possibilities\(^\text{18}\). She condemns common people for they do not

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\(^\text{15}\) See for example Urban’s “The torment of secrecy” (1998).


\(^\text{17}\) The disciples who are taking care of the temple in Sodhpur (Kolkata) were interviewed on 13/11/2012.

\(^\text{18}\)
know about their natural cycles and cannot recognize the right days when the union should take place: “Nowadays people just keep on making children like dogs!”. The ignorance about the movements, tides and ebbs of desire in the physiological body is said to lead to violent and unrestrained behaviors: one among the closest disciples of Bhaba Pagla stated that “kām arises in the period following women’s purīmā (the full moon, symbol for menstruation), when the menstrual period is over after three or four days. In those days the sadhus recommend to restrain yourself as much as you can, or, if you want to have a child, then the couple should pray, talk sweetly and honestly, well behave and repeat the name of God before uniting. These concepts are well known in Indian culture and in the ancient texts. It is also well known in the rural culture. But nowadays this knowledge is less spread, people is less involved in this sādhanā: that is why nowadays people is full of anger and commits crimes, sins, and rapes beyond control”.

An important common trait of the teachings on conception regards the necessity of getting to know one’s own body, particularly the lunar movement of bodily fluids that periodically occurs within it. According to Gosain Amulya Babu, while animals instinctively know about their mating season, humans got detached from nature and are unaware of it, which cause them an unhealthy relation with their bodies. “When a couple makes love with the aim of conceiving a child, they should start at 2 in the night, when the earth is calm, for there is a close relation between men and earth, and they should chose a time when the Earth is quiet. The main thing they should be aware of is their śvās-nīśvās (breath). The creative act should take place in one of these three days of the week: Monday, Wednesday, or Friday [the days associated with the moon, waters, coolness: see Karim ibid. p.35]. One should observe the breathing and only when the air is entering through the left nostril, when the left nostril is widely open and not obstructed, one should make a child. Also some dietary prescriptions should be followed: the couple should preferably eat a lot of 'cooling' food, milk, ghee, and vegetables, and preferably avoid meat and fish”.

The right choice of the proper day for conception is a widely diffused idea among the esoteric lineages. While interpreting the verses of the song of Bhaba Pagla “Bāṁite nāi prācīr gherā, bāṁi kintu ċārtalā / yārā gaechilo ei mokāṁi, dīē bhālo bhālo māl masalā” (The house has no fence or enclosure, though it’s a four-storeyed house / Those who built this dwelling place used ingredients and mixtures of very good quality),

I met Kalyani Ma and interviewed her in the Ma Tara Ashram of Birnagar (Nadia district) on 15/05/2013.

From a recorded conversation with Sukumar Mistri in his ancestral home in Majhdia (Nodia district) on 21/04/2012.

The recorded conversation took place at Amulya’s ashram in Jugpur, on 2/02/2013.

The text of this dehatattva song appears on Gopika Ranjan Cakrabarti’s Bhaba Paglar jiban o gan (p. 192).
the guru in charge of Batur's temple, in Murshidabad, explained: “the theme here is the conception of a child. To conceive a child with good “material” means to fecundate with a good seed. If you want a good tree, strong and beautiful, you have to plant good seeds. The human seed as well has to be treated and nurtured before conception: you should store it without any dispersion for two to three months. Then three or four days after the menstrual period has ended you should unite with a woman after midnight and prolong the union for the whole night until sunrise, getting hot and again cooling down repeatedly. The union has to be performed with bhakti, biśvās, madhu (devotion to one another, faith, sweetness). In the morning the seed will be thick, strong and ready for a successful conception”\(^{22}\). In this case too the guru emphasizes the relation between the agricultural and the human semantic fields, establishing a correspondence between the right time for sowing and the right time for conceiving, encouraging a close understanding of physiological, inner seasons. Shakti Nath Jha, in his study on the beliefs and practices of Bauls and Fakirs of Murshidabad, confirmed that Baul gurus have a deep knowledge of techniques of contraception, based on the calculation of time, astronomy, days of the week and of the lunar calendar: his informants believe on even days counting from the end of the menstruation the fetus will be female, while he will be male if conceived on the dark fortnight of the lunar month, and a couple of twins if conceived on the day of ekādaśī. He also reports it is a widespread idea that the most auspicious time for the birth of an ideally strong and healthy son takes place in the last part of the night (Jha 2010: p352-353).

Since the time of conception of a proper child is the only time when seminal discharge is not perceived as sinful and injurious, a wide array of norms and recommendations have to do with the creation of a child that is “supposed to possess all the qualities of a great man” (Karim ibid. p.37). The general misuse of semen would in fact lead to the birth of a child who is sick or weak (Lee ibid. p.161) or disrespectful of his parents' authority (Bose ibid. p.167). The prescriptions Bhaba Pagla used to give to his disciples on this topic include the suggestion that “an ideal son, with the strength of a sadhu, should be conceived on a night of new moon (amābasyā) at 00:48 (!). A male will born if the sādhaka is breathing more intensely through the right nostril, and a female will born if the left nostril is more open. He did not recommend a couple to have more than one child and emphasized the necessity for both partners of being “of the same mind, same intention and same will for the creation of a good child\(^{23}\)”.

A recurrent idea in the norms regarding the birth of an ideal child concerns the need for equality and mental equipoise between the couple. A shared idea among Bauls, pretty much in contrast with the general trend of non-Baul families in rural areas, where the wife is not usually involved in the decisional process regarding family planning (see R.L.

\(^{22}\) Interview recorded at the temple in Batur on 04/05/2012.

\(^{23}\) The information was given by Mamata Khyepi, a baulini initiated into Bhaba Pagla's line; the conversation was recorded at her home, in the surroundings of Guskara (Birbhum) on 21/04/2013.
Carroll 1967 *Measuring differences among family planning adopters in urban and rural West Bengal* and Stoeckel and Chaudhury 1973 *Fertility, infant mortality, and family planning in rural Bangladesh*), is that if the woman does not wish the physical union and is not sexually satisfied, the child will be born handicapped or deformed. Once the conception takes place, a new set of ideas on the growth of the fetus and his behaviour inside of the womb constitute the traditional folk-embryology that seeps into Bauls' compositions. Some selected examples of sṛṅgaṇī gāṇi would help integrating the most important tenets to conclude the discussion about progeny. The following song bears the bhaṅgītā of Sarad Das and was recorded at the house of Debdas Baul (Bolpur, Birbhum district) on 14/08/2013.

You were standing on your head with your feet upside down
in the country where you dwell.
But now, oh mind, you forgot about that country.
Oh mind, you existed in the form of seed
in the brain of your father
in the form of desire you entered your mother's womb
from the mixture of semen and blood you obtained this human body.
But now, oh mind, you forgot about that country.
In that country the sun and the moon do not shine
in whose nest were you in the darkness for ten months?
see, you were able to eat through the maternal nari [umbilical cord] in the navel
But now, oh mind, you forgot about that country.
Sarada says: How amazing!
A place where the sun and moon do not shine, everything is in the dark.
Now you are stuck among falsity and illusion
Brother, you didn't even think to reach the other shore

The song gives many insights on the thoughts on gestation and life inside of the maternal womb. The Bauls consider the fetus to be performing yoga in the womb by resting in a head down position (śīrṣāsana) and arresting respiration (kumbhaka)25. The 'country' the composer talks about is of course the uterine land, where the fetus eats through the umbilical cord and lives without seeing the light of sun and moon. In the tales that

Yethā heṅ maṅga aṁ āṛḍhba pade ye desē bāś karecho
sei nā deśer kathā re maṅ bhule giṁācho
bindu rūpe chilo re man, ore man pīṭhār māstake
kāṁ rūpe māṅgarbhe prabeś karile
śukra ār śośite mēśe mānab deha peśecho
sei nā deśer kathā re maṅ bhule giṁācho
sei deśe candra sūrya nāi kare prakāś
andhakāre kār ādhāre chile daś mās
dekho nābhimāle māṅnāi se āhār karecho
sei nā deśer kathā re maṅ bhule giṁācho
Sarad bale dekhilām camakār
yethā candra sūrya nāi kare prakāś sab-i andhakār
tui miche māṅāre rālī bhule
pārer upāṅ bhāi ki karecho.

See the comment on the song number 11 in Capwell (1986: 189).
emerge from this kind of songs, the soul of the baby is graced and gets the chance of taking birth into a human body after traveling 84 lakhs of wombs. Sudhir Cakrabarti (ibid. p.43) resumes the beliefs surrounding child birth as it follows: human life is created through the mixture of the father's seed, that resides in his head in the form of bij, and woman's “blood” (śoṁit). The eighteen moqam (stations, abodes, components) of the human being are so divided: four of them are provided by the mother (the external parts, hair, skin, blood and bones), four by the father (flesh, brain, marrow, semen) and the remaining ten are given by Allah. It takes ten months before the ten senses (five jñānendriṁa, the five sense organs, and five karmendriṁa, the actions related to the senses, speech, sight, touching, etc.) are formed and therefore the child has a consciousness and is ready to come to light. When the baby is conscious, it is said that he speaks to the Creator: he finds the womb very uncomfortable, dark and confined, and thus he prays and asks him to set him free from that slippery place full of blood. Then the Creator asks him: “Will you remember what you have to do once you are born?” The baby then promises that he will serve and revere humans (karbo mānuṁ bhajan), he will not be a slave of desires, and he will be controlled and unperturbed. But after he is born, he forgets about his promises. As soon as he is delivered and his face sees the light, he is hit by māṁā and forgets about his past, that is why he cries “kāhā kāhā”, where am I? Where do I come from?

When the mother offers him milk for the first time, the five senses consolidate and desire (kāṁ) is awakened. The composer therefore says: “Now you are stuck among falsity and illusion / Brother, you didn’t even think to reach the other shore”, the shore of the enlightenment of the liberated souls as opposed to the shore of worldly māṁā. Innumerable songs present similar riddles on the condition of the fetus and several songs categorized as manasīkṣā (giving teachings to the disciple's minds) reproach the adepts for having forgotten about their “real address of residency”. We can refer, as an example, to Bhaba Pagla's songs “Āmi ḍhikānā bhule gechi” (I forgot my address) or his verses “Kasam kairyā khodā kāche / tāī rośnāi dekhli duniā a mājhe / ekhan begam pāiā āsmān nāce / tāī bhulāi geli āsal mokām” (Making promises in front of Allah / you were able to see the life of this Earth. Now you found a woman and the sky is dancing / you forgot about the real abode).

26 See France Bhattacarya 2002:256 on the eighteen moqam. The same structure already appears in the medieval anonymous text Yoga Kalandar.

27 See for example song n. 20 and 30 from Capwell’s The music of the Bauls of Bengal, or the well-known song presumably by Lalon Fakir that says “Ghar āche tār dvār nāi / lok āche tār bākyo nāi go / ke tāhār āhār jōgāy / ke go deśi sondhyā bāit? (there is a house but no door, there is a person but no speech / who provides for his meals? Who lights up the candle when the evening comes?)”. For the full text of the songs, see Lālan Gīti Samagra (Ahmad 2002: 522-523).

28 For the complete lyrics see Gopika Ranjan Cakrabarti (1995:249).
Another song that very explicitly lists the various steps of the formation of the embryo goes as follows:

During the first month it’s just flesh and blood
in the second month the human navel and hard bones appear
in the third month the living brain with the three *gunas* is born
the fourth month brings the eyes, ears, lips, skin and hair
in the fifth month, the shape of hands and feet
the five elements appear and accumulate
that day the nature and substance of a living creature is made
on the sixth month, the six enemies begin to inhabit every corner
on the seventh, the seven components begin to dwell with their seven energies
on the eighth, the eight Siddhis arrive by way of the food offerings
on the ninth month the ten senses (arise) and one does not remain in the abode of the womb.

The song appears in Sudhir Chakrabarti's collection of Bengali *dehatattva* songs (p 25) and it shows a correspondence between the numbers of the conventional esoteric numerology of Bauls (six *ripus*, seven *dhātas*, etc.) and the month of the fetus in its developmental process. If the first four months are focused on the anatomical development, from the fifth onwards notions on the symbolic components of the subtle body are involved in the formation of the human being: the fifth month brings the five *bhūtas* (earth, water, fire, air, ether), the sixth month brings the six vices (lust, anger, greed, ignorance, pride, envy), the seventh brings in the seven *dhātas* (see p.4). In the eighth month the eight *siddhis*, or yogic powers, are formed (*animā, mahimā, garimā, laghimā, prāpti*, etc.).

The fact that the lyrics skip the correspondence related to the ninth month and land up suddenly in the tenth make us wonder if there is a mistake in the transcription of the song, for the number nine is usually related to the formation of the nine *darjā* (doors), the nine orifices of the body (ears, eyes, nostrils, anus, etc.). When on the tenth month the ten senses are completely formed, the baby is ready for the birth.

Many of the discussed ideas may have ancient origins and already appear in Ayurvedic treatises, Rasayana works, Nath literature and medieval Tantric literature. Though rather than tracing them back and stressing a continuum that roots them to the original sources, the present article aims at recording the living conditions of a system of beliefs in the contemporary oral tradition of the esoteric lineages that cluster around the umbrella name

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29 Pratham māše māśaśāśitaṁ
dui māše nar nābhī kaṁ ā asthiṁ uḍaṁ
tin māše tin guṇe jīber mastak janmāṁ
caturthete netra oṁa carma lom āne
paṁcametē hasta pādākār
paṁcatattvā ese tabe karien saṁcār
sei din halo jīber ākar o prākār
cha māsēte aṁaśripu basilo sthāne sthāne
saptametē saptadhātu ye erā āpan śaktī laṁe basilo āse
aṁsametē aṁaśiddhi elo bhoger kārāṁe
na māse daś indriya nā rohe garbhadhāme.
of Baul, thus explaining the paramount role played by Baul gurus in the management of child birth and family planning in their social milieu.

Swimming in the Jamuna river without drowning: Bauls' methods for contraception

We can divide the section dedicated to the practices that lead to contraception in two parts. The first part concerns the method known as basturakśā, while the second one regards the time-based natural method (periodic abstinence). It is important to remind that what we are discussing as a contraceptive technique may be seen by the practitioners simply as a different idea of lovemaking and not necessarily as an instrumental stratagem to stop child birth: applying cultural relativism to the constructions around sexuality, it has been said that “uninterrupted heterosexual coitus is only one possible form of sexual activity, but this form was made paramount and all others repressed” (McLaren 1990:7).

If the use of bindubandha (locking the production of bindu) was well known in Indian and Chinese esoteric traditions and ancient literature30, in the West some attempts at utilizing coitus reservatus as a method of sexual healing and contraception took place in the United States around the 1850s, when John Noyes popularized his concept of “male continence” in New York state Oneida colony. Though very successful for preventing childbirth, his method was said to be “very risky, placing great demand on couple cooperation” and his institutionalized “complex marriage” attracted strong criticism and marginalization by the coeval society (see McLaren ibid. p. 188, and Finch and Green 1963:64). Inspired by Noyes' ideas, Alice Stockham (b. 1833) further developed his method and baptised it as “Karezza” in the homonym book in which she promoted controlled intercourse as a way to prevent reckless procreation and raise spiritual awareness. Her method was destined to circulate among underground circuits and aroused a controversial reception.

In the contemporary repertoire of Baul and Fakir songs, the compositions that deal with the topic of seminal preservation are disguised under a camouflage of metaphores filées in which the unsuccessful retention and consequent loss of semen is generally referred to as the “robbery of the jewels”, the “drowning in the river during a storm”, or simply “death”. Among the contemporary teachings on basturakśa, mainly directed toward the male practitioners, the supporting practices that assist the way toward complete retention are said to be numerous and widely vary according to the gurus of different lineages: repetition of the mantra; refuge in the inwardly visualized image of the guru; mechanical techniques of “stoppage” (referred to as Ṇiper kāj, or pressures in particular points of the male genitals); preferable positions that help counteracting the disadvantage of gravity; techniques of breath control for the relaxation of the excitement (mainly prācak, kumbhak and recak series where inhalation is deeply and intensely passing through the left nostril). Breath control is given the uttermost importance: in the songs about

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30 Dash and Basu (ibid. p.16) report that in the treatise on ayurveda Rasaprakāśasudhākara one entire chapter is dedicated to the description of various formulae for bijabandha, complete retention.
dehasādhanā breath is metaphorically referred to as “guru”\textsuperscript{31} or as the art of “swimming”, a prerequisite skill before diving in “the river of love”\textsuperscript{32}. The crucial importance of ātmarakśā for physical health, mental vitality and yogic attainments is expressed in a number of proverbs, puns and charades that permeate Bauls' oral lore. In the words of the kabiyaľ\textsuperscript{33} Asim Sarkar, a dikśa guru of Bhaba Pagla's line, the sincere devotee should stop performing pujas outwardly, filling the outer maṅgala ghaṁ (the pitcher that contains Ganga water), and worry instead of keeping one's inner pitcher always full of the holy water of pitṛdhan (the wealth of the father). In a similar way he recommends to perform ārati, the evening worship, which he deciphers and interprets as “ānander rati”, the joyful sexual union that is only reached when the seed is retained and there is no risk of misusing it\textsuperscript{34}. In the subversive sphere of Bauls' literary devices and figures of speech, 'high' words of the theological vocabulary of the orthodoxy and orthopraxis are distorted, vivisected and reassembled in order to fit their own tenets: during the Baul Fakir festival held in Karimpur (Nadia district) on 25/12/2012, a performer on the stage was describing a proper “hindu” as “ye bindu rakśā kare (one who preserves his bindu)” and one who follows dharma as “ye dhāraṁ kare (one who practices retention)”. Concerning the time-based natural method of contraception, that revolves around the accurate knowledge of woman's cycle and the calculation of her more or less fertile days, we should distinguish between two different practices: the testing of vaginal fluids for the recognition of ovulation and fertile days, and ritualized sexual intercourse during the three days of the menses. The first technique appears in very few references: among the only works that mention the practice of observing the fluids that appear at the middle of the ovulation cycle, Openshaw says Baul gurus show considerable expertise in nāl dekhā (observing the “saliva”), the determination of the fertile days by looking at the cervical secretions (2004:

\textsuperscript{31} See for example the song “tumi ghumāle yini jege thāken / sei to tomār guru baṁ […] karile tār sādhanā sakal-i yāibe jānā / habe nā ār ānāgonā e bhabasaṁśār sakāṁe” (the one who is awake even when you are sleeping / he is your guru indeed … if you perform his sādhanā you’ll get to know everything / there’ll be no more coming and going in this ocean of existence) in Cakrabarti (ibid. p.27)

\textsuperscript{32} See the song “āge sātār šekho nā re jele, tabe nāite nāmis jale” (first learn to swim, oh fisherman, then descend to take a bath in the water) in Tamonash Bandopadhyay (1988: 163)

\textsuperscript{33} A performer of the genre known as kabigān, a form of debate between two professional poets/singers who improvise their verses and sing with musical and choral accompaniment. He who fails to answer the riddles or is outwitted by the logic of the opponent, loses the contest (see Hussain 1997: 493).

\textsuperscript{34} The kabigān performance of Asim Sarkar from which the mentioned sentences were drawn has been privately recorded and his cds can be found at any temple founded by Bhaba Pagla in occasion of the annual mahapuja.
Anwarul Karim, in a surprisingly judgmental tone, refers: “What strikes is the system of birth control that they practice with no difficulty. The magic behind this practice is the crude test of female fluids whose color takes a white liquid form and occurs between two menstrual periods. [...] This is the most dangerous period and Bauls avoid three more days after it is dried up and a successful birth control is obtained” (Karim ibid. p.37). Karim's difficulty in comfortably discussing the female sphere of the contraceptive method, and the difficulty in finding written sources on the topic, may suggest the idea that, compared to the less problematic discourse on male substances, nāl dekhā evokes a strong social taboo and thus the teachings related to the subject are preciously concealed behind extreme metaphorization and strictly transmitted among initiates for reasons of self-defense from public judgement.

The second point of our analysis of the time-based methods of controlling fertility is centered on the knowledge related to the menstrual period. On the importance of menstrual blood in Bauls' practices, folk medicine and inner alchemy, much has been already said (see for example Hanssen 2002, Jha 1995, Openshaw 2004: 216-224). In the context of Baul sādhanā menstrual flow has a twofold significance. On one hand, the accurate observation of the three days flow is meant to identify the proper time for the performance of the sādhanā of adhar dharā, catching the uncatchable rādhā-bindu, the female seed that once per month descends, attracted by the male bij during penetration, and bringing it into the sādhaka's body through suction (śoṇā bāṇa): when the sādhaka is able to draw the female substance within his body he is said to have gained, while in the common sexual act the male is the one who loses substance. On the other hand, for those practitioners who are at initial stages of learning and did not reach the level of complete retention, the right moment for practicing jugala-sādhanā is indeed coinciding with the three days of women's raja, when there is no risk of conception. It is generally taught that, if seminal discharge has to occur, than ideally it must happen on the days in which “the flower blooms in Vrindavana” though even when ejaculation is permitted “it is not an uncontrolled and spontaneous ejaculation, but rather controlled, premeditated and quantified”: in the threefold categorization of existent beings as following the ṣāl-aṣāl-suṣāl way, the path of Bauls is different from the ṣāl (that which falls, as against the one which is unwavering) characteristic of animals and common men, and from the aṣāl (complete retention), the dried-up and passionless way of gods and ascetics; it is a

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35 Restricting sexual intercourse to the days of the woman's menstruation is reported as an ancient contraceptive strategy among the Abellians of the very early days of Christianity. They claimed that Able, second son of Adam, “lived in the marital status yet had no children. His followers took wives but bore no children. So great was their fear of bringing progeny into the world that they abstained from normal sexual intercourse except on special days which coincided with the time of menstruation” (Finch and Green, ibid. p.90). They used to adopt children and raise them in the same tradition within the community.

