

TEXTBOOK REGIMES

a feminist critique of nation and identity

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to interview a sugarcane farmer. She however remains dependant on her technology-wielding cameraman who directs the farmer to stand by his field and smile. Here the tensions between the rural and urban world are quite evident as is the appropriation of singular, success stories from the villages as media bytes. The city people politely turn down the farmer's request to visit his house and also peremptorily order him to put on his vest and pose for the camera. This framing of the rural world only serves to reinforce it as distant and different from the technologised realm of the city. As such it is consistent with the older attitudes expressed in the pieces discussed above, although it tries to introduce a newer and more contemporary context.

Nation

The Bengali Nation and Woman

The importance of the nation and the peculiar way in which it is represented in the Bangla textbooks has much to do with the way that the syllabus enjoins the compulsory inclusion of pieces from the independence movement which construct the idea of the nation, nationalism, patriotism primarily in the light of the freedom struggle. In the booklet laying out the guidelines to the new secondary syllabus introduced in 2005, there is an injunction to include pieces on 'swadeshprem' (patriotism) and 'swadhinata sangram' (freedom struggle) along with 'Pashchimbanger jananjibon' (life in West Bengal) both in the compulsory Bangla textbook as well as in the reader. The guideline for the compulsory secondary text advises the inclusion of a prose piece on the life of a freedom fighter and a piece on 'the agriculture, industry, technology, trade of India and any other issue of national pride'. The secondary reader should have pieces on 'India's culture and tradition (diversity of clothes, sculpture, cottage industry, hospitality, love of animals etc.)' and 'Life stories of famous Indians' as well as essays on West Bengal's folk and tribal culture. While the prescriptions about West Bengal's cultural life are followed closely in the Bangla textbooks, references to India's agriculture and technology are rare. The only presence of the nation in these textbooks appears to be the Preamble to the Constitution included in all the State textbooks (significantly, while the old Madrasah texts used to have the Preamble, the new set includes sections on fundamental duties and fundamental rights).

The construct of the nation in the Bangla textbooks is spatially co-extensive with Bengal and temporally fixed in the period of nationalist struggle. The other locus of nation construction seems to be negative, expressed through the left critiques of the independent nation-state.

There are several pieces on the Bengali revolutionaries' encounter with the British but almost nothing about other similar movements elsewhere in the country. Some of this pan-Indian character of the struggle is

captured in the Madrasah books and the ‘alternative’ textbooks which mention episodes from the freedom struggle in the Northwest Frontier against the British and the participation of the Muslim students of Deobaand Madrasah in the nationalist struggle (Sahitya Path, 8, ‘Shaikhul Hind Moulana Mahmudul Hasan’), or the contribution of the Chafekar brothers (Amar Sobuj Path, Class 8, ‘Agniputra’). However this is few and far between. There is a significant absence of material celebrating independent India, its achievements, or even the national symbols like the flag or Ashok chakra that is commonly found in other Indian textbooks. The euphoria of the young Nehruvian nation with its aspirations of industrial growth, its tropes of ‘unity in diversity’ and eradication of poverty find no place in Bangla texts (or even the English texts from Bengal), which by and large remain critical of the post-independence nation and its failure to deliver equity and justice. The nation thus remains largely only an imagined community conceived in the colonial moment as an essentially, almost exclusively, Bengali entity which has little to do with the independent Indian state.

In the texts, the colonised Bengali nation is iconised by the figure of the idealised ‘Mother’ who is identified with the pastoralised landscape of rural Bengal, the sacred motherland which is to be fought and died for. But Bankim Chandra’s ‘Bande Mataram’, synonymous with the trope of nation as mother, and which describes the natural beauties of the nation much in the rhetoric used to describe the lush and fertile Bengal countryside (*Sujalang, sufalang, malayaja sitalang / shashya syamalang mataram*) is by and large avoided by the Bangla texts, perhaps because of its political association with the Hindu right. However the texts include many other poems written in the same genre, like the extremely popular ‘Sakol Desher Sera’ (The Best of All Nations) by Dwijendra Lal Ray (Kishalay 5, old), which celebrates the nation not so much as mother but as ‘queen’, perhaps in a competitive bid to equal the Victorian empire of the British. The most commonly included ‘nationalistic’ poem is the national anthem penned by Bengal’s most revered author, Tagore. This helps to reinforce the construction of a nation which remains essentially Bengali in its core.

Significantly, the national anthem salutes not so much the nation-mother but a male ‘*adhinayaka*’ (who had once notoriously been identified as George the V, on whose accession the song was supposed