36 The song “Bṁndabane phul phuṁeche” metaphorically speaks of the three days of the menses, their different colors and qualities.
middle way known as “suṁal, where the emission is regulated by one's own choice” (Jha 2010:351). Having ascertained the right time for the union, according to the color, taste and smell of raja, the practitioner is allowed to lose his reproductive cells once per month (bachare bāra bār, twelve times per year, as it is commonly taught by the masters): “for thirty-six days in the year, the lord comes and is restive. But to the one who is free / in a year he can go for twelve days … he can please the enchantress of the other bank”\(^{37}\). When discharge is recommended, the loss of the reproductive substance has to be reintegrated orally, mixed with the female fluids: Gosain Amulya believes that “if the discharge is unavoidable, then one should 'fall' only on the second day of women’s menses. Then bīrya and raja should be mixed and drunk for the well being of the body”\(^{38}\). Chandidas says in his verses: “if you take the two juices, your power is doubled”. But I prefer to believe there is no need for ejaculation: suppose you cut your wrist and blood comes out. Even if you take the blood back, is your wrist ever going to be the same? No. That's why somebody thinks it is always better to have a filled pitcher instead of spilling water and pouring it back again”\(^{39}\).

The motif of the longing and the impatience of the sādhaka waiting for the “right time” for the union with his/her partner is very recurrent in the songs, that symbolically portrait the lover as a bee (bhramar), that does not go to the flower without honey, in the same way as the sādhaka does not unite with a woman without raja; or as the legendary cātaka bird, that does not drink any other water than fresh rain from the sky and stares at the dark clouds waiting for the rain-raja to appear.

A very common *metaphore filée* for the appearance of the menstrual flow concerns the semantic field of the river: in the allegorical universe of Baul songs tides and banks, storms and algae, floods and dried streams are all representatives of correspondences in the realm of sādhanā. An incredibly productive semantic field since the times of the literary lexicon of the medieval *dohās* and *caryāgīti* (see Dasgupta 1962:96), widely employed by the poets and theorists of Vaishnava Sahajiya literature of “liquid love”\(^{40}\), the contemporary repertoire of Bengali esoteric songs is still relying on the communicative efficacy of a hydraulic and riverine metaphorical world (Hayes 2006:43). Here I give two examples of such lyrics, both composed by Bhaba Pagla, concerning the proper time for sexual sādhanā, and consequently, for contraception.

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37 The verses are taken from Morris Lee, cit. p.160

38 For the theories and practices on the intake of bodily fluids see Jha (1995) on the ritual of the four moons.

39 Recorded on 2/02/2013 in Jugpur.

40 On the “liquid” perception of the *rasa* of love see June McDaniel (1989: 75).
On the two shores one can float, on the two shores one can drown
the one who can float in the middle of the flow
he finds the blissful joy
what can I say about that water of the river
it is blue and glowing, and pleasantly cool.
moving gently and pleasantly, with waves of joy
babbling it streams, in the wind of compassion
in case there were sharks and crocodiles
do not fear the touch of the river [...] 
day and night this stream of love flows
in this moment of time, swim in it.
Bhaba Pagla says, what else can I say?
that blissful joy cannot be explained.  

As per the interpretation of Gosain Amulya, one of the eldest disciples of Bhaba Pagla still alive and himself a śikṣa guru, the song is encouraging the disciple to perform jugala-sādhana when his partner’s river course is in full stream. The two shores (kūl, homophone word with kul, clan or family) are nārī and puru, man and woman, the only two social divisions recognized by anti-hierarchical Bengali esoteric cults, that refuse any other caste-based or communitarian division. The sādhaka that learns how to float between the two without drowning experiences the supreme joy. Crocodiles and sharks are symbols for kām, desire, and krodh, rage. When the senses and the six vices are sublimated and transcended, kām becomes prem, pure love, and krodh becomes anurāg, passion. The right time (“eman sama”) to descend in the river is when its stream flows abundantly day and night. At that moment its waters are said to be suśital: their coolness helps the sādhaka’s control of the senses. Suśital is said to coincide with the night between the second and the third day of menstrual period. The term also reminds, as per a vague assonance, the term for the ideal condition of suśal (see p.13). The song ends with a conventional bhaśita in which Bhaba Pagla, mentioning his name, expresses the

The original text of the translated version is as follows:
Du kūl bāšā yā, du kūl abā ye yā
sei srot maṭhe bāšā ye jan,
ānanda se janā pā
ki kahibo ār, sei nādi jal
nīl nil ābhā, ait suśital
mā du manda bhāb ānanda hillol
kal kal bahe karū ā hāo ā
thāke yadi tāhe kumūr hāgar
nādi paraśane nahe bhaśita kar [...] 
dibānsī bahe sei premadhār
eman sama dāo nā sāśār
bhabāpāglā kahe ki kahibo ār
ki se ānanda, bojhāno yā nā.

The full text has been published in a collection of songs curated by Tamonash Bandhyopadhyay (1988:136).

The interpretation of the songs was discussed in occasion of the annual mahotsab at Amulya's ashram on 11/08/2013.

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impossibility of speaking of the sensation of liberating joy that results from the successful practice. Ineffability is a pervasive literary topos in the songs on sādhana. More than a rhetoric device, it emphasizes the idea of the superiority of bartamān (the reality that one experiences through one’s own senses) and the necessity for personal practice rather than hearsay and faith in someone else’s words\textsuperscript{43}, judged as anumān, inference, an inferior mean of knowledge.

The second song, collected by Tamonash Bandyopadhyay in Nāmer pheriwālā Bhabapāglā (1988:162) presents the listener the opposite situation: the composer is here recommending the sādhaka to restrain from engaging in a sexual intercourse in the time when the river is dried up:

Why did you go swimming in the river full of algae? 
there is no flow, there is no life, your aquatic trip is useless.
I insist, get back on the riverbank! So many sadhus drown in it 
if evening comes, there’s no more hope, both eyes will become blind. 
Who will you be able to find in the darkness? You’ll only lose your mind-jewel.
in the stagnant river there is no flow, the dead Ganga of the five elements
I keep on asking you, why would you go without cause [kārā]?
Bhaba says: oh mind, in that river swimming means gaining\textsuperscript{44}.

The practitioner is warned quite explicitly: in the stagnant river full of algae the stream of life (raja) does not flow: if jugala sādhana is performed at this time, the sādhaka may “drown” and loose his jewel (semen). The idea of loss (“hārābi”) is here is an oxymoronic relation with the last word, upārjan (gaining, obtainment), representing the gaining of the female substance of life drew (or orally intaken) in the male partner's body during the practice at the time of menstruation. An interesting interpretation regards the verse “sandhyā hale nāi re upāṁ”\textsuperscript{45}: according to several interviewees, sādhana has to be learned when one is young. “If you try during your evening time, when you are too old, you will fail”, commented Gosain Amulya. “Those who have already had too many children cannot succeed in the practice. It is impossible for them: having children you enter the realm of ajñān, ignorance”, stated the baulinti Kalyani Ma. Bhaba Pagla's second grandson explained: “Sādhana is a matter of timing. Let’s say, the sādhana of washing clothes: if you wash them in the evening and hang them to get dried, they'll stink and become moldy. That's something you have to do with sunlight. Sādhana has to be performed at a young age. You will not learn if you practice later on. If you lift a calf everyday since its birth, you'll be able to lift a cow. But if I give you a cow all of a

\textsuperscript{43} On the dialectic between bartamān and anumān in Bauls'doctrine see Openshaw (2004:183-200)

\textsuperscript{44} Ėalā hārā nadir mājhē sāṭār dili ki kārā
srot-o nāi, jībān-o nāi, miche re tor jal-bhrama
ekan-o bālī uth kīnārā, kata sādhū thēbe yā
sandhyā hale nāire upāṁ, andha habe du nā an
andhakārē ār pābī kārē, hārābire man ratan
baddha nadir nāi re srot marā gaṅgā paīcchabhūt
kari tore anurodh, ki kārā e akārā
 bhabā kay man, man nadite sāṭār hā upārjan.

\textsuperscript{45} Śeolā bharā nadir mājhē sāṭār dili ki kārā
srot-o nāi, jībān-o nāi, miche re tor jal-bhrama
ekan-o bālī uth kīnārā, kata sādhū thēbe yā
sandhyā hale nāire upāṁ, andha habe du nā an
andhakārē ār pābī kārē, hārābire man ratan
baddha nadir nāi re srot marā gaṅgā paīcchabhūt
kari tore anurodh, ki kārā e akārā
 bhabā kay man, man nadite sāṭār hā upārjan.
sudden, you'll never be able to handle it. This is called sādhana. Suppose you have a sword inside a scabbard and you don't use it for one whole year: when you extract it you see it got rusty. But if you use it and rub it everyday, it'll shine and it'll be sharp. This is called sādhana.

Another verse worth of noting for its ambiguous use of words that does not appear faithfully in translation, is “kari tore anurodh, ki kāraṁ e akāraṁ”: the pun is created by the fact that kāra has a double significance, which ultimately consolidates into a singular meaning. Kāra, in its primary sense means “cause, reason”, and in this sense the question translates as “why would you do it for no reason?”. In a different sense, kāra means seed, origin: kāra-jal is the water that existed everywhere before the creation of the universe. Kāra is also the noun used for consecrated wine used in Tantric rituals. In the Baul context, the first day of menstrual flow is called kāra-āmāta, the nectar of cause. In this sense, the question posed by the composer communicates the nuance “why do you perform sādhana when there is no causal fluid in the matrix?”.

The bhaṁāta offers the conclusive verse, in which Bhaba speaks of himself in the third person and reminds the practitioner that the gain is available to those who learned to swim (against the current) in the river of the fluids of love.

The sinful use of other contraceptives

The strategy of contraception obtained by Bauls and Fakirs has coexisted with various methods of contraception adopted by other groups of society derived from local folklore, kabiraji herbal medicine, or, more recently, imported from Western medicine. We will concentrate in the next paragraph on the alternatives available for the broader rural population in terms of both folk methods and modern contraceptives and their impact on society and family planning. Here I will focus on the fact that, for those who are initiated into the path of sādhana, the use of any other technique or device for birth control is absolutely prohibited and looked on with suspect, scorn or mistrust.

Probably referring to the use of condoms and IUDs (intra-uterine devices), Gour Khyepa, the famous Baul from Bolpur who sadly passed away this year, laments Bauls' use of modern contraceptives: “Today's plastic Bauls have chemical gurus' cried out Gour Khyepa, expressing his disgust with modern contraception and its consequences. Baul couples practice natural contraception...”(Mimlu Sen ibid. p.113). Also natural methods such as coitus interruptus are highly criticized, for they presuppose the dispersion of semen: a Baul couple interviewed by Lisa Knight harshly criticizes a neighboring couple of practitioners saying “Jamal has killed many thousands of seeds through inappropriate practice, like withdrawal and spilling of seed!” (2011:157). The most vehemently condemned method is vasectomy and sterilization, referred to by Bengalis simply as “the operation”. Even if the non-reproductive sex that characterizes dehasādhanā does not result in motherhood and fatherhood, the potential physical ability to produce children and the integrity of one's body (again, the importance of being akhāa) is very

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45 Extract from a recorded conversation in Jaydev, on 15/01/2013
important in order to be able to perform sādhana correctly. As reported by Lisa Knight, “a Baul couple living in Bolpur was said to be able to do sādhana correctly but then were criticized for falling out of practice, being distracted by earning money, and having had an “operation”. While having the “operation” is encouraged by local governmental organizations, Bauls view it as a violation of the body. Many Bauls argue that any person who undergoes the operation or any kind of surgery that alters or removes part of your body cannot be a Baul, because the body needs to be intact in order to bear the fruits of sādhana” (ibid. p.75). On the same topic, Shakti Nath Jha informs us that one who undergoes the “operation” cannot become a guru in this tradition: he would still be able to learn from the guru other practices for rejuvenation and preservation of the body, but they cannot perform the main practice. Some gurus are very strict and say they would not give initiation to sterilized disciples (Jha 2010: 307). Confirming this view, Gosain Amulya Babu said he still gives śikṣā to those who underwent an operation: “with the operation the reproductive power is stopped but the 'falling' still continues. They can still learn how to preserve their energy. Among the lines of Fakirs many gurus do not give śikṣā to those who got the operation done, but I don't refuse anybody, I don't turn them away.” He added, though, that he forbids his disciples to use any other contraceptive but the practice of sādhanā. Modern contraceptives are used for the sake of a momentary enjoyment, but “the mahānanda, the great bliss one experiences in sādhanā is a different thing. Nowadays kāmī and lobhī persons are the majority: this path is not meant for them”. Mamata Khyepi, from Guskara, reports an interesting view on sterilization that she learnt from her Vaishnava guru: “there are so many different methods used nowadays in this country for contraception, condoms, pills, and all that. But in our line, in the line of the Gosains, we just repeat the mantra, and there is no seminal emission. There are all the other means available, pills, and the “bali” (literally meaning “sacrifice”, especially for animals), the operation. But we think “bali” shouldn't be done. What if then you decide to have another son? During the operation they cut two nal, two channels, and stitch it together. It is a sacrifice of a living being, a bali. But in our line, when we take initiation, we make bali of the six ripus. That is how we obtain contraception.” Thus anything that modifies the natural flow of bodily fluids or the natural balance of the physiological body is seen as dangerous, or even sinful. The pill is believed to threat the fertility of a woman and among the practitioners that I met, 

46 Conversation recorded in Jugpur, 2/02/2013.

47 The reported conversation was recorded in Bononobogram, in the surroundings of Guskara (Birbhum district) on 21/04/2013

48 The relation between contraception and sin has been remarked by Therèse Blanchet in the context of rural Bangladesh. She reports that a woman that underwent ligation and then died was buried for six times under the earth, but, as the villagers reported, the earth would just not “digest” her, because she cut her “tree of life” thus affecting the relation of man with the universe. Only at the seventh time they finally managed to bury her. In fact, sepulture is permitted only to purified bodies and unsinful persons: the body of a thief, for example, would be left to float on the river (1984: 94)
nobody (supposedly) used any external or medical contraceptive method, even if most of them were well aware of their existence. In the words of Satyananda Das Baul, “if you have faith in the guru, you don't need to take any tablet. You can make love whenever you want, as long as you want, getting rid of your ugrata (excitement) and holding dharma. All those who know this and still use tablets or any other method, they are in pap, they commit a sin, they damage themselves”.

For those who enter the lineage, the sexo-yogic practice of retention is not an alternative method but rather a categorical imperative. It is very common to hear complaints from the gurus about the lack of good disciples and the impossibility of finding proper disciples nowadays interested in learning about sādhanā. If contraception is really a primary issue in the motivational pull factor for entering the lineage, then the rapid diffusion, at affordable costs, of handy modern contraceptives, which guarantee safe intercourse and do not require physical and mental discipline, may be seen as a threat to the survival of the oral tradition transmitted by Baul and Fakir gurus. In order to understand the plausibility of this hypothesis, we will briefly survey the wider context of contraception and family planning in Bengal in relation to social change.

Bengali folklore, folk medicine, and contraception

Since condoms, IUDs and medicalized contraception were not widespread as popular methods among rural Bengali families until the 1970s, we have to imagine that before that the methods Bauls had to compete with basically belonged to local folklore and folk medicine. Compared to exercises of sympathetic magic, amulets, roots (especially the application of the dhustura root), sponges and douches, the Bauls' method may have proven itself to be reliable and more efficient and thus persists in the contemporary oral tradition.

One of the methods reported by Blanchet (p95) for curing barrenness in rural Bangladesh consisted in the intake of the dried part of the umbilical cord of a strong and healthy newborn, hidden into a banana of the “shabri” variety. As per the opposite result, if a woman did not want to have any more children, she should extract one drop of blood from the umbilical cord of her own child and eat it in a pan leaf. The most common oral contraceptive of natural origin is asafoetida (Bangla loksamskriti biswakosh 2004: 434): women eat a pea-like dose of it for three or four days during menstruation in order to prevent pregnancy. According to Dash and Basu an oral herbal contraceptive still very popular among rural women is gunja (abrus precatorius). A widely employed method for spacing births in India, that does not anyhow allow accurate family planning, consists in prolonged lactation, since the production of breast milk retards ovulation. References to more elaborate methods intentionally aimed at preventing pregnancies are scattered among ancient and medieval Indian literature, particularly in the Yogāratnākara, Bṛhad yogatara giśī, Tantrasārasa graha and Rasaratnasamuccaya, where techniques of fumigation, preparation of pessaries (mainly salt rock smeared with oil), tampons

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49 Interview conducted in Sonamukhi on 19/04/2013.
In their article on the techniques of contraception spread in ancient and medieval India, Dash and Basu do not mention the time-based natural method based on the recognition of the female ovulation cycle, nor they refer to the practice of limiting sexual intercourse during the days of menstruation. One possible explanation is that the authors failed to find any written evidence for the practice of nāl dekhā which, as previously said, may be strictly confined to oral transmission, or they may have failed in recognizing allusions to the practice of the “sādhanā of the three days” (tin diner kāj) in medieval Sahajiya literature because of the metaphorical language that conceals the teachings from the non-initiated readership.

Other works on the history of contraception (i.e. Finch and Green 1963, and Mac Laren 1990) show a tendency to explore the matter from a eurocentric perspective, mostly using Latin and Greek sources and leaving inadequate or no space to the development of the use of contraceptives in Asia. The only reference to coitus reservatus as a strategy for contraception is referred to in the context of the American utopian religious colony founded by Noyes (see p.12) and its impact on the method proposed by Alice Stockham, while the existence of seminal retention as an ancient and widely diffused method among several groups of practitioners in South Asia is not considered.

Studies on birth control in Bengal: the absence of the ‘Baul method’

At the outset of this paper, the hypothetical situation in which the question of the changing role of the guru was posed envisaged a rural Bengal in which – before a massive advent of modern contraceptive technologies, i.e. in the late 1970s - the keys of the secrets of family planning were in the hands of Baul and Fakir gurus, while the majority of the population had barely any idea on fertility and sexual education. With this premise, we are inclined to think that with the increment of the use of modern methods of contraception (strongly encouraged by governmental projects and NGOs50), the more extensive awareness of modern contraceptives, and their availability at subsidized prices, the importance of the guru's knowledge and the attractiveness of his teachings would be severely undermined. Then the complaints that one regularly hears from the elder gurus on how rare and difficult it is to find a disciple that wants to learn dehasādhana nowadays – if one excludes a certain dose of 'good old times' nostalgia for the ever-better past – could be motivated by the loss of interest in learning a complicated contraceptive technique when pharmacies and hospitals can offer cheap and effortless alternative solutions. Let us see, through a brief excursion into the available data on the diffusion of modern contraceptives in Bengal, if the actual state of things confirms this view.

50 Historically the Indian government has preferred to encourage sterilization instead of increasing the availability of highly effective reversible contraceptives (see Singh, Ogollah et al. 2012). Incentives offered by the local government for ligation attract many women from the lowest stratus of society (see article “Horror in a mass sterilization camp in West Bengal” at the website www.bioedge.org, last visit 02/09/2013). The use of incentivizing, and often coercive, practices by government health officials compromise the quality of medical care and often act without informed consent.
The study on family planning in West Bengal by Richard Carroll (1967), based on an experimental attempt at diffusing and encouraging the use of IUDs in Calcutta and Serampore around 1965, reveals that, among the adopters of the new method, 72% never used any means of contraception. Among non-adopters, the percentage is even higher (89%); in sum, the vast majority of the population did not use any contraceptive method at all. Unfortunately the research does not inquire into the local, more traditional forms of spacing births and avoid pregnancies: what emerges is that, before the salvific arrival of imported, modern methods, people just had no idea about how to control their fertility and the dimension of their families.

According to Stoeckel and Chaudhury's study on family planning in rural Bangladesh, carried out in Comilla in 1967, only 4% of the couples they interviewed were actually practicing family planning, although around 48% of them had some knowledge of modern contraceptives (1973:31). The study was the result of a project of the Academy of Rural Development of Comilla for the encouragement, distribution and diffusion of modern contraceptives. In this case as well, it seems that the authors are equating active family planning with the use of modern contraceptives, as if, in an idealized situation previous to the import of intra-uterine devices and condoms, Bengali families had never faced the problem of birth control. The premise of these works seems to suggest that there are no valid indigenous methods diffused among low-class groups, while the only valid methods of family planning have to be adopted from 'abroad' or from 'above'. There has not been any preparatory research on the local and traditional methods, their efficacy and their distribution, as a ground for a better understanding of the impact and the potential acceptability of contraceptive “innovations”. An accurate inquiry into local views on health and ideas on the body, especially the 'sexual' body, could have revealed that people from the lower status of society (the ones who were least prone to adopt the new methods encouraged by both the above-mentioned studies, according to their conclusions) were perhaps already using other methods of contraception, or that the new methods (e.g. sterilization, that undermines the natural flow of bodily fluids, or condoms, that do not prevent men from ejaculating and thus from a loss of energy and health) may be perceived as unhealthy or even sinful by some groups. It may be objected that, as regards esoteric practices that are supposed to be strictly reserved for initiates into the Baul path, it would be impossible for a researcher inquiring on family planning to get to know about the underground practices hidden among the privacy of an esoteric lineage, unless he/she is acquainted with the academic literature available on Bauls for other reasons. Nevertheless the “baul method of contraception” does appear in a work that is not strictly on Bauls, suggesting the idea that the Bauls interviewed were not reticent about practicing a peculiar method of contraception: in The Changing Status of Women in West Bengal, 1970-2000 (ed. Bagchi and Gupta 2005), the chapter dedicated to the survey on women artists shows that among 27 artists, three Bauls say they “follow Baul methods of family planning” (ibid. p. 189), while the general tendency is preferably ligation (22 cases out of 24).

Based on the efforts largely sponsored by the Indian government for solving the thorny problem of overpopulation, contraceptive usage in India has tripled in the last fifty years.
The in-depth study of National Family Health Survey Subject (1996:24) reports that in 1992-3, 38% of women in rural West Bengal were practicing family planning: among them 27% opted for sterilization, still the most widely known and practiced form of contraception. However, for the sake of our main topic, we should consider the fact that, since ligation does not represent a solution for the families who want to temporarily prevent a pregnancy, without being deprived of the possibilities of having another child in their future, it would not be appropriate to consider it as a contraceptive method that may 'compete' with the natural Baul method. Among the remaining share of women in rural West Bengal, 18% follow traditional methods of contraception

The survey reports that almost the totality of Indian women (99%) are acquainted with some modern methods of contraception. If, on the one hand, this may lead us to think that the esoteric teaching has lost part of its functionality with the spread of healthcare, on the other hand the motivating factors for engaging in the esoteric training of sādhana may have to do with the broader set of ideas concerning the body and the preservation of health and vitality, and with the general necessity of knowledge about the functioning of the human reproductive system in the absence of systematic sex education. Jeanne Openshaw expressed her shock when she realized that “in the rural areas around Shantiniketan... well educated householders, and sometimes even doctors, had no notion of fertility in relation to the menstrual cycle. Indeed, many thought that the menstruation was the fertile period. On the other hand, bartamān pānthīs normally have an extremely accurate grasp of such matters” (p 207). It seems in fact that traditional views on the relation between loss of semen and sickness, and between menses, fertility and pollution, are still firmly rooted notwithstanding the pervasive presence of, and faith in, modern science and Western medicine. From the selected extracts of Bengali medical journals published between the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, collected in Health and Society in Bengal by Pradip Kumar Bose (2006) it is clear that the authors, well educated and trained in Western medicine, retained traditional ideas on conception and fertility that reinterpret and reiterate “shastrian” taboos. Just to give some examples, “intercourse during menstruation pollutes the menstrual blood and that polluted blood does not permit conception”, (a statement that indeed perpetuates the underlying idea that conception happens out of semen mixed with menstrual blood), or “indulgence in masturbation or too much copulation leading to the smallness of the penis are also responsible for woman's barrenness”.

Collective imagery and popular ideas about sexuality and reproduction are important factors to take into consideration, since – apart from the immediate result in avoiding childbirth – preferences and decisions regarding reproduction are entangled in a web of

51 The same study reveals that the east and north-east, Assam and the states with a higher proportion of Bengali speakers, tend to have a higher proportion of respondents with knowledge of traditional methods (p.11). See http://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/bitstream/handle/10125/3471/NFHSsubj rpt002.pdf?sequence=1
social, cultural and gender relationships, and “changes towards attitudes [...] can only be understood if placed in the context of both economic and social conditions and involving religious, medical and philosophical preoccupations” (McLaren 1990:4).

**Innovation and change: persistence or disappearance?**

The delicate question of the changing role of the esoteric masters of the Baul-Fakir communities in contemporary Bengali society is ultimately a question on social change; its answer involves the underlying issue of the transitions and dialectics between innovations and traditions, between folk traditions and the dominant culture. What is retained in a culture and what is abandoned to the fate of oblivion in the process of embracing innovations, especially if brought by the homologating forces of globalization?

In the words of the anthropologist Melville J. Herskovits “there does not exist in human experience a survival in the classical sense of a non-functioning carry-over of custom, sanctioned and perpetuated... simply by habit and tradition: all human customs are meaningful; nothing without some living value survives in any culture” (1946:97). In this view, only the elements that retain functionality are transmitted in the oral tradition. In the case we are examining, the pragmatic function of the Bauls' sādhana has to do with the powers of controlling conception and contraception, powers that are now dominantly institutionalized in governmental and medical structures, thus threatening the exclusiveness of a guru's knowledge; but in the broader spectrum of the functions of bāul sādhana that concern well-being, mental training for self-control, and sexual awareness, the value of the teachings of the guru paramparā may be unchanged.

If we are to believe in a progressive deterioration and ultimate disappearance of the teachings of “the masters of conception and contraception”, we may follow Morris Lee's conclusions of his research on the esoteric beliefs of the mārphaṭi practitioners of rural Bangladesh. Reflecting on whether the system would persist in the future or not, he attributes the greatest responsibility in threatening the transmission of tradition to all forces of homogenization, such as formal education, decreased remoteness as a result of better road transport, electronic communication and the diffusion of mass media, a narrower gap between rural and urban milieu, the impact of NGOs – especially among women – and, as “the remaining major influence capable of affecting the world view”, orthodox Islam.

The idea that increased literacy, a higher level of formal education and improved socio-economic standards lead to a more positive attitude towards the adoption of innovations is confirmed in the studies on family planning in Bengal: among the adopters of new contraceptive methods, the couples that shifted from a traditional or a non-existent strategy of family planning to a medicalized introduction of the IUD all showed higher levels of formal education, access to means of communication and information, better housing conditions and higher ambitions for the future of their child (Carroll 1967:28-32; 65-66). Stoeckel and Chaudhury similarly found that “the approval of family planning was [...] higher among the high socio-economic status groups”, inferring that a general
betterment of average education and economical status would naturally lead to the victory of the modern methods of family-planning (1973:36).

On the other hand, the possibility of the persistence of traditional methods is supported by several reasons. We have already seen how certain ideas about the use of the reproductive body are still in circulation: the importance of preserving the semen for the attainment of longevity and power, the negative attitudes and feared side-effects of modern contraceptives, the importance of regulating one's own body according to natural rhythms. The baul technique offers (and prescribes) an efficient solution for birth-control, free of cost and with positive repercussions on the holistic wellness of the practitioners; inspired by such a thrilling efficiency, Anwarul Karim advertises the 'baul method' but falls prey to a deontological slip:

The practice of birth control has proved quite effective among the Bauls. … if the practice has a scientific use it would certainly go a long way in solving the problem of population with no financial involvements. I observed these over years but did not divulge these secrets because of sentimental attachment with them. I talked to many of my foreigner friends who visited me here, they were surprised when they came to know some of my findings. I promised bound by my baul friends not to divulge these secrets but I could not help it [sic] because I think if their practice, particularly their system of birth control, which they, as I understand, learnt from the buddhist mystics or the vaishnav sahajiya, is studied scientifically, it would help solve the population problem to a great extent. Caitanyadev practiced it and so did Lalon. (1979:38)

In countern trend with the (d)evolutionary hypothesis of an old tradition washed away by the aggressive impact of modernity, here we have the opposite situation: the hypothesis of a revival of the baul method applied in a mass scale as a national remedy for overpopulation. Disregarding the feasibility of Karim's aspired solution – based on the fact that it is hard to transform an esoteric practice, whose subversive tenets demolish social and religious taboos, and whose applicability is restricted to elected men and special women\(^{52}\), into a proselytizing creed – we should recall, among the plausible factors of functionality that keep the traditional method alive and capable of attracting new adepts to the lineages, the fact that baul sādhana cements couple relationships. Being a practice that requires intense cooperation and intimate communication between the couple, the neophytes are attracted by the promise of a happier married life and domestic harmony. Besides that, the success of jugala sādhana is said to lie in the transcendence of man's lust, his cultivation of an inner feminine and maternal nature (mārībhāb), perceived as a superior temperament, and in the complete equality (samān) between the two partners. The position of the woman in the alternative social structure of Bauls and Fakirs and the necessity of gender equality for the success of jugala sādhana leads us to consider some social implications of the esoteric structure. The teachings of the guru parampara constitute a challenge for, and a silent revolt against, patriarchal ideas

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\(^{52}\) We have already said that the elitist character of the secret knowledge excludes certain categories of people: lustful and greedy people cannot access the path. Women are also categorized according to their suitability for the learning of sādhana: sādhara女人 (common women led by selfish desire of satisfaction) are not fit for jugala-sādhana, while the ideal partner should be a sāmarthā, a woman that does not wish to bear children and only cares for the satisfaction of her partner (see Jha 2010: 324-325).
propagated by the exoteric religious establishments. Woman is conceived as a more perfected and complete human being: Bauls support “independence of women and sex without procreation of children: these concepts destroy the idea of patriarchal and male-dominated society and family” (Jha 2010:302). Sādhanā as the prolonged sexual intercourse that does not culminate in male ejaculation “comes to an end when the female sadhika reaches satisfaction and produces rasa” (ibid.p.329). The support of education and independence for women is closely related to different views and achievements in the field of conception and contraception; in the wider analysis of the success of birth control in history, gender equality and women’s decision-making power is often seen as a key element in successful family planning. Carl Degler has attributed the rise of birth control to 19th century women’s growing sense of individualism fostered by literacy. In 19th century America, “studies showed literate wives had a lower fertility than illiterate wives (Mc Laren 1990:202)”. According to McLaren, birth control was presumably more likely to be successfully achieved in cooperative households: “it is possible that an unintended consequence of mass education was that it broke down some of the barriers that once divided male and female cultures and made it easier for men and women to communicate. […] Family historians have commonly assumed that the spread of birth control was a symptom of the growth of more equitable, egalitarian family forms” (ibid.p. 204). All of these elements should be taken into consideration as important nuances when considering the mechanisms of preservation and change within a traditional structure: in the field of the history of contraception, historians incurred the risk of sharply contrasting a world in which fertility is technologically restricted with one in which it was not, ignoring the possibility that fertility has always been controlled, and that family structures and couple relationships may play a crucial role in managing fertility.

Family planners of the 50s, imbued with the view that the third world’s population crisis could only be solved if it adopted Western contraceptive practices, popularized the idea of science’s recent triumph over fertility. Western societies were, in their view, once as incapable as today’s developing countries in rationally restricting family size. The emergence of a “modern mentality” saved us... (ibid. 2).

Instead of perpetuating the idea of the recent “revolution” brought in by modern contraceptives, envisaging a scene where once modernity will sanitize and medicalize contraception and there will be no space left for such traditional methods as those transmitted by Bengali esoteric schools, it would be more realistic, and to a great extent liberating, to picture a more dynamic history of birth control. The history of fertility control has always been marked by both breakthroughs and reactions, imported innovations and indigenous resistance. If, following McLaren's suggestion (p.5), we avoid the temptation of the evolutionist argument by which “the movement is one from ignorance to knowledge, from primitive to ever more effective forms of contraception”, we may remark that different forms of contraception, propagated and encouraged by different social components, whether governmental healthcare, kabirāji53 folk medicine,

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53 Formally, kabirāji is based upon Ayurvedic medicine. The term is often used loosely to describe more informal knowledge of local plants, bone-setting, and mantra (see Gardner 1995:251).
religious orthodoxy or subversive anti-societies of esoteric practitioners, have always coexisted and interacted in a fluid and flexible pattern of mutual exclusion or osmosis, in relation to historical, political end socio-economic factors. In the particular field of Bauls' beliefs and behaviors, it has already been observed how the Bauls dynamically adapt their system to changing socioeconomic conditions, adopting the vocabulary of the dominant culture and accommodating it into their own sādhanā sangit, as a strategy of resistance and opposition to all religious and political establishments (see Author 2014). In the confrontation between Bauls' traditional theories and practices concerning body and health, and the hegemonic system of institutionalized Western medicine, Bauls' strategy of concealed reaction assumes the same characteristics: the validity of the “new” medical system is not openly challenged, on the contrary it is taken as a recognized authority, adopted and reshaped in order to fit Bauls' own tenets. A song collected in Haramoni (Mansuruddin vol.I p.23-24), one of the very first anthologies of Bengali folk songs, demonstrates the lexical tactic of borrowing and functional distortion of the terminology of institutionalized healthcare:

Come on, let’s go to the hospital of Gour Cand in the city of Nadia! why, brother, should I still endure this torture
suffering the malaria fever of the Kali Yuga!
there’s never been such a torment for the creatures of this land
on the miserables’ shore, a doctor was on duty
the saviour of lives wrote on the signboard and manifested himself to the people
he is calling for the diseased and after observing their fever
he brings the thermometer of mercy.
Herbs and plants, Vedas and rituals
extracting their essence he prepared a prescription
the rescuer, Brahma, is the great medicine
the sixteen names and thirty-two syllables.
Nitai Babu is a civil surgeon
His assistant is Advaita
the native Srivas, Srinivas and Haridas
are also in the same compound
Nitai Babu has a good reputation
Jagai and Madhai were both very ill
their fever of differentiation was healed thanks to his mixture
the doctor prescribes a diet for recovery: milk and sago of sadhuness and the sweet lemons of Hari’s name,
by which worldly appetites turn into detachment
Gosain says: that’s what I said,
the magic of that medicine is endless
your fever would come to an end, you wouldn’t need your pills of hypocrisy anymore.

The words in italics are in English in the Bengali original. The ironic use of English words in Baul songs as a satirical appropriation of the dominant culture’s terminology has been discussed in Author 2014. Here is the original text of the song:

Torā āṃ ke yābi re gaur cāder hāspātāle nadī ṣāpure
ār kena bhāi yātanā pāi
kalīkāle myāleri ā jvale
kakhan eman chilo nā re deśe jīver yantraśāre
kallen dāṭabhya ek āktārkāhāṁ dīṁhīn tare
jīvan tāra sāin-borē likhe rekheche dekhāte lokere

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Several Baul songs incorporate elements of the institutional and political establishment and forge them into a metaphorical structure, transforming the dominant, exoteric system into a parody of the Baul system of beliefs\(^5\): in this case, the semantic world of hospitals, pills and thermometers is symbolically adopted to express the salvific power of devotion. Nityananda (supposedly the primordial guru of most of the Baul lineages) is here described as a great doctor that heals his patients from the evils of attachment and dualism. In the same compound, among the governmental health officers, the patients can find the vaishnava saints Srivas, Srinivas and Haridas, close associates of Caitanya. The ironic use of healthcare for the expression of Bauls' central themes, such as devotion (\textit{bhakti}), suggests the underlying message that it is the guru's teaching that provides the greatest medicine, which hospitals and surgeons are not able to supply. Oral sources confirm the persistence of this perspective and reflect the mistrust of the practitioners towards "modern science", considered inferior in respect to the knowledge that one acquires through the understanding and the control of one's body and its substances.

“See how many doctors are sitting today in the bazar: homeopathic, allopathic, kabiraji, this and that. But I believe in \textit{bartamān}, in what I prove in reality, what I see with my eyes”, commented the baulini Kalyani Ma while talking about people's decisions in the field of family-planning. In the eyes of the insiders, the esoteric teachings learnt through the personal relation with a guru are not challenged by the diffused presence and encouraged faith in Western medicine and governmental healthcare, for they offer something more than what is available on the market of what we may call the “exoteric medicine”. In a battle of \textit{kabigān} performed during Amulya Babu's annual festival held in Jugpur, crews of \textit{kabiyaś} (performers of \textit{kabigān}) were challenging each other in a poetic competition that had as a main topic the clash between \textit{dharma} (religion, but also...\textit{ānchen rogī}
\textit{ēke ēke}
tāder jvar dekhe dačā thārmē ēre
gāch gācha ēa bed bidhī
tār ēarak tule karlen bidhī
tārak brahma mahaucādhi
\textit{ōla nām batriś āksāre}
\textit{niṭāi bābu sībhīl ṣāṛjjan}
\textit{nāyāsiśeś advaita halo re}
\textit{neśib śrībāś ār śrīnībāś haridāś}
\textit{āche kampāu ēre}
\textit{niṭāi bābur suyaś bhālo}
jagāi mādhāi rogī chilo
tāder hālāmya jvar che ēe gelō ekāi mikcāre
\textit{pāthya bale dičchen bābu sādhubād dugdha sābure}
\textit{harī kathā pātinebu tāte ruci hale aruci habe}
gosāiś balen dilām bale
\textit{ananta ai auśad khelere}
jvar yeto tor kapāu pēle yeto ekebāre.

\(^5\) See for example the Baul song in Haramoni (vol I p.22) adopting the terminology of law and the Court, or the song in Baul Fakir Padavali (Jha 2009:45 ) borrowing the vocabulary of formal, Western education, exams and promotions, and metaphorizing it in order to discuss the levels of \textit{sādhana}.\)
“retention”, as interpreted by the practitioners) and bijñā (science). Asim Sarkar, a successful kabiyāl and a disciple of Bhaba Pagla, concluded his battle by saying: “Dehatattva is something you cannot learn from somebody that has a master degree in bijñā. They have no authority on the subject: it would be as if you take one graduated in Bengali and ask him to teach chemistry. Bijñā cannot tell me who I am: that is a subject for those who know darśan [philosophy, but also “vision”, in the sense of direct knowledge acquired through the experience of one's senses]. The answer is only in the hands of a true guru. A disciple finds this truth in the guru paramparā. We all come from our father's bij and that is the substance we should not lose for it is the only way of preserving our health and live a long life […] Everything should be understood through the science of the maithuna (sexual intercourse) between man and woman\(^{56}\).

**Conclusion**

Asim Sarkar's explicit opinions during his kabigān public performance support the feeling that “modern medicine” is not perceived as capable of substituting the teachings of the guru paramparā, and that – putting aside the option of a dichotomy between preservation and disappearance in which one of the two systems would emerge to posterity as the ‘winner’ – the two systems can co-inhabit in a shared social space and in an integrated manner.

Textual and contextual sources have shown us the richness of folkloric material in the field of human conception, birth control and sexuality in the repertoire of Baul and Fakirs' songs, proverbs and oral teachings. A closely connected topic that has to do with the issue of contraception among the sādhakas but we did not have the space to discuss in this paper is abortion: preoccupied with their reputation as accomplished sādhakas, some gurus are said to compel their partners to undergo several abortions. In the rivalry of the guru-society, rumors of suspected abortion are a very common tactic for publicly diminishing a guru's authority. At the same time, Baul and Fakir gurus are said to be very knowledgeable in managing abortions and in the folk-medical practices concerned with the use of the fetus. A further development of the present research could be dedicated to the beliefs and methods surrounding the delicate field of abortion, for a broader and more complete consideration of Bauls' approach toward child birth and birth control.

The present interdisciplinary exploration of Baul and Fakir's oral tradition in the field of reproduction will, it is hoped, have shown the esoteric tradition, often romanticized as an outpouring of devotional mysticism, as embedded into the social constellation surrounding it. The views on procreation diffused among contemporary Bengali esoteric schools reflect both the antinomian attitudes of subalternt groups, proposing a sophisticated alternative to orthodox injunctions regarding family structures and sexual behaviors, and the need for an efficient and pragmatic knowledge of conception and contraception to counsel a rural milieu in which institutional systems of family planning and sexual education are either not welcome or not available.

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\(^{56}\) The kabigān performance took place on 11/08/2013 at Amulya Babu's ashram in Jugpur (Nadia district).
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A Sociological Discourse on Euthanasia
- Anuradha Bhattacharyya

Abstract
This paper attempts to understand Euthanasia, the practice of using medicine to prolong or shorten the life of terminally ill, its social consequences addressing the ethical questions involved, analysing the inbuilt dilemmas. Attempts has been made to assess the changing socio-cultural scenario and its relation to the rising demands for legitimising euthanasia in Indian social milieu, which can possibly bring about changes in the normative social structure of Indian society. It examines the changing socio-cultural notions of 'natural death' in our society. It throws light on the social variables affecting the end-of-life decision making process and the changing role of medical professionals. It unfolds the debate of right to live, individual autonomy and the issues of dependency.

Key Concepts
Social Dynamics, Terminal Illness, Mercy Killing, Macro-level Social structure, Normative Structure, Pathological, Thanalogy, Post-modern, Legitamacy, Hospices and Palliative Unit, 'Santhara', 'Prayopavesa', Holocaust, Autonomy, Dependency, 'Paradigm Shift', Genocide, Ethical cleansing, Psychological defence mechanism.

Full Version of Paper
Euthanasia is now on the agenda which has generated waves of social current assessing its inbuilt dilemmas and the various social dynamics involved in the process. The practice of using the potentials of medicine to prolong or shorten the life of those suffering persistently from terminal illness or of those whose life is rated as of little or even negative value has only recently surfaced in India after the honorable Supreme Court rejected a mercy killing petition on behalf of a comatose woman, Aruna Ramachandra Shanbaug (a nurse of REM hospital who has been in a vegetative state for last 37 years ).

(1). while rejecting Aruna Ramachandra Shanbaug's euthanasia, the honorable court laid down guidelines for passive euthanasia which involves the withdrawal of treatment or food that would allow the patient to live. Various forms of euthanasia is legalized in various nations of the world like Albania, Belgium, Netherland. In India the following guidelines were laid down by the Honorable court –

a. A decision has to be taken to discontinue life support either by the parents or the spouse or other close relatives. In the absence of any of them such a decision can be taken even by a person or a body of person acting as a next friend. It can also be taken by the doctors attending the patients.

b. Decision should be taken by adults of sound mind and capable of making a rational
decision based on informed consent.

c. Even if a decision is taken by the near relatives or doctors or close friends attending the person concerned to withdraw life support such a decision requires approval from the High Court concerned. In such cases minimum 3 relatives well informed about the patient's condition should submit a written request.

d. When an application is filed the Chief Justice of the High Court should forthwith constitute a Bench of at least 2 judges who should decide to grant approval or not. A committee of 3 reputed doctors to be nominated by the Bench who will give report regarding the patient's condition.

e. It should also involve the local sub divisional magistrate and the station house officer of the police station within whose local jurisdiction the hospital is situated.

Some members of Indian medical establishments were skeptical about euthanasia due to country's weak rule of law and a large gap between rich and poor, rate of illiteracy and large difference in the quality of medical services available in cities and rural areas which might lead to exploitation of elderly by their families, Hence fear of euthanasia becoming an 'instrument for killing' the elderly dependent.

Sociological discourse on euthanasia reveals macro-level (societal level) manifestations and its inherent conflicts or dialectics. Sociologists analyze 'social facts' and social phenomenon from different perspectives locating it at different levels of social structure. Euthanasia is complicated, controversial material social fact exerting influence on individual autonomous choice towards making end-of-life decisions and it emerging because of societies’ shared beliefs that it serves a purpose. Thus euthanasia is conceived as functional by the propagators of 'right to die movements', serving the requirements ('needs') of post-modern social structure. Functional sociological approach to euthanasia is keen in examining the preservation and maintenance of order and stability of social group.

Sociologists are also interested in studying the process of developing normative social structures and emerging dominant belief, value systems, associated forms of conforming human behaviors and its deviance from the normative social standards. The study of the factors behind deviant behaviors reflects the health of the society signalling pathological developments which requires inbuilt resistance for the maintenance of stability and survival of the society.

Euthanasia, an emerging social phenomenon or a social current, is examined by the sociologists, locating it at different societal levels, like, cultural, religious, economic, demographic, technological and scientific, moral, ethical and personal levels and this helps to conceptualize euthanasia from functional, conflicting, behavioral perspectives. It requires a multivariate analysis studying circumstances surrounding euthanasia, the social dynamics of the various facets underlying a end-of-life decision making, the outcome or the societal implications of the changing law, role of medical professionals and the normative value systems. Legitimizing euthanasia which involves the practice of hastening the dying procedures to alleviate sufferings and a painful existence by removal of life support machinery or by administering lethal drugs to end life-these are only the
manifested elements of the practice visible on the surface. A scientific study needs to probe beneath these surface manifestations and as we delve in we are sure to encounter new levels of reality embedded in it. Thus a sociological inquiry will require deconstructing it to unveil the underlying interplay of the latent facets helping to explore the ingrained cultural assumptions that contribute to the occurrence of the practice. Sociological understanding helps to acquire an insight of the current world wide debate regarding the legitimacy and morality of the practice and the dialectical relationship between the contradictory ideas, ethics and issues centering the practice.

In this attempt a sociologist needs to remain value free and should not interfere with how things 'should be' making the scientific inquiry subjective close to ethics and theology. Sociology is scientific as it studies the fact objectively in a value neutral way excluding any ideological or evaluative judgement of the empirical evidences. It is an explanatory study taking care of the way 'things are' and trying to establish a causal relationship explaining why things are as the way it is manifested in the surface.

**Euthanasia and Sociology of Death and Dying**

Euthanasia has added a new dimension to the Sociology of Death and Dying. A recent noticeable trend in which a solution to suffering is achievable by exercising rational autonomous control over the manner and timing of death and the plea for social sanction of euthanasia has altered the existing dominant normative definitions of 'natural' good death. In connection to euthanasia it is significant to study how the notions of death and the normative, socially accepted mores and practices associated with dying has evolved over the past decades giving birth to a whole new field of study called Thanalogy. There is a noticeable shift in the goal and role of the doctor-from curing illness and preventing death to providing help throughout the dying process or assisting to bring easy painless death. Death is a universal human experience but the societal response to it varies according to the particular culture of the specific society. Dying process is a social process rather a social construct hence response towards death, fear and after death beliefs, funeral rites, causes and socially accepted normative age of death, modes of procuring death, who should be vested with the power to make the end-of-life decisions, the authority to act be vested on those who claim expertise in curing, caring or the kins of the dying, awareness of physical and psychological pain, rituals employed, extent to which efforts may be made to postpone or hasten the moment of death, how the dying person or their relatives make decisions about type, site of death and duration of care they want to receive at the end of life, expression of grief and emotional distress by the family of the deceased—all these aspect should be consistent with the acceptable dominant, normative ethical standards of the particular society. All these are tuned by culture (socially constructed and socially conditioned). Hence these are culture specific which vary across society and is specific for a particular society in a particular time-frame. Legalizing euthanasia or physician assisted suicide for delivering a 'good death' (meaning of euthanasia as derived from its Greek roots) will skew down the existing gap between homicide and euthanasia hence to re-define 'natural death' and its associated rituals, beliefs, attitude prevalent in the society. It is fascinating to study the constants and discontinuities in beliefs and rituals centering death and how primitive societies' perception of death and its beliefs, rituals contrasts their post-modern, post-industrial
counterparts. E.B. Tylor explains how primitive man conceived spirits of the dead residing in any object, haunting in dreams. These belief gave birth to ancestor worship and animism, one of the earliest forms of religion (2). Frazer explained the primitive beliefs of death as reflected in magical principles and funeral rituals. The principles of contagion magic (once in contact always in contact) is evident in the funeral rituals of burying the belongings of the dead (3). Van Gennep viewed primitive rituals and death as a 'rites de passage', a transition (4). Durkheim analyzed the frequency of suicide (a form of end-of-life decision) in modern industrial society and explained how degree of social regulation, social solidarity and permissible levels of individual liberty can be important determinants of suicide (5). Explaining suicide as a social fact and the causes of higher suicide rates amongst protestants (less conservative and low social solidarity than Catholics) than Catholic Christian. The changing notions of death and dying accompany changes in the management of social life. Hence the modern therapeutic measures assisting patients to choose to alter exact time of death where death of the body closely coincides with death of the social being.

**Changing social-cultural scenario and the rising demand for legalizing Euthanasia**

When deviant action recurs frequently (for eg. euthanasia in many societies where it is illegal) and finally strives to secure social sanction and legitimacy, we need to assess the social cause and social context behind its acceptance in the existing normative framework.

**Emergent social structure**

The Post modern social structure is marked by predominance of small nucleated families (working spouses) with neolocal residence often separated emotionally and geographically. This arrangement has resulted entrusting the secondary groups to render essential services in lieu of money instead of primary groups. There is also considerable erosion of the socially accepted mores and practices of taking care of dependent elderly in the family. The emerging social normative order accommodates a dependent elderly providing pain free final days in a hospice or a palliative care unit, accomplished by skillful tailoring of pain medication and first rated nursing. But many nations hospices and palliative units are plagued by lack of money and dearth of trained nurses hence terminally ill patients with no chances of resuscitation demand euthanasia.

**Changes in demography**

Sociologists examine changes in demographic structure resultant of the advance medical technology. Life expectancy of the population has increased considerably so a increasing number of old, handicapped dependent are alive causing a possible retarding and destabilizing effect on collectivity. A substantial shift in the age-structure during second half of the 20th century coupled with economic growth, majority of the population are capable of experiencing a change in lifestyle inconceivable or unachievable before bringing social structural and physical environmental changes. These have acted as a driving force to seek a social sanction to euthanasia.

**Advances in Biomedical science and technology**

The potentials of technology to prolong the physiological processes even when cognitive
life has ended are recent phenomena. There is a 'paradigm shift' in the role of medicine and technology. Technology has revolutionized modern living and provided wealth of experiences and luxuries of life experiences and increased life expectancy which was a fantasy for people living in 19th century. Medicine is capable of curing disease and resisting death which was unthinkable in the past but a shift is noticeable in the recent application of medicine and technology. It exercises its power to deliver 'Good death' and resisting prolongation of life or applying its knowledge and authority to achieve a 'dignified death' by assisting those who are terminally ill to shorten their life or hasten death. Thus there is a shift from providing a 'good life' or its traditional goal to preserve life. Technology is satisfying insatiable human demands and also generating new desires by expanding new horizon, to offering 'good death', i.e. euthanasia. Role of medicine shifted from acting as a 'savior' to 'reliever of pain' and 'deliver' of death. This role is threatening. This role is ethically questioned and a more rising concern is to know whose vested interest is served by empowering medicines to end life. Shift has occurred in relation to the cultural and social construction of suffering and death through the application of medical technology. The dialectical relationship to medicine reveals the complexity of the practice. If state legalizes euthanasia these ethical dilemmas needs to be resolved.

**Euthanasia, Some religious practices and holocaust**

Recent propagators of right to die movements are searching for legitimacy of euthanasia drawing support from ancient Greek and Roman beliefs which did not encourage preserving life at any cost and was tolerant to suicide in case where no relief could be offered to the dying. Sociologists also find traces of the element of passive euthanasia in Jain and Hindu rituals of 'Santhara' and Prayopavesa' respectively. Although all major world religions like Christianity, Islam, Hinduism etc. do not support euthanasia but the degree of vehement opposition varies across the various sects of the religion, as Protestant Christianity are not holding a strong opposition like the Catholic Christians. Even few Jain and Hindu sects think passive euthanasia is acceptable under some circumstances referring to 'Santhara' and 'prayopavesa'. These practices allowed a person to end their life by starvation only when one feels his or her life is complete. 'Prayopavesa' was performed by Hindu ailing elderly people with no chance of recovery and incapable of performing his own daily bodily purification. The decision to die in case of 'Prayopavesa' had to be declared publicly and actions were performed under community regulations. Demands to legalize euthanasia draws support from these religious practices but the ethical dilemmas of what will be the yardstick to measure the 'completeness' of one's life which is relative and subjective. The task of measuring will be in whose hands when one is in a vegetative state or in brain death cases. Will it be in the best interest of the patient or their family?

Some Sociologists, like Howart and Jeffery (6), bring forth the proposition that the salience of the issues surrounding decisions to take human life has increased at least partly as a result of the horrific events of the 1930's and 1940's culminating in the holocaust, Jews and countless number of gypsies, mentally and physically disabled people and political dissidents were brutally and deliberately eliminated as a matter of state policy. To suggest a resemblance between the specious judgement of their deeds by
the Nazis and the stance of those who argue that the lives of some individuals have become valueless to them and that in social circumstances they should be assisted, if they so wish, to end their existence is grotesque.

Thus if euthanasia is backed by state then the diametrically opposing views of human dignity and autonomy and the right to live is contested which will considerably influence the collective opinion and the legislators.

**Euthanasia and the related issues of dependency and autonomy**

Dependency and conversely the demand for autonomy are intricately related to euthanasia and the process of end-of-life decision making. Body of empirical evidences about terminally ill patients in hospices and palliative care units, surveys on the opinion of their family, relatives and care givers, health care units reveals the basic cause behind speeding up end-of-life decisions stemmed from the feeling of losing independence in everyday living both for the terminally ill and as well as their family. Many feel that lingering a painful life without chances of resuscitation is a torture even if care is administered with compassion. Also technology assisted prolongation of life is economically burdensome for the family and is unbearable at times generating a feeling of guilt for the patient. Dependence on others for performing the private daily requirements is seen as demeaning undermining one's self-esteem, loss of dignity, loss of one's personal space and confinements makes the patient and their family demand for autonomy which is achievable only through issuing advance directives or living will to end life. Euthanasia fulfills this desire for achieving autonomy and dignity through death. The notion of permissible levels of dependency which is bearable, is culture specific. Some societies lay emphasis on reciprocity in social-relationship and offering personal space in relations respecting individualism while other cultures emphasizing collective life permits some levels of dependency as normal acceptable and their belief also encourage and honor serving the dependent elderly to some extent. Thus again feeling of dependency is relative conditioned by social mores and value systems. Even then in most cases it is noticed that a prolonged dependency is burdensome for children, family, relatives as it also restricts their lives draining wealth with no positive outcome other than resisting death and prolonging a life with negative value. Hence it is commonly found that relatives are more keen in demanding euthanasia than the patient. The results of the surveys on relatives and dying people establishes this fact. As pointed out by Addington and Hall that only the spouses of the patients are more likely than others to feel that a later death would have been better inspite of deceased's level of pain, distress, age and dependency. On the contrary non-spouses (eg. children and relatives of the dying) prefer an early death even when levels of pain, distress and age were controlled for. This was influenced by the fact that they experience care-giving burdensome than the spouses. The relatives and the patient feel trapped in a helpless state bringing unbearable misery for both. Socially sanctioning euthanasia might alter the balance of dependency and autonomy underlying the relationship of care-givers and care-recipient. If autonomy in making end-of-life decisions is in hands of relatives and family rather than the patient (when they are in vegetative state) then old age living might be a 'living death' shaping the co-experience of suffering for all people close to death, altering the basic ingredients of primary kinship relations and inter-generation relations. Social bond,
emotional security and mutual trust provided by these primary kin relation will be replaced by feeling of mistrust, suspicion signalling changes in the social structure. If the autonomy to decide or advice euthanasia is vested upon health care staffs and medical professionals then it might threaten patient autonomy and interest, which is alarming as the customary patient-doctor relationship will alter and the element of trust, dependency will be replaced by mistrust, always questioning the intentions of the doctor's actions and advice. Lack of reliance is fatal for both the parties affecting the medication process. Benevolence and nobility of the medical profession will be under threat. While demanding sanction for euthanasia, legislators and pressure groups (like right to die activists) must be more responsible and careful evaluating the possibilities of dependency, autonomy and the ethical dilemmas ingrained in the practice. Even if voluntary euthanasia is legalized empowering the terminally ill patient to make autonomous informed choice, to issue directives to end his or her life will lead eventually via the 'slippery slope' to permit non voluntary euthanasia. The 'slippery slope' argument claims that permitting voluntary euthanasia and restricting its other forms will create a space for fine distinction and exception in the rule which creates a slippery slope from absoluteness of the rule through which people slide down to non-conformity and the rule gets diluted over the years sliding down the slippery slope permitting even non voluntary euthanasia, involuntary euthanasia and homicide.

Social variables affecting the end-of-life decision making process and the role of medical professionals

End-of-life decision making is neither autonomous nor personal rather it is affected by social variables or determinants like religiosity, social class, economic considerations, culturally accepted normative attitude to death, ethics, awareness of pain and acceptable degree of dependence.

The key predictors in the end-of-life decision making are medical professionals, kins of the dying and the patients themselves. There is an underlying power play affected by dynamics of power and trust operating amongst them which makes the legally empowered patient's exercise of his autonomous choice toward making his end-life-decisions an unachievable dream in reality. It denies the last right of the dying to exercise his choice or denies his power to adjudge his own awareness of pain, suffering and dependency. Hence patient empowerment and autonomy is a utopia.

Patient's awareness of his approaching death is an important determinant in decision making which is culturally regulated. Some society and kin groups does not approve the patient's awareness of his death while in other culture awareness of dying is desirable and permissible as it helps the dying manage and plan his place, mode and time of death. Strauss and Glaser's field studies (8) revealed that the awareness of dying by both relatives and patients was an important key to understand the interaction between those people and their role in decision making. In case of premature infant mortality the patients were not aware of their impending death, while in oncology department dying was slow and differences in the awareness of dying was very pronounced. Out of these field studies grew 'Awareness of Dying', a theory on the influence of awareness on the interaction with dying for instance if the patients were aware of their death the nursing
and the interaction was often limited to the absolute necessary in order to prevent open awareness. They provided a typology of awareness differentiating between closed awareness (where the relatives know but the dying person is unaware of his approaching death), suspicion, mutual deception and open awareness (both the dying person and their family knew about death). Open awareness help in autonomous planning of one's dying career to some extent where one can choose the place and time of death where it is reported that most patients are likely to die at their own homes.

In case of closed awareness relatives and medical professionals play a key role in decision making process. As in Indian society illness is a share, collective family affair than an incident pertaining to the sufferer only and the doctors might be requested to conceal the naked truth about the fatal diagnosis from the patient. In India advance directives are non existent and family acts as the locus of ethical decision making process taking account of the economic cost. While in western society, where euthanasia is permitted, there are legal directives on the doctors to inform the patients about their approaching death and emphasis on patients’ autonomy in issuing advance directives, which is mandatory as healthcare is covered by insurance. Thus the bio-ethicists face a formidable challenge of cultural diversity. Medical professionals play a pivotal role in the end-of-life decision making process. The method of offering relief to sufferings is dependent on the diagnosis and judgement of a doctor rather than being directed primarily by matters of dependence or autonomy. The legal direction of acquiring an 'autonomous' informed patient choice or an advance directive (living will) to achieve relief and dignity through death is not independently formulated neither reflecting autonomy rather it is a 'guided choice', where guidance provided by health care staffs and family. This tends to a role reversal of the doctors whose age old accepted ethics is to provide relief from pain using his knowledge to save patients from the hands of death (Even in primitive societies magician enjoyed a high place in the society due to this role).

In the absence of clear legal directives the medical professionals face difficulty in handling the ethical and legal issues encompassing the decisions to withdraw life-support systems facilitating death. Thus many doctors prefer a slow euthanasia as psychologically and ethically acceptable taking refuge in the 'double effect' of sedatives and analgesics. John Keon (9) examined the principle of 'double effect' where sedatives and analgesics are provided to terminally ill patients to relieve their pain and sufferings without injecting bolus injections to end life, as in case of active euthanasia but these sedatives and analgesic on other hand hasten death. This double effect of the drugs generates areas of ambiguity surrounding the causation of death and managing of intentions for infusing sedatives. A possible grey area exists between palliative care and euthanasia or rather a continuum between the two. It is ethically and psychologically acceptable to the doctors because it just results in a small loss of time for patient already close to death without falling in the complexities of euthanasia. Legalizing euthanasia needs careful framing and defining a standard for the medical practice and a proper system of societal control and surveillance measures to provide safeguards in the best interest of the patients, to prevent
abuse.

Research conducted by Douglas, Kerridge and Ankeny (10) has revealed that this kind of slow euthanasia is psychologically more accepted than ending life by bolus injections. By disguising the end of life decision as the normal medical practice and providing a socially acceptable 'natural death', granting patient's wish without having performed real euthanasia and doesn't need to comply euthanasia laws. 'Double effect' make it difficult to differentiate and establish when a doctor intentionally terminates a patient's life and when death occurs as a consequence of the doctor's actions or treatment which is foreseen, but not intended. The distinction between euthanasia and 'natural death' is blurred. This area has to be taken into account to prevent possible abuse of the practice as the doctors may be pressed by the patient's family and an unholy nexus might operate ignoring and restricting doctor's autonomous judgements and diagnosis.

Doctor's decision towards euthanasia is influenced by religiosity. Clive Seale's (11) research has investigated the role of religiosity in the end-of-life decision making. Research findings show that doctor's faith is likely to influence the decision. Doctor's with high levels of religiosity seldom take decision to hasten death than doctors with less religiosity. Doctors with high religiosity are less likely to discuss such decisions with the patients at the first instance.

Medical professionals lack consensus in their approach to end-of-life decision making. Porter and Porter (12) reported that Dutch doctors put more emphasis on a comprehensive assessment of the patient's actual situation where Australian doctors are more inclined to use scientific evidences and advance directives. Some doctors take the primary responsibility where other doctors are more inclined to leave the decision to the family. Disparities exist in care approach, comprehensive approach and analytical approach.

Despite all complexities of the factors it is evident that health care staff yield enormous power in the end-of- life decision making process and sociologists observe the role of various social institutions which has received legal sanction or common consent to set and control the normative order, providing a fresh look grounded in reality about 'who should' control and 'who does really' control the decision to hasten the end of life.

Other possible social-cultural consequences and outcome of euthanasia

Euthanasia and socially constructed vulnerability for the elderly and the fear of marginalization

Frail, incapacitated elderly dependent will be made to feel vulnerable, undignified and guilty of being a burden on the family feeding on the resource which could be devoted to other valued objectives with positive returns. A different meaning is attached to old terminally ill dependents who are alive by artificial means. It is seen as enormous expense to the public (in case where the state provide for the social welfare), occupying the limited hospital bed and machinery uselessly restricting others from availing it. Their lives are devalued marginalizing them in the society. They might be pressurized and coerced to accept euthanasia as an alternative against their will. Such oppression will
make old age living dreadful.

_Spiraling medical cost discourage reliance on advance medicine or life support system_

Health care services have become expensive and the medical cost is expected to spiral upwards further. The perceived futility of making use of expensive modern medical technology to achieve only a temporary lengthening of life with no signs of recovery or improvement in the quality of life is not justified. Thus just prolonging the present state of the patient and cost-outcome calculations will prompt them to avail covert euthanasia.

_Possibility of coercion and the oppressed dependent's loss of autonomy_

Legalization euthanasia might restrain individual's autonomy. People may be coerced to demand for their own death. Euthanasia may be offered as an alternative even to those who are unaware of it. Further medical professional might be pressed to permit euthanasia against their own judgement. It might be presented in a patient-friendly manner, as a means to transcend from present painful undignified dependence. This will lead to encroaching the most fundamental basic right of man and increasing crime in guise of euthanasia eroding the nobility of the medical profession. Hence oppression and loss of autonomy for the terminally ill patient and also for the medical professionals in some cases.

_Sufferers are often incapable of sound decision making_

Prolonged sufferings make the person incapable of proper rational decision making and his desires to end his life results from a state of depression, uncontrolled pain or dysphoria which can be cured through proper treatments. In many circumstances it becomes difficult to ascertain whether the patient has made an informed competent decision or not.

_Euthanasia can be used as a means to resolve conflict of interest_

This applies if death of the terminally ill assures material gain for the family, relatives or friends. It is possible for the person taking total responsibility for the ill and incapacitated, to decide when the helpless person should die. As death might speed up property inheritance, independence, insurance, monetary gains or some other advantage may accrue to the person caring on the death of the ill. This conflict of interest might hasten the process of euthanasia without taking into account of the patient's wishes and to reap personal gains.

_Abuse such as genocide or ethnic cleansing (A conflict theoretical perspective on euthanasia)_

The conflict theoretical analysis reveals the macro-structural levels of society where the potential power struggle generates from antagonistic conflict of interests. The powerful class or group will find a justification, a rationale backed by legal sanction to get rid off the weak through this practice of euthanasia. The Nazi holocaust, the more recent events in Balkans and Africa show that power can be misused to get rid of specified individuals or groups. Dreams of establishing a 'master' or superior individuals have surfaced occasionally in human history. The fear of employing genetic engineering or eugenics to improve the genetic stock of human race and eliminating those who are perceived to be
inferior or unproductive or those who do not contribute positively to the economy but feed on the resource and the emerging practice of euthanasia will assist this process of selecting the fittest and eliminating the weakest in the group. If this analysis applies for the group it is also applicable for an individual.

**Difficulty in enforcing and monitoring the legislation on euthanasia**

With the dismal picture of the legal set up in many nations it will pave a way to eliminate the 'vegetative dependent' seeking legal refuge in euthanasia. Moreover many cases of euthanasia is not legally reported by the doctors as they do not perceive it as real euthanasia (as in cases of covert or slow euthanasia) and hence doesn't feel the need to comply to euthanasia laws. The reporting rate of euthanasia in Flander (where it is legalized), in 2007 was estimated to be 52.8%. This means that only one of two cases of actual euthanasia is reported to and reviewed by the Federal Control and Evaluation committee. In a large majority of unreported cases (about 92.2% of the unreported cases) the physician involved did not perceive or label the act as euthanasia and a written request was absent, opioid, sedatives or both life ending drugs were administered by the nurse and not the doctors. (13). Strict monitoring, surveillance and effective social control measures required in sanctioning euthanasia in society.

**Psychological defense mechanisms.**

Euthanasia perceived as 'mercy killing' provides a psychological defense for the relatives and friends taking care of the terminally ill rationalizing their decision as not unethical or sinful rather acting as reliever of pain and sufferings thus in course of time changing the dominant moral and ethical values of the society accepting it as normal.

**Euthanasia might fail to bring about an easy death**

An accepted method of euthanasia may fail to kill a person aggravating sufferings as the same procedures may produce different results in different persons. Predictions and diagnosis can be erroneous as it is not a perfect skill, neither an art nor a science. Expansion of knowledge helps to invent new drugs and technology which can provide a new lease to life for the terminally ill and the condition which may have been terminal at one country or at a time may respond to treatments at another place or at another time. People may be deprived of their right to life by accepting euthanasia. Loss of motivation reduce efforts in diagnosis, treatment and care. Practice of euthanasia may act as a deterrent reducing the efforts to provide or improve diagnosis, treatment and care. If the suffering persons are able to choose to die then it will demotivate the funding agencies to fund research, caring facilities and maintenance of support system. Economic conditions may motivate authorities to support euthanasia.

Mann (1995) stated that once traditional prohibitions and taboos are broken, society may be drawn down an unanticipated path towards acceptances of practices which at the time of initial breach, would be considered unacceptable. (14). Helme (1993), while discussing the possible implications of legalizing euthanasia stated 'If the law was to be changed, the balance of opinion would alter so that what would be intended as an extension of rights of some and possibly only a small minority, might result in the transference of an obligation to others. Once a legal precedence has been established, social endorsement of euthanasia
might place undue pressure on patients to class themselves as a burden to others, to submit to it rather than defend individual interest' (15). He suggested that some patients may make a request for euthanasia 'in bad faith' in order to manipulate, threaten or exploit over-conscientious kins or carer. Helme balanced these arguments by pointing out that other patients may enter their final stages of illness reassured by the knowledge that euthanasia was available to them even though they may never request it.

Euthanasia stands in a conflicting plane questioning the absolute respect for human life and the intrinsic values of primary kin relationships as opposed to economic values (in secondary relation). Certain sets of beliefs will remain always inconsistent contradicting the beliefs propagating euthanasia, regardless of the media and social agents (pressure groups) sensitizing the collectivity, mobilizing collective opinion to sanction euthanasia. As euthanasia searches for legitimacy and social endorsement the society will have to change to accommodate it by changing its traditional basic emotional, intrinsic elements of kinship and inter-personal relationship networks which generates the broader macro social structures and rendering its unique identity as a group.

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Portraits of Plantation Slavery in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century India: Real and Fictional Accounts
- Amrita Bhattacharyya

Abstract
This paper is a study of three real and fictional accounts of plantations in India. The paper explores the various types of exploitation to which the coolies are subjected to in the colonial period. The condition of the coolies who were actually the uprooted peasant class or comprised the ‘folk’ people, needs to be addressed in this paper. These sections of coolies are actually the aftermath of land-acquisition and denial of rights to peasants which has happened for a long time in India. Knowing their long history of oppression will ultimately add to the need of this present hour to document their folk culture.

Key Words
Plantation, coolies, ‘folk’ people, oppression, slavery

Full Version of Paper
While slavery in the real sense of the term was present in other parts of British occupied areas, in India it was more of an indentured nature. We find both real and fictional accounts of the oppression and deprivations of the coolies and labourers associated with it. These coolies and labourers were actually uprooted people from all over India who were denied their rights to land. Their lives were a series of oppressions by the zamindars or the feudal lords. Some of them even fled from their traditional land to avert the deadly clutches of famine. This paper will mainly deal with three accounts –Dwarakanath Ganguli’s ‘Slavery in British Dominion’, Mulk Raj Anand’s ‘Two Leaves and a Bud’ and ‘Nildurpan: An Indigo Planting Mirror’. The first text is a real account and the others are fictional accounts.

Dwarakanath Ganguli (1844-1898) went to the wilderness of Assam and studied the coolie life there. He was the first chronicler to write about it in the columns of Bengalee and weekly Sanjibani. Even though the events occurred in the nineteenth century and were published in newspaper in that century but the above mentioned book was published in 1972 and it compiled all the papers. In the foreword to the book, Prabhat Chandra Ganguli, the son of Dwarakanath Ganguli says –

‘Those who will read it, I am sure, will be shocked to find that coolies in the Assam tea-gardens were worse than slaves. My father, to say the least, did a pioneering job at the dusk of his life in lifting the veil to the slavery that existed then in this part of the British Dominion. …
Had it not been for him, the harrowing tales of the coolie life in the tea-gardens of Assam would perhaps have never been told."

Dwarakanath Ganguli was a member of Indian Association of Calcutta founded by Rastraguru Surendranath Banerjea. The association was the successor to a long line of social reformatory groups starting from Brahma Sabha, Brahmo Samaj, Tattvabodhini Sabha, Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, the Indian League and the Indian Association. There were quite a few newspapers which were upholding the plight of the peasants in the indigo and tea plantations in Assam and North Bengal and the oppression of the indigo-planters. Akshoy Kumar Datta edited the ‘Tattvabodhini Patrika’, Harish Chandra Mukherjee published an English paper ‘Hindoo Patriot’, and another journal titled ‘Som Prakash’ also circulated. Slavery was not present as an institution in India but the Indigo planters forced the peasants to take advance payments and practically reduced them to such abominable condition. Protest throughout the country led to the end of indigo plantation by 1859 but exploitation of the tea labourers continued. The first labours in these tea gardens can be said to have been forcibly recruited as they were unwillingly made to sign a contract by which they were bound to work for a specified period of time. They can be thus called ‘indentured labourers. They were appointed (actually hunted down) by recruiting agents known as ‘Arakatis’ who in turn were set up by ‘European Labour Recruiting Agency Houses’. The ‘Arakatis’ penetrated into inaccessible villages and lured the poorest of the villagers with promises of good wage, proper service condition and even land of their own. But in reality the labourers were totally exploited by the Englishmen and the latter also frequently violated the honesty of the coolie women. At first these appalling conditions of the labourers was totally unknown to the common people because of the inaccessibility of Assam province. Later after 1878 prominent leaders of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj like Ram Kumar Vidyaratna, Dwarakanath Ganguli, Kalisankar Sukul, Krishna Kumar Mitra and Heramba Chandra Maitra took up the cause of the Assam coolies. Krishna Kumar Mitra, a Brahmo Samaj leader published the Bengali newspaper ‘Sanjivni’ where all the cases were published. The courts presided by English judges always went in favour of the planters and only occasionally imposed nominal fines on them. Ram Kumar Vidyaratna fearlessly reported two such severe cases – Umesh’s case and Webb’s case. In the first case a fourteen year old boy Umesh was kicked so severely and trampled with boots by Mr. Gordon who was in charge of the tea garden that the former died. The district judge, Mr. Pope honourably acquitted him. In the second case the accused was not a planter but a supervisor named Charles Webb under whose eyes the coolies were kept for sometime before they were shifted to various gardens. Webb forcibly confined and molested a married coolie woman named Sukurmani leading to her death. The judge let him off only with a fine of hundred rupees. Dwarakanath Ganguli was sent to collect facts about this case by both the Indian Association and Sadharan Brahmo Samaj to which he was Assistant Secretary. While Lord Ripon evaded the matter, Dwaranath persisted with this matter and pressed the Congress to propose a resolution. Bipin Chandra Pal, a young Brahmo and later a nationalist leader proposed it and wanted the government to do legislation for redressing the grievances. Under Sir Henry Cotton some remedial measures were taken which led to improvement of labour condition and less exploitation.
Dwarakanath says that “The law provides that an immigrant should ‘understand the contract as regards locality, period and nature of service and the rate of wages and the price at which the rice is to be supplied to him, that the terms thereof are in accordance with law, that he has not been induced to agree to enter thereunto by any coercion, undue influence, fraud, misrepresentation and that he is willing to fulfil the same.’”(p.2) Dwarakanath points out that the coolies brought before registration offices are taught to give stereotyped answers and those who are reluctant to sign to the terms of the contract are never brought in person. Either an alibi answers to their name or they are forced to sign the contract. Dwarakanath points out the bitter reality: “But when an emigrant says in answer put to him that he goes to Assam it is doubtful whether one in a thousand knows what Assam really is. If you ask him whether it is a village, town, district or province, he will not be able to give you a satisfactory answer and thus he ‘understands the contract as regards the locality.’ Whether the locality is good or bad, healthy or unhealthy, how an ignorant coolie is to know, unless someone would explain it to him.”(p.4) The labourer is also ignorant about the duration of work hours and thus everything is at the discretion of the employer. Dr. Eteson, the then Deputy Surgeon-General and Sanitary Commissioner of Assam confesses that the labourer lives in dismal conditions, gets inadequate food and is exposed to all sorts of diseases and the hospital is a farce. Thus there is increase in cases of cholera and other bowel complaints. The death register is also tampered with and dead persons are sometimes passed off as deserters and disabled labourers are simply struck off rolls. The employers decrease the work hours at their will just before the visit of the inspectors. After paying bribes to chowkidars, sirdars, mohuris, doctors and clerks, the labourer earns about Rs.3 and the women about Rs.2. This insufficient small sustenance forces the labourer to fall on loans which naturally leads to non-payment and life bondage. A case was reported where a man named Lakhi Bagdi murdered his wife with her consent and confessed his crime to the Magistrate. They were forced by extreme starvation to take this step.

The condition of child life is mentioned which is actually life-threatening. In even one of the best gardens the mortality of children is high. This condition is related to mainly the working women who are unable to carry the affected children to the gardens in heat or rain. An epidemic of infantile typho-malarial fever was reported which led to the breakdown of the nervous system and destruction of internal organs. This disease was recorded mainly during the months of August, September, October and November when high temperature prevailed. The child-bearing women get very little time to recuperate and even little time to look after the nourishment of the children. Many women opt for abortion rather than face such unbearable situations as she has to fulfil her contract.

Now, let us discuss the fact whether these labourers can escape this bondage if at all. There was an incident where a coolie’s father Sheikh Khodadin applied for a discharge certificate from the garden of Mr. Hosack to the Magistrate of Sibsagar. Now the planter wrote that the said coolie was only a domestic servant and can leave his job at any moment he wishes. When the coolie actually left, he was arrested for breaking the contract of labour and sentenced to rigorous imprisonment of seven days. This shows that the law is in favour of the employer. There is also no escape for the coolie if he tries to run away as the Deputy Commissioner of Cochar pointed out: “ ‘The gardens in the
Upper Assam districts are so scattered… and the mode of communication on the other hand is so difficult that a coolie cannot easily run away if he wishes.” (p.30) In some cases when the coolies deserted due to some ill treatment, if caught the judges reduced the fine on the planters but did not decrease the punishment on the deserters. There are also reports of coolie suicide when the coolies cannot bear the severity, boredom of being surrounded by intense jungles and beasts. The planters also do not want to cancel the contracts of coolies who fall ill and are thus unable to work and forces them to work under the fear of lashes. The other methods of punishing the coolies are stated:

“The next mode of punishment is the lock-up. It is a dreadful place, not less dreadful than the Black Hole of historic notoriety. The ‘Fermenting House’ is generally used for the purpose of locking up deserters and other recalcitrant coolies. They are literally roasted there and when they appeal for water to quench their thirst, not even a drop of water is given to them, and when their sufferings become unbearable, there is none to listen to their piteous cries. They are kept in this state of confinement till it pleases their master to order their release. In 1884 two officers of the Dum Dum Tea Estate in the district of Dibrugarh, named Babu Kedar Nath Ghosh and Sasadhar Barma were charged with the defence of keeping a man under illegal restraint, and in this case the existence of a dungeon in many tea-gardens was proved by the witnesses for the defence.” (Ganguli, p.43-44)

The modesty of the women was also under question. A coolie woman named Khanta Doomni was raped by Mr. Edward Pinches, the manager of a tea-garden in the district of Sibsagar. Some of the planters also keep the coolie women as mistresses.

In Dinabandhu Mitra’s play “Nil Durpan or The Indigo Planting Mirror” which was translated by Michael Madhusudan Dutta, we find the portraits of two indigo planters – J.J. Wood and P.P. Rose who employ Amin (land measurer) who forcibly mark off lands for indigo plantation. Goluk Chunder Basu and his two sons Nobin Madhab and Bindu Madhab and their family have fallen under the cruel gaze of the planters because they have resisted the plantation of indigo in favour of rice cultivation. This resistance is practically for several reasons – the indigo lands become high in saline content and its cultivation needs four times labour required to cultivate rice.

The play opens with Goluk Chunder lamenting that they are forced to leave Svaropur, a place in which they have lived for seven generations. The place produced enough rice, oil, peas, molasses, vegetables to sustain the family, indulge in hospitality towards the guests and even procure profit from the sale. Sadhu Churn, a neighbouring ryot attributes this unfortunate change to a Saheb’s taking lease of the land since three years. Ray Churn, the brother of Sadhu Churn gives vent to his disgust at the prevailing injustice:

“The stupid Amin is a tiger. The violence with which he came upon me! Oh my God! I thought he was coming to devour me. That villain did not hear a single word and with force he marked off the garden. If they take five bighas of land of Sanpoltola what will my family eat?” (Mitra, ActI, scii, p.12)

The planter, J.J. Wood has employed a Dewan, Gopi Churn Das who is instrumental in inciting the planter against the family of Goluk Chunder. The type of people like Gopi
Churn Das are sycophants of the ruling class and will embark on exploiting his own countrymen. Gopi takes a pleasure in displaying his power –

“The service I have rendered in stopping the rice cultivation and making the indigo to grow in the field of the Mollahs and also take his rent-free lands of seven generations Goluk Chunder Bose and to take away his holdings which were royal gifts…” (Mitra, Act I, sciii, p.16)

Gopi even advises the planter to acquire all the lands of Sadhu Churn in lieu of all the accumulated debt.

On the other hand there are people like Nabin Madhab, who are forthright in saving the poor farmers. He is conversant in the laws of the country and is considered to be the principal enemy of the indigo factory. He himself took initiative to probe into the burning down of Polasapore. He was instrumental in confining the previous Dewan for two years. Ryots or farmers like Sadhu Churn are forced to take advances and prepare the land for indigo. Because the people are becoming aware of the rules and laws of the country, the planter decides “I shall write to our Indigo Planters’ Association to make a petition to the Government for stopping the schools in villages; we shall fight to secure stopping the schools.” (Mitra, Act I, sciii, p.18)

The planter, J.J.Rose can employ women like Podi Moyrani, a sweetmeat maker to procure women for him. Reboti, the wife of Sadhu Churn fears for her daughter Khetramani and says –

“O my Mother! Every violence can be committed in the ryot’s house. Taking away the women, they bring the men under their power. In giving advances for indigo they can do this; they will do it more when they are infatuated. Don’t you know, my mother, the other day, because certain parties did not agree to sign a fictitious receipt of advances, they broke down their home and took away by force the wife of one of the Babus.” (Mitra, Act I, sciii, p.26)

The planters even bribe the other ryots to give evidence against Goluk Chunder and keep the ryots confined in the factory. The planters try to bribe the Magistrate and even the Governor. One of the ryots reports and questions – “Then how did the late Governor Saheb go about the Indigo Factories, being feasted like a bridegroom just before the celebration of the marriage? Did you not see that the Planter Sahibs brought him to this Factory well adorned like a bridegroom?” (Mitra, Act II, sci, p.31)

Mulk Raj Anand’s ‘Two Leaves and a Bud’ is a fictional account of the oppression and exploitation in an Assam tea plantation focussing especially on the family of Gangu who comes with his wife Sajani, a fourteen year old daughter Leela and a son Buddhu. They originally are from Hoshiarpur, Amritsar. Gangu who is actually broke and had to give his hut and land to Seth Badri Das, considers this a better opportunity even more than the occupation of a sepoy. Buta Ram, the Sardar of the Macpherson Tea Estate has lured Gangu and his family with the promise of becoming a Sardar, land and cattle. Buta Ram gives exalted pictures of the sahibs (planters) –

“If any one needs money for something special such as the purchase of a cow, for marriage or for the propitiation of the ancestors’ ceremony, the sahibs advance it free of interest and recover it only gradually. The Manager Sahib knows and cares
for all his people…There is a real affection between the labourers and the
sahibs…” (Anand,p.7)
Buta even assures Gangu that the Sahibs even lend money to send to relatives back home
or to clear debts which the coolie had left behind.

There is a sharp contrast between the Englishman Charles Croft-Cooke and French man
John de la Havre in their attitude towards the coolies. The latter is highly alarmed at the
decreasing health of the coolies and notes “If only those syndicates could stop and think
for a minute, they would know that it was in their own interests that the coolies should
not suffer from anaemia and listlessness. The world was mad, mad, heading for self-
destruction. If only the directors had sanctioned his plan to stem the tide of cholera that
has arisen year after year and carried hundreds of lives away!”(Anand, p.15) The former
thinks that “These coolies are sub-human, and do not altogether value the benefits of
hygiene…”(Anand, p.23) Croft-Cooke also says “I have never known a coolie noted for
bringing up children, for instance, and at one time mortality was appalling. But still they
swarm.” (Anand, p.26)

Even the housing conditions are unfavourable to the health of the coolies as Gangu
experiences that the tin boxed shaped hut would be very hot in summer and very cold in
the winter. The claustrophobic conditions alarms Gangu and confirms his misgivings –
“But, as Gangu entered the place behind his fluttering excited wife, he was
confirmed in his misgivings for the narrow little place, back to back with another
hut presumably of the same size, was like a furnace with the heat radiated by the
tin roof. He looked round the room, probing the corners where columns of
darkness washed the light, and he had a feeling of being closed in by the hard,
impenetrable walls, a feeling that he had never experienced surrounded by the soft
clay of his village hut even when it was choked by smoke.”(Anand, p. 29-30)
In the three instances we see that no kind of standard labour law was implemented. The
poor hygiene and even adverse sanitary conditions affected the life of the labourers to
such a degree that the mortality rate was very high. The poor housing conditions further
added to the death toll. Both the real and the fictional accounts bear testimony to the fact
that the plantations engage in severe exploitations.

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Moral Crisis and Relevance of Swamiji’s Notion of Love
- Mili Dutta (Pal)

Abstract
(Swami Vivekananda interpreted the significance of India’s ancient culture in the modern world and made it understandable and acceptable to people of the modern age. His efforts to make the common people aware of the rich cultural traditions of the country are truly remarkable. In this paper, I would like to focus upon Swamiji’s radical perspective on our natural instinct ‘love’ to show its necessity for inculcating moral values in human being.)

Key-words
Oneness, Love-triangle, Attachment, Sheer carnal appetite, Sadharani love, Samanjasa love and Samartha love.

Full version of paper
With the close of the 20th century, we are entering into a period of moral crisis. Most of the problems we are facing today in interpersonal relationships, in family life, in social, cultural, economic and political fields are mostly moral problems. There has been alarming increase in homicides, violence, crime against women and children, incidence of communicable diseases like AIDS, break up of family life etc. Although electronic gadgets, the internet and biotechnology have conferred immense benefits on humanity, their misuse can have serious moral consequences. Furthermore, the greatest threat to social security, harmony and peace today is terrorism. Our nation, in fact the whole world, today presents such a general picture of ethical, cultural and spiritual malnutrition. I think there is an urgent need to tone-up the moral fiber of our society and to educate everybody ethically, if we have to save our country from this moral crisis and from the current chaos of indiscipline in social and cultural life. I hope that only the dissemination, on a wide scale, of the inspiring and ethical and rational teachings of Swami Vivekananda will contribute substantially towards this end.

Swami Vivekananda is a universal phenomenon and when we study him, we are amazed to find his tremendous grasp of contemporary human problems and prospects. He lived only a very brief life of thirty-nine years and seven months on earth, but within that brief period, he lived an intense life, first inwardly then outwardly. He was born in India but he identified himself with the whole humanity. He travelled to different parts of different countries, and whenever he went, he loved and identified himself with the people of that region.
Swamiji created a national consciousness amongst all Indians. At a time when the self-esteem of our people was low and many Indians looked to the West for ideas and role models, Vivekananda infused self-confidence and pride in them. It was his mission to establish coherence between theoría and praxis. The first Prime Minister of India, late Sri Jawaharlal Nehru said, rooted in the past and full of pride in India’s prestige, Swamiji was yet modern in his approach to life’s problems, and was a kind of bridge between the past culture of India and her present. He was not only intensely modern but had also assimilated the past historical human developments and culture and was at home both in the orient and in the occident.

Now, ethics is a part of philosophy which is concerned with living well, being a good person, doing the right thing, and wanting the right things in life. The aim of ethical theory is to give a reasoned account of how we ought to be or act, individually or collectively. It is not just a varied collection of ‘do’s and don’ts’ but a system of values and principles which tie together in a reasonable and coherent way in order to make our society and our lives as ‘civilized’ and ‘cultured’ and as happy as possible consequently. Of course the ethics of Swamiji sets itself the task of specifying criteria or norms for human conduct at the goal of ‘living well’. He considered all the traditional virtues such as selfishness, love, compassion, chastity, brotherhood etc. as moral. In this paper, I would like to discuss Swamiji’s conception of love which, according to him, is one of the basis of morality.

Love is a natural instinct of man and it has diverse expressions or manifestations – physical, psychological or spiritual. It may be attached to or occasioned by various types of objects – nature, birds, animals, human beings etc. Perhaps, love can also be distorted, defiled or lost, like a sparkling stream getting polluted or lost in desert sands. But the assumption is that love is one at bottom like energy, however varied its modes or mix-ups may be. In fact, we are mainly concerned here with the nature of this unique thing, not with any particular formation or deformity of it.

Love is universal, it is not a thing which is totally unknown, unfelt or not-experienced, rather it is familiar, obvious and experienced by almost all. It “…opens the most impossible gates; love is the gate to all the secrets of the universe.” At the same time, however, it has to be borne in mind that love is primarily affective in nature, it is felt – not thought. It cannot be defined like a concept, like the concept of triangle, for example. By words, it can only be indicated or spoken of by pointing to or drawing specific attention to some of its salient aspects. Without love, life becomes dreary and desolate, it loses its worth and significance. With love, it becomes joyous and meaningful. This is so because in love the ego recedes or subsides – even if it does not disappear altogether. The ego is at the root of man’s agony, and love is its antidote. Sri Ramakrishna quotes the saying: “…As is a man’s feeling of love, so is his gain.”

According to Swamiji, love is indefinable. He utters, “we cannot define it (love), but we can only trace it through its development and describe its surroundings.” Some things can be defined in terms of other things, but everything cannot be defined. The sensation of red or the feeling of pain can be known by experience, not by definition – for
they are unanalysable. Similarly, what love positively is cannot be conveyed through mere words unless one has felt it, however feebly or fleetingly it may be. ‘We only see love ‘ says swamiji, ‘Love cannot be expressed’. Butter is butter, and its qualities cannot be expressed to those who have not tasted it. By words, love can only be indicated or spoken of by pointing to or drawing specific attention to some of its salient aspects.

Writer Gautam Sen, in his book ‘The Mind of Swami Vivekananda: An Anthology and A Study’ explains Swamiji’s notion of love with good illustrations: “What is the nature of love? You love your baby, you say. How do you give it expression? By wanting to be with it, to play with it, by sharing its joy when it bubbles with mirth, by sensing its discomforts and tending to its needs, by keeping it away from harm, etc.-- isn’t it? These are some of the expressions of our love. What is the one common characteristic of all these acts? What is the one common motive force behind them all? The feeling of being one with, and inseparable from, the baby, isn’t it? When your baby falls sick, you do not curse it. You do not say, ‘To hell with it! Now I’ve got to waste money on a doctor! ’ However short of money you may be, you somehow try to see to it that your baby gets all the treatment it needs. Why is it so? -- Because when your baby is not well, neither are you well, for the child is you and you are the child. That is love. Do you expect anything in return for your love? Return from whom? From yourself? If a car comes dashing towards your baby do you step aside to save your own life? Would you not rather save your baby’s, even if it has to be at the cost of your own?”

Swamiji asserts that a true love i.e. love for love’s sake cannot be expressed to those who have not felt it and a true love knows no bargaining. It knows no reward. Love is always for love’s sake. To truly practice it, you must sincerely feel no expectations from those whom you love, and yet an unconditional caring. If there are people you love, allow them to be free beings. Give and don’t expect. Advise, but don’t order. Ask, but never demand. It might sound simple, but it is a lesson that may take a lifetime to truly practice. It is the secret to true love. Sri Ramakrishna also gives homely illustrations of it. He says, “Suppose you go to a wealthy man every day, but you seek no favour of him; you simply love to see him. If he wants to show you favour, you say: “No sir, I don’t need anything, I came just to see you.” This is love for its own sake and it cannot be expressed to those who have not felt it. This love is desireless devotion. You may love me or not, but I love you: this is love for it’s own sake.

‘Love the neighbor as thyself’ exhorts Jesus Christ. This is the central message of ethics and morality. But the human heart always asks a counter question: Who is my neighbor? To be true to Jesus, accordingly, one has to break down every barrier in the way of neighborliness, be it a sect or a creed, a political group or a nation-state ideology. To the heart’s searching question, ‘Who is my neighbor?’ -- the clear and convincing answer is: Everyone, irrespective of caste or creed or nationality. It is the ethical vision and urge that sustains us in our search for finding and loving our neighbors even within our own sect or group, but the vision itself and its urge cannot be confined there; it breaks down all barriers and marches on to discover the neighbor in every being. So, extend the range of your neighborly love to those outside your group and sect, says the ethical urge in man; function in and through a sect or a church if you so choose, but don’t die there,
whispers the spiritual urge. The soul in man is greater and more glorious than sects and creeds, says Vedanta, and exhorts man to cultivate this attitude and urge of spiritual dynamics and march on to the infinite and the universal, which is the true destiny of every individual, says Swami Vivekananda.

Swamiji also advises us to love even the evil-doers instead of hating them. We cannot correct the evil-doers by hating them but we can make them moral by loving them. This ideal of Swami Vivekananda is similar to the ideal of Jesus Christ, Gautam Buddha and M. K. Gandhi who taught us the ideal: “Hate the sin, not the sinner.”

It is love which makes us see God in others. Love is worship. As Swamiji says, “He who sees Shiva in the poor, in the weak, and in the diseased, really worships Shiva… He who has served and helped one poor man seeing Shiva in him, without thinking of his caste, or creed, or race, or anything, with him Shiva is more pleased than with the man who sees Him only in temples.”

Swamiji even went one step further and identified life with love. He says: “Life is love, and when a man ceases to do good to others, he is dead spiritually.” They alone live who live for others, the rest are more dead than alive -- writes Swamiji in a letter to the then Maharaja of Mysore in 1894. Therefore, all love is expansion, all selfishness is contraction; and this is true here or hereafter. He who loves lives, he who is selfish is dying.

From these remarks it follows that Swamiji’s love is not a mere wishful thinking or feeling. A person who is motivated or guided by love tries his/her best to do something positive which will alleviate the suffering of others. Love unites us with others.

Love is therefore the only law of life. It is hatred that separates man from man. It separates and destroys. According to Swamiji, man ought to love because love is existence and hatred leads to non-existence. It is life to do good, it is death not to do good to others. Ninety per cent of human brutes you see are dead, are ghosts – for none lives, my boys, but he who loves – declared Swamiji to his disciples. Scriptures and temples should not divide man because man is the most perfect temple and the most authentic Scripture in which to read the truths about this universe. Love binds, love makes for oneness. This justification sustains a confident recommendation based on personal verification. So, ‘Love never fails.’ Swamiji utters: ‘believe in the omnipotent power of love.’ He further utters: ‘Wait, money does not pay, nor name; fame does not pay, nor learning. It is love that pays; …’

Love has many angles. Swamiji makes a special mention of three of them repeatedly. According to him, love may be represented by a triangle, each of the angles of which corresponds to one of its inseparable characteristics. There can be no triangle without all its three angles and similarly, there can be no true love without its three following characteristics. The first angle of our triangle of love is: love never begs never asks for anything. The second: love knows no fear; and the third: love for love’s sake. Swamiji explains each of these three characteristics, giving illustrations – to make them obvious.
First, love never asks, it always gives. Love is no beggar. “The beggar is never happy …
We are all beggars. Whatever we do, we want a return. We are all traders. We are traders
in life, we are traders in virtue, we are traders in religion. And alas! we are also traders in
love.”

But true love is not a business relation. There is no bargaining in it. So long as
you see a man loves another only to get something from him, you know that that is not
love; it is shop keeping. Wherever there is a question of buying and selling, it is not love.
Bhakta loves the Lord because he is lovable; there is no other motive originating or
directing this divine emotion of the true devotee.

The second distinguishing feature of love is fearlessness. Love knows no fear. Love and
fear do not go together. Where there is fear, there is no love – and conversely. Fear comes
from the selfish idea of cutting one’s self off from the universe. Love and fear are
incompatible. Swamiji asks, “does the lamb love the lion? The mouse, the cat? The slave,
the master? “Slaves sometimes simulate love, but is it love? Where do you ever see love
in fear? … With love never comes the idea of fear.”

True love surpasses all fear. It is a
degradation even to worship God through fear of punishment. Love conquers naturally all
fear.

The third angle of love-triangle (as Swamiji calls) is stated in a number of forms: ‘Love
has no rival ‘, ‘ Love is its own end . It can never be the means ‘. True love knows no
rival, for in it is always embodied the lover’s highest ideal. True love never comes until
the object of our love becomes to us our highest ideal. If people have that kind of love he
becomes an eternally blessed and eternally happy person. If love is the highest ideal,
then there is nothing higher than love, and therefore it has no competitor, being supreme
itself. This means that it has no other end to serve, it is an end in itself – not means to any
other end. Love is not for the sake of anything else; it is for its own sake; it is intrinsically
valuable; it has no extrinsic justification or explanation. That is why it is called ahaituki
beyond causality or explanation. The same sense is conveyed by calling it “motiveless”.

Now, if pure love is motiveless, if it has nothing to gain, then there is no place for
seeking any return or advantage in it or in exchange for it. Thus it appears that the
significance of the first characteristic of no-want or no-seeking is not really much
different from that of the third characteristic of love’s motivelessness or being for itself.
Thus, Swamiji’s description of love makes particular mention of absence of three objects
– want, fear and motive. Not only this, the absence of quite a few other things also needs
to be noted in the negative description. They are hatred, anger and jealousy. Swamiji
utters, “It is better not to love, if loving only means hating others. That is no love. That is
hell!”

Love never denounces. It is hatred that separates man from man, but love binds.
So, there is no hate in love, no anger either. How can there be any anger in love, when
there is no seeking or expectation of return in it? Anger results from frustration of desire.
Where there is no desire, anger cannot sprout. And if hate has no place in love, nor has
jealousy. Jealousy involves hate and comparison, but love does not compare. Further,
love is effortless, spontaneous. It is effortlessly alive and energetic.

Again, love, according to Swamiji, must not be confused with attachment. Because
attachment centers round the ego, and hence it always has a motive or a purpose behind
it. But real love makes us unattached. Where there is real love, it does not rest on physical
attachment at all. Mother’s love, so called, presents a typical but curious case of strong
attachment, and the subject of antithetical evaluations on account of that. On the one
hand, as Swamiji says, “The highest of all feminine types in India is mother, higher than
wife. Wife and children may desert a man, but his mother never…” 13 On the other hand,
mother’s love is, in maximum cases, a helpless bondage, a lavishing affection on her
child. Swamiji says, “There was never a mother who did not think her child was a born
genius, the most extra ordinary child that was ever born; she dotes upon her child. Her
whole soul is in the child. The child grows up, perhaps becomes a drunkard, a brute, ill-
treats her, the more her love increases. The world lauds it as the unselfish love of the
mother, little dreaming that the mother is a born slave, she cannot help it … And this is
Maya.” 14 But if it is possible to have the total concern of motherliness without the
bondage born of attachment, then it would be love par excellence – divine – according to
Swamiji. Thus, love is something different from attachment.

The beginning of love, so to say, is the ending of sorrow. Love knows no sorrow. By
sorrow is not meant physical pain that comes from illness or from injury or from
malfunctioning of the organism. It is of psychological origin. It is mental suffering
having innumerable forms – all unpleasant. In love, all suffering disappears. So, swamiji
utters – “Love is the only thing that takes off all sorrows, the only cup by drinking of
which this disease of the world vanishes. 15

Now, the question is: How does love do that? The answer is: By its very nature, because
love is joy in unity, whereas sorrow is the result of division and disunity. Love expands
and absorbs, sorrow segregates. Therefore love can envelop sorrow – even terminate it in
its embrace or put it in its little corner to enjoy it also, so to speak. There is no set method
or procedure for it. When love comes, Swamiji asserts, “method dies.” 16 Love is not rule
bound. It can thrive only in freedom. “Love never comes until there is freedom.” 17

According to Swamiji, the highest love is sexless because sex differentiates bodies. Sheer
carnal appetite is not love – it is animal instinct. Even the supreme love, as represented in
the Radha-Krishna image, seems to involve the essence of femininity and its congruent
complement though not any physical relation. It is much easier to see that lust is not love
than to realize that love totally and necessarily excludes the body. Lust is aggressive,
exploitative – has no consideration for the other – and results in cruelty and violence. It
is inhuman and has nothing to do with love. Where it is, love is not. Swamiji excludes
lust wholesale from the category of love. He, however, grants that real love comes to us
through the love of humanity; the shadow of spiritual bliss is in this human love.

Sri Ramakrishna distinguished different levels or grades of love in terms of differences in
dispositions. In ordinary (sadharani) love, the lover seeks his own happiness, he doesn’t
care whether the other person is happy or not. That was Chandravali’s attitude towards
Krishna. In symmetrical or equal (samanjasa) love, the attitude is: Let there be my
happiness and yours too. This is quite a good condition. But the highest of all is what is
called potent or adequate (samartha) love. Here the attitude is: You be happy, whatever
may happen to me. Sri Radha had this sentiment. She was happy in Krishna’s happiness.
This is selfless love – love for love’s sake – love that seeks no return. Sri Chaitanya speaks of this pure love in his prayer. This love is also portrayed in the character of Prahlada in Indian mythology.

Swamiji makes a distinction between ordinary love and real love. According to him, all kinds of worldly love are transitory and hence, they cannot be termed as real love. A real love is selfless and unchanging and that unchanging love can only be for God. Actually, Swamiji maintains and distinguishes grades of love as Sri Ramakrishna does. At the lowest is that selfish love which only seeks pleasure from other. In this ordinary love, one only wants to be loved and be gratified by others without any desire to bring about others’ happiness. The next grade is that of mutual or interdependent love. Human love is mostly of this variety. It involves reciprocity. It is less selfish or somewhat benevolent in that along with one’s own satisfaction, others satisfaction is also sought. The highest love, however, has no regard for self; it only seeks to make the other happy. “True love “, utters Swamiji, “is all giving … it is almost impossible to love a human being like this, but it is possible to love God.” We may say that such selfless love is in the nature of great teachers and benefactors of mankind – in godly souls – whether they are explicit about God or not. The Buddha, for example, did not teach or preach anything about God, but is universally regarded as having boundless love and compassion.

The union of the soul with the supreme reality through love is called “Bhakti-Yoga”. According to Swamiji and Sri Ramakrishna, higher knowledge and pure love are one and the same, and provides the following rationale of it. According to Non-dualism (Advaita Vedanta), ultimate Reality is Sat-Chit-Ananda, Existence-Consciousness-Bliss. Bliss is the same as love. In Indian Jnana-Yoga (the Yoga of knowledge), greater stress is laid on the aspect of Consciousness, while in Bhakti-Yoga (the Yoga of devotion), Bliss or Love is emphasized . If supreme enlightenment or knowledge is attained, supreme bliss is also thereby attained, for Reality which is Consciousness is Bliss also. Following this logic, it seems reasonable to hold that knowledge and joy or love coincide not only in the highest grade, but at all the lower stages also. If knowledge and love thus go together, then love, since it is consciousness also, cannot be blind. Love would have its appropriate vision and understanding. In fact, this explains why understanding through love is deeper and more intimate than loveless apprehension. And one may come to understanding through love, or to love through understanding; the hearty way into the head or the brainy way into the heart. By and large, Sri Ramakrishna’s seems to be the soft persuasive way and Swamiji’s robust forceful way to the same unified goal. The thesis of oneness of love and understanding has ample corroboration in the Gita, where both the man of wisdom and the man of devotion are described in almost identical terms.

In truth, it is love for others that brings out the true meaning of life, for in love the sense of difference is obliterated and hence one discovers oneself in others too. Actually, how exactly love brings about harmony of being, resolving discordant notes, can never be put adequately in words because words are utterly inadequate for the task. But if one has love, in whatever measured or form, one can notice its unifying operation in life. Words can only point to, represent or verbalize this essential function of it.
According to Swamiji, love makes no distinction between man to man, it makes the whole universe as one’s own home. He gave the ultimate justification of it: we have always heard it preached; love one another. But why should I love everyone? Because they and I are one. The whole universe is one existence. Love is the joy of the unity of existence. Unity does not create any problem; problems arise in disunity because of lack of love; and therefore love, as the dynamic unifying potency, can resolve all problems. So, Swamiji utters, “Love for yourselves means love for all, love for animals, love for everything, for you are all one. It is the great faith, which will make the world better.”

This precept of Swami Vivekananda is of tremendous importance for the present human climate in which man is frequently set against man. The present day man often so seals himself in his own consciousness that his will is not in the least played upon by the needs of others. In order to get rid of this human crisis, it is absolutely necessary that man develops as well as demonstrates a proper loving care towards his fellow beings. May the profound holiness and universal love preached by Swamiji become the basic philosophy of our country and of the entire world in its search for peace and harmony.

NOTES

5. GSR, Vol-II, Pg- 766.

REFERENCES :


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Copper (Cu) is considered to be one of the first metal to be used by humans [1]. The main reason for its early discovery and use is that copper can naturally occur in relatively pure forms. Lacking modern knowledge of metallurgy, early societies, including the Mesopotamians, Egyptians, prized the metal mostly for its aesthetic qualities, using it like gold and silver for producing decorative items and ornaments and even as currency. Romans used copper lumps as money for many years [2]. So copper has been an essential material to man since pre-historic times. In fact one of the major ‘ages’ or stages of human history is named for a copper alloy, bronze. Not only copper but its many alloys have played an important role in many civilizations, from the ancient Egyptians to modern day cultures around the world [3]. The objective of this paper is to provide some key explanation on the use of copper based material in our daily life.

**Keywords**  
Copper; Water preservation; ionization; Oligodynamic effect; Disease control; Enzymes

**Full Version of paper**  
Traditional households in our country have for thousands of years (and are till today) been utilizing a simple, practical and effective method of drinking water in its most holistic way- drinking water from a copper cup or a large copper vessel where water is stored. Controversies are there but I do believe that there are some scientific explanations to store the water on copper based material for the occasion of Puja or in our normal daily use. We know that Copper is vital to our general health and cannot be manufactured by the body so we need to get our supply directly from the food we eat or drink [4]. Without copper the body would be unable to absorb that other important mineral like iron. It also helps with growth and maintaining strong bones as well as being good for healthy eyes, hair and helps against the ageing process. It is also necessary for good thyroid function, helps to reduce bad cholesterol levels and protect the body against infection. An Irish hospital is the first in the world to embrace the latest science by specifying hygienic copper door handles throughout in a bid to reduce healthcare associated infections such as MRSA (Medicine Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*), providing the best possible solid protection to its patients. St Francis Private Hospital, a 140-bed facility located in Mullingar, County Westmeath, and its associated nursing home, St Clair's, made the
Copper Alloy

Lord Vishnu on Garuda (17th – 18th Century);

Acknowledgement

Bhaktapur Museum, Nepal

decision after examining the compelling evidence from the clinical trial at Selly Oak Hospital, Birmingham, which showed that copper surfaces such as taps, toilet seats and door push plates can reduce microbial contamination by 90-100%. This bacterium Staphylococcus aureus can’t be killed by antibiotics. About 80 percent of MRSA transmission comes through surface contacts so an 18 month trial found that replacing stainless steel fittings with copper can greatly cut infection. The clinical trial was conducted at Selly Oak hospital in Birmingham. Key surfaces such as door handles, push-plates, bath taps, toilet flush handles and grab rails were changed to copper [6]. Even the pens used by the staff were of copper alloy. MRASA lives for days on stainless steel but dies within 90 minutes on copper, tests at Southampton University found. Copper can also tackle the resistant bug Clostridium difficile and could even act as a defense against bird flu. Not only it resist infection by killing microorganisms but also it’s involved in either an element or a cofactor of as many as 50 different enzymes that take part in various biological reactions within the body. These enzymes can function properly only in the presence of copper [5]. Copper is a strong antioxidant, which works in the presence of the antioxidant enzyme, superoxide dismutase, to safeguard the cell membranes from free radicals. Copper is essential for the synthesis of adenosine triphosphate, which is an energy storing molecule of the human body. The cuproenzyme, cytochrome c oxidase, affects the intracellular energy production. It acts as a catalyst in the reduction of molecular oxygen to water, during which the enzyme produces an electrical gradient used by the mitochondria to synthesize the vital energy-storing molecule, ATP. Copper vessels are widely used in Hindu pujas and rituals. The reason why copper vessels are used is that it is made from a single pure metal- copper. The ancient
belief is that vessels made from a combination of several metals are impure. They transfer these impurities into water and puja materials. The copper vessels are not an alloy or made using a combination of several metals. Other metals that are used for making puja vessels are gold and silver. As these are costly, vessels made of these are very rare. Silver vessels are used in rich homes and in temples. Hindu saints have been using copper vessels for thousands of years. They keep water in it for drinking purposes. Drinking water from copper vessel is considered healthy and is believed to improve immunity and blood circulation. Copper are known to be far more poisonous to bacteria than others, e.g. stainless steel or aluminum. When copper dissolves in water, water becomes ionic (electrolyte) as can be ascertained by its pH measurement. That is the reason the micro-organisms get killed in such water. This is called the Oligodynamic effect, as proven by research. Even today, management of Siva temple at Rameswaram uses large sized Copper vessels to store water brought from river Ganges to offer to lord Siva. Water, stored thus, stays fresh for years together. Lastly, I believe when water is 'blessed', its crystalline structure is changed, when water is blessed, the water has super healing properties and the reality is Copper drinking cups do change the taste and feel of water. The water definitely feels more energized.

References-

1. "Copper, Chemical Element – Overview, Discovery and naming, Physical properties, Chemical properties, Occurrence in nature, Isotopes"

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Highlight
Religious Harmony in the light of Swami Vivekananda and Islam
- Sk. Makbul Islam

Abstract
The people of different religions need harmonious coexistence to retain peace in this world. Different religion has taught the lesson of harmony as well as different religious personalities and social thinkers too have tried to translate harmony in life. These points should be highlighted in my paper (a speech) with particular reference to Islam and Swami Vivekananda.

Key Concepts

Full Version of Speech

“Bismillā hir rω ahmānir rω ahim”
I start with the name of God
Who is very kind and sympathetic to the entire universe.

I
INTRODUCTION
Indeed, I feel honoured and recognized to be invited to say a few words on religious harmony from the perspective of Islam. I would like to extend my gratefulness to Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission for giving this opportunity to deliver my speech from this dignified platform.

Revered Swami Chetanandaji Maharaj, the president of this session,
Respected Francis Clooney,
Venerable P. Seewalee Thera,
Prof. Arvind Rupani,
Dr. K. P Aleaz,
Sardar Swaran Singh,
Respected Monks and Brahmacharis, Sannyasinis and Brahmacarinis,
honoured believers in Sri Ramakrishna Order and devotees of all Orders present over here,
Ladies and Gentlemen …
I would like to extend cordial salutation to all of you.
It is better to admit that religious harmony is undoubtedly a wide discourse. I shall try to present some of the major points considering both Islam and Swami Vivekananda in precise way. The basic three areas to which I would like to draw your attention are:

a. What Islam implies and how Islam gives space to religious harmony?
b. How Swami Vivekananda had appreciated Islam to bring harmony?
c. A comparative appreciation between Swami Vivekananda and Islam?

I want to widen the domain of my speech because the question of religious integration in Indian context is not mere a theoretical exercise. In our cultural life, religious harmony is a conspicuous reality. Sri Ramakrishna Order has been playing responsible role in strengthening the harmony starting from colonial India until now. Sri Ramakrishna, Sarada-Ma and Swami Vivekananda had visualized and materialized harmony in practical life. That is why, I want to present my speech on ‘Religious Harmony in the Light of Swami Vivekananda and Islam’ considering the Indian context in general.

Before I enter into the main discussion, I would like to offer my deep respect to Swami Vivekananda on the closing of the sesquicentenary celebration. I consider him to be a great soul personified to advocate an alternative vision of harmony and integration in a critical period of time when part of our mind was shrouded by doubts and confusion.

II. ISLAM AND HARMONY

Islam and Mussalman:
At the outset it would be worth mentioning that ‘Islam’ is an ancient religion which owes its origin in the monotheistic vision of Prophet Abraham (Ibrahim Al’a’sallam). Islam was widely spread in the hands of Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH)1 (570-632 AD). Islam implies a comprehensive life-system that leads man towards ‘truth’, harmony, and peace. Islam speaks of a controlled life – both spiritual and material (Gani, p.265). If anybody embraces Islam as religion, he is called ‘Mussalman’ (Gani, p.500). A Muslim who possesses both humanity (Insāniyāt) and universal brotherhood (Ikhwāniyāt) is known as “Mumin Mussalman” (Gani, p.50). Islam says – have faith in God and surrender unto God. There is no underlying complexity in it.

Believing in God is the ‘straight and simple way’ (i'dinā’ sirātmustākim…; Quran, 1:5). To the best of my understanding, he who believes in God, and respectfully surrenders unto God contains the essence of Islam in his heart. But, actually ‘Islam’ is a state of spiritual attainment. One has to attain ‘Islam’ through ‘Ibadat’ (Sadhana). Whenever anybody attains he/she becomes ‘Sthita-dhi’-muni’ or ‘sthita-prajna’.

Tawhid and Advaita:
The concept of ‘Divine Unity’ (Tawhid) of Islam is a space of spiritual realization to harmonize the difference of opinions. The spirit of ‘Tawhid’ and ‘Advaita’ of orient may be perceived as complementary to each other. The ‘Ekamevdvitiyam’ of Vedanta and ‘Wāhādāhu la sarikālā’ of Islam may be understood in the light of harmony. God is one, but the manifestation of God is plural. The essence of both Tawhid and Advaita taught us
to perceive the ‘Ultimate Supreme One’ amongst many. This consciousness – is the threshold of harmony. God is One and Undivided. Mankind is also One and undivided.

Oneness of mankind:
The idea of ‘oneness of mankind’ is mentioned in Holy Quran. Surah Al-Baqara says:
“Kā-nānnā-su ummātō wā-hi’ddāštā ...”
“Mankind was one single nation ...” (Quran, Surah 2:213)
In another Surah of Al-Quran, Allah said:
“Yā-āiyuhānnā-su innā khālīqūnākum min jāokāriu wa unsā ...”
“... I have created you from one man and woman” (Quran, Surah 49:13)
The concept of ‘oneness of God’ leads to the concept of ‘oneness of mankind’. Quran says:
“wāmnā kā-nān nā-su illā ummātāā wa-hidātān fā’kh tālāf...”
“Man was one nation, ...they have made disagreements amongst themselves” (Quran, Surah 10:19)

The spirit of harmony in Islam:
The world has witnessed that misinterpretation of ‘Dharma’ has brought about ‘communalism’. But, communalism is highly condemned in Islam. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) mentioned that one who slanders other community or nation is a ‘debased person’ (Gani, p.583). There were many religions (Christian, Judaism and Paganism) in Arabia when Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) preached Islam. They were allowed to practice their religion along with accompanying rituals in the state of Madina. The ‘The Constitution of Madina’ (622 - AD) which was formulated under the supervision of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) gave emphasis on inter-religious amity (Rafique Ullah, pg. 63). Some of the main points of the charter were –
  a. All the communities who will sign on the charter will form ‘one nation’.
  b. The Jews, the Muslim and the other religious group will enjoy freedom to perform their religion in Madina Republic without any interference by anybody.
  c. Killing, bloodshed violence and torture - were declared prohibited within the territory of Madina.
The life of prophet Mohammad (PBUH) reveals that he always wanted to maintain a harmonious relationship with the believers of other religion. This was in conformity to the verse of Holy Quran –
“lā ik’ hā fiddin kāttā bāʾī yānā’ rushdu mināl gā’yi...”
Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from error...; (Quran, 2:256).

III.
SWAMIJI ON ISLAM
In the third part of my speech I would like to refer some of the major points to bring forth how Swami Vivekananda appreciated Islam. The issue of harmony from the perspective of Islam, technically has two aspects –
  a. What Islam thinks of religious harmony (which is already mentioned) and
  b. What non-Islam personalities think of Islam with an aim to bring about harmony
We have to consider both the spheres of this discourse.

**Swamiji’s family members used to read Quran:**
The writings of Mahendranath Dutta, the brother of Swamiji says that along with the other religious scriptures, Quran and Bible were read in their house (Dutta, p.48-51).

**Swamiji was acquainted with Qualema Tayyeb in childhood:**
Swamiji was acquainted with *Kalema Tayyeb* in his childhood. One of the Muslim clients of his lawyer father used to chant:

\[\text{“Lā-ilāhā illāllāhū āhō Mohāmmādur Rasulullāh.”}\]

Child Narendranath was very close to him and there is no doubt that he knew the theological significance of this *Qualema Tayyeb* and the importance of Rashul in Islam (Basu, vol-5, p.19-20).

**Swamiji considered Muslim girl as ‘Virgin Umā’:**
Even in case of his *Sadhana*, Swamiji gladly accepted the girl child of a Muslim houseboat owner as ‘Virgin Umā’. The incident took place on 12th and 13th August, 1898 in Srinagar. Sister Nivedita had recorded this incident in her writings (Nivedita, p. 121).

**Swamiji gave instruction to teach Muslim boys:**
Swamiji gave clear instruction to Swami Akhandananda to admit Muslim students in *Sarghachi Ashram* in Murshidabad. Swamiji wrote:

\[\text{“You must admit Mohammedan boys too, never tamper their religion.”}\]

\[\text{“Admit boys of all religion – Hindu, Mohammedan, Christian or anything ... and ... teach them the universal side of religion”}\]

(Vivekananda-1, p. 367 and 368; Letter no - 167).

Here, the ‘universal side of religion’ implies the common values of Hindu and Islam. The common values stands on the philosophical semblance of Sanatan and Muslim order.

**Swami Vivekananda on Quran:**
Swami Vivekananda considered the text of Al-Quran to be uninterpolated. Swamiji told:

\[\text{“There is one thing very remarkable about the Koran. Even to this day it exists as it was found eleven hundred years ago. It retains its pristine purity and is free from interpolations”} \]

(Ín Historic Rajputana, Life, pg. 265)

Swamiji believed that the words of Quran being the words of Almighty Allah are eternal and free from any interpolation. In Quran, Allah has said:

\[\text{“inna anjalnahu fi lailatil quadir”}\]

Certainly I have revealed the message (of Quran) in the *Night of Power (Glorious Night)*

(Quran, Sura Quadr, 97:1)

\[\text{and}\]

\[\text{“inna nahnu naz-zalnaz zikra wa inna llahu laha fizun”}\]
Certainly I have sent down the message (of Quran) 
And I assuredly protect it (from corruption). 
(Quran, Sura Hijar, 15:9)

What Swamiji mentioned about Quran is really justified in Islam. The term ‘pristine purity’ as used by Swamiji not only applicable for the ‘text’ of Al-Quran, but also applicable for the entire transcendental space of Quran where ‘Truth’ and ‘Wisdom’ remained codified without any interruption.

Swamiji mentioned about Quaba Sharif
While delivering lecture on ‘Bhakti’ in Sialkot, Punjab, Swamiji told:
“Among Mohammedans the prophets and great and noble persons are worshipped, and they turn their faces towards the Caaba when they pray” (Bhakti; Vivekananda-2, pg. 303).
What Swamiji mentioned about ‘Kabba’ is absolutely right. During Id and Bakrid Namaz we say –
“… mutāwddjehān ilā jihātil qābānī shārifātē allāh hu-ākbār”.

Swamiji’s speech on Prophet Mohammed:
1. Swamiji’s words on Prophet Muhammad(PBUH) on 25th March 1900 conspicuously speaks of his towering respect for the Prophet of Islam (Works, vol-1, pg. 481-484).
2. Swamiji’s speech on Prophet Muhammad(PBUH) in California is an excellent reference to discover Swamiji’s psyche of Islam. Some of his works may be quoted here –
   “And then comes Mohammed, the messenger of equality. Mohammed was the Prophet of equality, of the brotherhood of man…” (Speech on the Great Teachers of the World; Pasadena, California, 3rd February 1900).

Swamiji on Muslim conquest
The history of Muslim conquest has noted many adverse realities In India – I admit. But the history of Muslim conquest written in the line of colonial view too reveals some deliberate ‘fabrication’. In India, Islam was spread with sword and it caused gross damage to India - are some common historical conclusion. It is a common notion that Islam was spread by way of sword and fire. Swamiji did not accept this notion. He commented:
“It is not the sword that did it all. It would be the height of madness to think it was all the work of sword and fire” (The Future of India, Vivekananda-2, pg. 224).
Contrary to the common notion, Swamiji evaluated Muslim Conquest (in India) in a positive way. He said:
“the Mohammedan conquest gave us many good things no doubt;…” (Lecture delivered in Triplicance Literary society, Madras; Vivekananda-2, pg. 196).
Practical Vedanta, Equality, Islam and Swamiji: What ‘good things’ Swamiji perceived in Islam? The most significant point which attracted Swami Vivekananda was – equality of Islam In his speech on Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) Swamiji mentioned:

“[Mohammadanism] came as a message for the masses. The first message was equality…” (Works, Vol.1, p. 483; Speech of San Francisco, 25 March 1900).

Swami Vivekananda himself had descended to promote equality and harmony in contemporary centuries. He himself being a Vaidantic wanted to bring about equality in social life. Swamiji noticed that Islam amongst the religions could achieve such equality in practice. He wrote this to Muhammad Sarfaraz Hussain (10th June, 1898). Swamiji told:

 “… my experience is that if ever any religion approached to this equality in appreciable manner, it is Islam and Islam alone” (Vivekananda-1, pg. 379, Letter no-175)

While talking on “Universal Religions: Its Realization” Swamiji Said:

“Islam makes its followers all equal – so, that, you see, is the peculiar excellence of Mohammedanism.” (Speech delivered in Universalist Church, Pasadena, California, 28 January 1900; Works, Vol-2, p. 371)

Swamiji in search of Cultural Identity of the ‘Muslim of India’:
It is very interesting to note that Swami Vivekananda had appreciated ‘The Muslim of India’ with their cultural distinction. Swamiji said:

“Educated Muslims are almost all Sufis – they cannot be differentiated from the Hindu” (Vivekananda, vol-9; p. 439).

Swamiji wanted to give the Muslims of India a new Cultural Identity. In India, Muslims share some age-old elements of Sanatan culture. From the point of religion they are Islam, but from the point of culture, they are more close to Hindus. The Hindus and Muslims of India are mostly cultural twins. This observation had important significance in colonial period.

Vedanta-Islam Integration:
Swamiji’s idea of ‘Vedanta-Islam’ integrity is an exceptional model to accelerate the process of religious harmony in Indian context. Actually Swamiji wanted proper harmonization of the essence of Veda, Bible and Quran (Vivekananda, vol-8, p.39). But he gave special emphasis on Hindu-Islam harmony by saying ‘Vedantic brain and Islamic body’.

Why Swami Vivekananda wanted to make a bridge between Vedanta and Islam? We can explore some more points to explain the question.

Please allow me to render the following arguments:

a. the philosophical semblance between Vedanta (Ekamevadwitiyam) and Islam (..Wahada hu La-sarikala).
b. the ‘Practical Vedanta’ and ‘Practical Islam’ are not far away from each other

c. Swamijis dream of ‘spiritual unity’ (Ekamevadwitiyam/Tawhid/La-sarik).
d. the cultural similarity between Hindu and Indian Muslims

e. ‘Islamic body’ often means the institutional form of Islam (the social cohesion of Islam)

f. historiographic significance in colonial reign

The answer is hidden in the letter written to Mohammad Sarfaraj Hossain. Swamiji believed that Islam could achieve ‘equality’ in practical life. Swamiji wrote:

“… my experience is that if ever any religion approached to this equality in appreciable manner, it is Islam and Islam alone” (Vivekananda-1, pg. 379)

Actually, Swamiji wanted harmonious bond of ‘practical Vedanta’ and ‘practical Islam’. The term ‘practical Islam’ was also coined by Swamiji in the same letter (Vivekananda-1, pg. 379).

IV.

SWAMIJI FROM THE POINT OF ISLAM

Before I conclude my speech, I would like to evaluate Islam and Swamiji in the light of comparative appreciation.

Service for Mankind: Islam and Swamiji:

Swamiji’s idea of ‘service for mankind’ is highly supported in Islam. Islam has taught to serve men in the name of Allah. Swami Vivekananda on the other hand taught us to serve men with Shiva Consciousness. Both Islam and Swamiji wanted to serve mankind from the point of spirituality and God-consciousness. In this regard, I would like to add that Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) extended his untiring service to those distressed people who suffered in the war known as - ‘Havab-i-fuzzar’ (‘Unlawful War’). He was given the name ‘Al-Ameen’ for his cordial service (Rafique Ullah, pg. 39). He also formed an organization to extend service to mankind known as “Halful Fuzzul” (‘Oath for Welfare’) in 595 AD (Rafique Ullah, pg. 39).

True Islam – Swamiji’s appreciation:

What true Islam implies? Swami Vivekananda subscribed to that ‘Islam Sadhana’ cannot be completed without Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). He remarked: ‘Islam without Prophet hardly makes any meaning’ (Rachana, Vol-3, p. 203). Swamiji’s remark is very significant. Islam is incomplete without Prophet. Swamiji considered Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to be the ‘Acharya’ (Sad Guru) of Islam. This hidden message is codified in Qualema Tayyeb –

“Lā ilāhā ʾIllālāḥo Mohammādur Rasulullāḥī”.

Rasul is the Sat-Guru or Acharya in Islam.

Character Building:

Islam, as its integral part has taught men to build character and capacity. Man is blessed by Allah. He can do great and become noble. To achieve this goal one has to build character and has to do all noble works in the name of Allah. Education, honesty, perseverance, modesty, patience, sincerity and service to mankind are the basic teachings.
of Islam. This is ‘\textit{Karma Yoga of Islam}’. Swami Vivekananda also believed that man is ‘potentially divine’ and he can achieve mighty goal by building character.

\textbf{Colonial strategy of Division: Swamiji’s Remedy:}
We have witnessed that India was divided into two on the basis of “\textit{Two-Nation Theory}”. We were successful in resisting \textit{Bengal-division} (\textit{Banga-Bhanga}) in 1911, but we failed to resist division of India in 1947. The land and mind of India was divided into two on the basis of Hindu and Muslim. Interestingly Swamiji did not allow himself to surrender unto any such narrow religious division as it was deliberately indulged in the then colonial politics. Swami Vivekananda has given an \textit{alternative dynamic model of harmony} by pronouncing the bond of ‘Vedanta-Islam’. Swamiji said:

“For our own motherland a junction of the two great systems, Hinduism and Islam - Vedanta brain and Islam body – is the only hope.” (Vivekananda-1, p. 380).

\textbf{Samiji’s idea of ‘Same Spiritual Tune’}
In his lecture on ‘The Common Base of Hinduism’, Swamiji had made a historical comment. He told:

“A nation of India must be a union of those whose hearts beat to the same spiritual tune” (The Common Base of Hinduism; Vivekananda-2, pg. 314)

Swamiji’s dream of Vedanta-Islam integration was also a means to bring about ‘same spiritual tune’ among the Hindus and Muslims for remaking a glorious \textit{Bharatbarsha} – India.

\textbf{V. Conclusion}
In conformity to the teachings of Guru Sri Ramakrishna and \textit{Ma-Sarada}, Swamiji accepted all religions as true. In his first lecture of Parliament of Religions in Chicago, Swamiji mentioned:

“I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. \textbf{We believe not only in universal toleration, but we accept all religions as true.}.”

(Speech delivered in World's Parliament of Religions on 11\textsuperscript{th} September, 1893; Chicago)

I think, the expression “\textit{we accept all religions as true}” - is not merely some good words pronounced by Swamiji, this is the voice and vision of Vedanta which has created an open space to nurture religious harmony. What actually harmony implies? Where harmony lies? Harmony implies proper harmonization of ideas and vision. Harmony develops in one mind. Islam says, one has to make a healthy mind through proper education, wide vision and \textit{Ibadat}. A man having harmony in his own consciousness can bring harmony in society. I believe, \textit{Sanatan Dharma}, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Jainism, Shikhism and all the major religious values together speaks of harmony and peace.
So far as Swami Vivekananda and Islam is concerned, we really aspire for Vedanta-Islam bond in our collective consciousness to make a glorious India. Cordial inter-relationship of religions which Sri Ramakrishna Order has dreamt is undoubtedly a ‘mark’ in our national and spiritual life. I, from the core of my heart would like to ‘press toward the mark’.

With these few words, I pray – Let there be peace and harmony. Let God’s blessing be with you for ever –

Āssālum ālāikum wā rahamatullāhi wā barākātu

NOTES
1. PBUH: The abbreviation implies “Peace be upon him”. It is decorum to pronounce the sentence “sallālāhu ālāihe wā d'sallām” along with the name of Hazrat Muhammad(PBUH). The English meaning of the sentence is Peace be upon him(PBUH). When we write the name of prophet we write like – “Hazrat Mohammad(PBUH).”
2. Free English translation from Bengali by the speaker.

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Abstract

In Ira Levin’s 1967 novel, ‘Rosemary’s Baby’ (also made into a film), Rosemary is projected as a not so powerful figure at the beginning of the narrative. She is allotted the conventional female role of a housewife who is not supposed to take part in decision-making. In fact it is she who has a strong belief that her husband, Guy, will ‘think of something’ whenever they face a difficulty. That is to endorse the fact that thinking is a man’s job. Even during the rape scene, Rosemary is lying unconscious and powerless to react. This powerlessness of the ‘womb’ factor leads us to the middle section of the narrative where Rosemary’s fear for the safety of her unborn baby is termed as pre-partum depression (a kind of hysteria) by her husband. It must be noted here that ‘hysteria’ derives from the Greek word for ‘womb’. Thus traditionally women are linked with hysteria more often than men and Elaine Showalter demonstrates why insanity has been and still is considered ‘a female malady’.

My focus in this paper will be how Rosemary transforms herself from an ordinary, powerless housewife to a powerful mother-figure; though in-between her transformation or rather growth she encounters a maddening experience of pregnancy. It is interesting to note that when Rosemary comes to know that her child is a progeny of Satan, she thinks of killing it. But soon she realizes that it is ‘her’ baby and agrees to nurse it. This change that she has brought upon herself is internal and is not influenced by patriarchy (as nursing of the baby is considered a woman’s task according to patriarchal norms); for her decision to nurse her yellow-eyed infant comes from her intense desire to satisfy her own maternal feelings. She starts to show intense possessiveness for her baby and soon Satan’s Adrian becomes Rosemary’s Andrew. This show of excessive love for the so-called devil’s child may seem a kind of mad gesture. But I would rather like to point out that the transformative process of Adrian to Andrew makes Rosemary’s triumph over Satan (who is also a male figure) in particular and patriarchal oppression in general more striking.

Key Words

Women, madness, pregnancy
Madness and motherhood are linked together very often. But seldom are the two related in a positive kind of way. What has struck me most about ‘Rosemary’s Baby’ is its presentation of the potential of madness triggering a wave of power in a mother. My focus in this paper will be how Rosemary, the protagonist, transforms herself from an ordinary, powerless housewife to a powerful mother-figure; though in between her transformation or rather growth she encounters a maddening experience of pregnancy.

In Ira Levin’s 1967 novel, ‘Rosemary’s Baby’ (also made into a film by Roman Polansky in 1968), Rosemary is projected as a not so powerful figure at the beginning of the narrative. She is allotted the conventional female role of a housewife who is not supposed to take part in decision-making. In fact it is she who has a strong belief that her husband, Guy, will “think of something” (part1, chap.1, p.10) whenever they face a difficulty. That is to endorse the fact that thinking is a man’s job. Therefore, initially it seems Rosemary has complete trust on her husband and she puts complete faith upon him. Moreover it is Guy whose decision matters most when the planning of having a baby occurs. Guy is so engrossed with his career that he does not have time for all this. Therefore when he says, “Let’s have a baby…” (part1, chap.7, p.100), Rosemary is surprised. After a while she becomes overjoyed thinking of becoming a mother. But soon her sense of joy is transformed into a nightmare. She is duped by her own husband. Karyn Valerius says ‘Rosemary’s Baby’ “is a story of violence, deceit, and misappropriation of a woman’s body by people she trusts that makes pregnancy a Gothic spectacle”. Guy has sold his soul to the Devil for attaining success in his career. For Valerius it is “a Faustian story of destructive ambition”. He has entered into a pact with Minnie and Roman Castevet, who lead a coven of witches and are his next door neighbours. The terms of the pact implies that Rosemary’s womb will be taken lease and she will be the begetter of the devil’s son. It is questionable why the Castevets first approached Guy and not Rosemary herself. Does this indicate anything? Does it mean that a man can be swayed more easily than a woman? Is a man powerless to resist the temptation? I would say, yes, it seems that Rosemary here in a way is portrayed as a more powerful woman than her husband. The fact that she is not approached by the Castevets for participating in their devilish plan indicates she would not have succumbed to their wish like her husband. Guy has fallen prey to the devilish plan because he wants success in his career. On the contrary, Rosemary has fallen prey to Guy’s motives because she earnestly wants to be a mother. Interestingly, at the end of the novel Rosemary is transformed into a powerful mother figure who does not let anyone come between her and her child.

The above transformation is not without a period of transition where we find things and events happening to her. At the beginning of the novel we find that Rosemary is raped by Satan in her half-conscious state in the baby-making night. Even here she lies powerless to react:

This is no dream, she thought. This is real, this is happening. Protest woke in her eyes and throat, but something covered her face… (part1, chap.8, p.116)
The next morning Guy tells her that he made love to her in a “necrophile sort of way” (part1, chap.9, p.119) as she had passed out. Lucy Fisher states “That she is unconscious during intercourse, mocks woman’s designated coital stance: passive and undemanding”

Rosemary says to Guy that the baby making thing is “supposed to be shared, not one awake and one asleep” (part1, chap.9, p.120). This seems the first instance of complaint from her side and also marks the beginning of her attaining power. She does not like the fact that Guy has taken “only her body without her soul or self or she-ness” (part1, chap.9, p.121). She becomes engrossed with disturbing thoughts:

She felt a disturbing presence of overlooked signals just beyond memory, signals of a shortcoming in his love for her, of a disparity between what he said and what he felt. He was an actor; could anyone know when an actor was true and not acting?

It would take more than a shower to wash away these thoughts. (part1, chap.9, p.121)

Actually these thoughts are naturally coming to her as a result of whatever has happened to her. But she is constantly told by people around her that her thoughts are not normal. And from this point of the narrative onwards the onset of madness begins.

Rosemary becomes pregnant. She “was too fired with joy and wonder” (part1, chap.10, p.142). She makes up her mind that if it will be a boy she will name him ‘Andrew’. Later at the end we will find that the naming of the child will display how much strong she has become. She becomes so protective about the unborn baby that she sleeps with “her hands on her stomach shielding the embryo inside her” (part1, chap.10, p.143). But here lies the irony. She does not know what actually she is carrying inside her. Fisher quotes Phyllis Chesler “Last night I dreamed I gave birth to a monster, myself...Maybe it’s Rosemary’s baby in there”.

But would that (the monster baby) really matter much? Had Rosemary known the truth would she have killed the baby? “Mother Slays Baby and Self at Bramford” (part3, chap.2, p.302)- would that headline ever appear in the newspaper? Is there a possibility of Rosemary becoming a Lamia (a child-eating daemon) or she would rather be like Martha Ray of “Thorn” (in this poem called ‘Thorn’, Wordsworth suggests that the ‘unborn infant’ turns Martha sane). These questions will find their answers in part 3 of the novel (which will focus on the title of my paper and is discussed later).

Next we come across the middle section of the narrative which deals with Rosemary’s maddening experience of pregnancy. She is given mysterious drinks and soon she begins to develop “abdominal pains of an alarming sharpness” (part2, chap.1, p.150). Dr. Sapirstein, her obstetrician (who is one of the devil’s associates) makes her believe that everything happening to her is normal and there is nothing to be worried about. The pain has made her confined to the apartment just like mental patients who are institutionalized in the asylums. We find:

The pain settled down to a constant presence, with no respite whatever. She endured it and lived with it...There was no going out with Joan or Elise, no sculpture class or shopping. She ordered groceries by phone and stayed in the apartment. (part 2, chap.1, p.152)

Meanwhile she starts losing weight and looks terrible. The pain is not stopping as:
The pain grew worse, grew so grinding that something shut down in Rosemary—some center of resistance and remembered well-being—and she stopped reacting, stopped mentioning pain to Dr. Sapirstein, stopped referring to pain ever in her thoughts. Until now it had been inside her; now she was inside it; pain was the weather around her, was time, was the entire world. Numbed and exhausted, she began to sleep more, and to eat more too—more nearly raw meat. (part2, chap.4, p.179)

Rosemary’s fear for the safety of her unborn baby begins to develop now. She tells to Guy: “Something is wrong with me” (part2, chap.4, p.182). She is tensed about eating raw meat and senses it abnormal. But all her apprehensions are checked by Dr. Sapirstein’s words. It is after when she has read the book ‘All of them witches’ that she expresses her fear of Roman and Minnie to her husband:

“Yes! Yes! Maniacs who think they have magic power, who think they’re real storybook witches, who perform all sorts of crazy rituals and practices because they’re sick and crazy maniacs!” (part2, chap.7, p.226)

Fisher states ‘for RhonaBerenstein the film reflects the “horrifying status of motherhood in American patriarchal culture”’.

Rosemary’s words are not taken heed of and her fear is termed as pre-partum depression by Sapirstein. Guy says:

“‘You were crazy’, he said. ‘You were really kapow out of your mind. It happens sometimes in the last couple of weeks. That’s what Abe says. He has a name for it. Prepartum I-don’t-know, some kind of hysteria.’” (part 3, chap.1, p. 278)

It must be noted here that ‘hysteria’ derives from the Greek word for ‘womb’. Thus traditionally women are linked with hysteria more often than men and Elaine Showalter demonstrates why insanity has been and still is considered ‘a female malady’.

Rosemary goes through an unnatural childbirth and delivers the baby or rather she is made to deliver the baby. In other words, she remains only a passive agent in all the events until now. From the conception to the delivery the whole process was planned beforehand by the Castevets and her husband. Valerius says “Rosemary’s exploitation by her husband and the coven, who coldly pursue their own interests in her future child without regard for her desires or well-being, might be read as an indictment of the more routine ways sexist social relations expropriate women’s reproductive labour”. But now after the baby is born, we find a certain amount of change or transformation in Rosemary. When she is told that the baby is dead she expresses her strong emotions: “I don’t believe you. You’re both lying.” (part 3, chap.1, p. 278)

Her mind has become active. As Fisher quotes Leifer: “Women commonly beg[in] to view the outside world as potentially threatening. They bec[ome] more cautious in their activities, fear[ing] that they might be harmed or attacked”. For Leifer, this is not a pathological symptom but a protective stance that reflects realistic concerns for safety. She senses something is amiss when she hears a baby crying somewhere. She becomes sure that her baby is alive and she has been cheated by her husband. The narrative recounts:
She felt stronger and more wide-awake. Hang on, Andy! I’m coming! She had learned her lesson with Dr. Hill. This time she would turn to no one, would expect no one to believe her and be her savior. (part 3, chap.2, pp.285-286)

Her motherly instinct enables her to find her baby. She decides:
This time she would do it alone, would go in there and get him herself, with her longest and sharpest kitchen knife to fend away those maniacs. (part 3, chap.2, p.286)
She finds the secret way to the Castevet’s apartment and arrives at the room where the baby is kept. The narrative records:
The thought of her baby lying helpless amid sacrilege and horror brought tears to Rosemary’s eyes. (part 3, chap.2, p.293)

But she is now powerful enough to withstand it:
She shut her eyes tight to stop the tears, said a quick Hail Mary, and drew together all her resolve and all her hatred too; hatred of Minnie, Roman, Guy, Dr. Sapirstein—of all of them who had conspired to steal Andy away from her and make their loathsome uses of him. (part 3, chap.2, p.293)

It is interesting to note that when Rosemary comes to know that her child is a progeny of Satan, she thinks of killing it. But soon she realizes that “he was her baby, no matter who the father was” (part 3, chap.2, p.303). Initially she hates the yellow eyes of the baby, but the ‘mother’ in her soon starts to like the cute chin of the baby. Thus the final acceptance of the baby comes when she says: “…it (milk) comes in mothers, and I’m yours.” (part 3, chap.2, p.306)
According to her:
He couldn’t be all bad, he just couldn’t. Even if he was half Satan, wasn’t he half her as well, half decent, ordinary, sensible human being? If she worked against them, exerted a good influence to counteract their bad one… (part 3, chap.2, p.306)

It is praiseworthy that Rosemary has gained the power of at least thinking of exerting a good influence to counteract the evil. Finally she agrees to nurse her baby. Valerius points out ‘this is a heroic gesture in Ginsburg’s terms which entails self-sacrifice and “acceptance of the responsibilities of nurturance despite problematic circumstances”’.
Her choice may seem gendered as nursing the baby is considered a woman’s task according to patriarchal norms. It may seem that she has surrendered herself to the rules of patriarchy when she abides by Roman’s words: “be a real mother to Adrian” (part 3, chap.2, p.299). But according to me that is not the case. Rosemary’s decision to nurse the yellow-eyed infant is not influenced by patriarchy. It comes from her intense desire to satisfy her own maternal feelings.
Valerius says ‘for Marcus, the ending betrays the feminist implications of the narrative “in favour of an image of sacred motherhood that neutralizes Rosemary’s [feminist] paranoia”’.

It is not that Rosemary’s seduction by motherhood is a profane parody of sacred maternity as Valerius points out. It is simply that maternal love has overpowered her dislike for the yellow-eyed infant. Still she shows her intense hatred for Guy by spitting
on his face; in a way she rejects the very patriarchal basis. Nonetheless she starts to like her baby as she declares:

It’s not your fault. I’m angry at them, because they tricked me and lied to me. (part3, chap.2, p.305)

She starts to show intense possessiveness for her baby and disavows the view that the infant should be named Adrian. Instead she clearly declares to Roman that she would name him Andrew. Earlier when Rosemary was asked by Roman “Aren’t you His mother?” (part3, chap.2, p.304) she remained silent. But now she powerfully answers “He’s my child, not yours” (part3, chap.2, p.307). Therefore gradually Satan’s Adrian becomes Rosemary’s Andrew and there lies the symbolic significance of the title of the novel. This show of excessive love for the so-called devil’s child may seem a mad gesture. But I would rather like to point out that the transformative process of Adrian to Andrew makes Rosemary’s triumph over Satan (who is also a male figure) in particular and patriarchal oppression in general more striking.

Beauvoir said “one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman”\(^\text{15}\). Keeping with this statement, Rosemary was not born with maternal qualities rather she becomes a mother at the point when she agrees to nurse her baby. Power of a mother seems to have triumphed over all evils. It is interesting to note that Rosemary has acquired this power after going through the maddening experience of pregnancy. Though madness is generally considered to have a negative impact, here it makes Rosemary grow stronger resulting in her inner growth of character which makes her able to fight back.

We may find echoes of ‘Rosemary’s Baby’ in a Bollywood film called ‘Kahaani’\(^\text{16}\) as it also explores themes of feminism and motherhood in a male dominated Indian society. Feigned pregnancy enables VidyaBagchi (the heroine) to fulfill her mission of avenging her husband’s death. This episode establishes the power of motherhood in a patriarchal society. The ‘mad with revenge’ motif empowers her to arrange for the justice herself that the legal system fails to deliver. Therefore Vidya and Rosemary both become symbols of powerful mother figures.

The novel is more explicit than the film version as the former handles the theme of establishing the power of Rosemary more prominently. In the film, Polansky does not show Rosemary talking with her baby as is evident in the last pages of the novel. Also the film omits the naming episode of the infant from Adrian to Andrew. The reason for this indirect approach may be suggested by the fact that perhaps Polansky left it to the readers to delve deep into Rosemary’s intentions (of nurturing her baby) when the camera zoomed in on Rosemary’s face at the closure of the film.

End Notes
3. Ibid. 118


6. Lamia- In ancient Greek mythology, Lamia was a beautiful queen of Libya who became a child-eating daemon. See- Wikipedia

7. In Wordsworth’s ‘Thorn’ it is suggested that before Martha Ray became pregnant people described her as crazy but Wordsworth also suggests the unborn baby brought “Her senses back again.”


15. The famous sentence of Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*


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Editor-in-Chief: Dr. Sk. Makbul Islam
News and Information
News and Information-1

International Seminar on Swami Vivekananda

- Amrita Bhattacharyya

An International Seminar held in Belur Math, Howrah, India on 28th January 2014 on the occasion of 150th celebration of Swami Vivekananda. A Parliament of Religion was held on this occasion. Dr. Sk. Makbul Islam was invited to represent Islam religion in this Parliament. He spoke on “Religious Harmony in the light of Swami Vivekananda and Islam”. In his speech he pointed out the space of harmony in Islam, Swami Vivekananda’s view on Islam with particular reference to how Swami Vivekananda had tried to create Sanatan-Islam spiritual bond for a stronger India.

News and Information-2

Ph. D. Awarded

- Amrita Bhattacharyya

The Department of Bengali of Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda University (RKMVU) has produced 2 Ph. D. candidates in 2014. Bodhisatwa Gupta worked on “Rabindra Katha Sahitye Nimnabargiya Manab Jiban” (Subaltern Life in Rabindranath Tagore’s Novel and Short stories) under the supervision of Dr. Sk. Makbul Islam.

Tapas Saha worked on “Bangla Sahitye Grantha Chitram” (Illustration in Bengali Literature) under the supervision of Swami Shastrajnananda. Both the candidates will receive their certificates in a Convocation going to be held on 4th July 2014.
**KURSA organized National Seminar in Kalyani University**

- Sk. Makbul Islam

*Kalyani University Research Scholars’ Association* (KURSA) organized a 2-day National Seminar on “Interdisciplinary Approaches in Science, Humanities and Culture” in Visyasagar Sabhagriha, Administrative Building, Kalyani University during 28th – 29th May 2014. The lectures were arranged thematically to present the diverse discourse. Apart from Inaugural session and Valedictory session, lectures were delivered on:

i. Chemical Science
ii. Indian History
iii. Physical Science
iv. Social Science
v. Earth Science
vi. Physics
vii. Linguistics
viii. Life Science and
ix. Indian Folk

Scholars from University of Calcutta, Indian Statistical Institute, University of Burdwan, IGNOU IIP Kolkata and University of Hyderabad had sent papers for the seminar. A ‘Proceedings’ containing the abstract of the papers has also been published on this occasion. All the speakers together had given emphasis on interdisciplinary approach in understanding knowledge.

It is also commendable that the Research Scholars’ Association of the university has successfully materialized such a hectic task of holding a National Seminar. I congratulate KURSA for holding the seminar.
Photo Gallery
Dr. Asutosh Bhattacharyya

A legendary figure in initiating Folklore Studies in Bengal.

He is delivering lecture in Darbhanga Hall,
University of Calcutta

Photo:
Dr. Subhas Chandra Banerjee
Former Secretary, Arts and Commerce
University of Calcutta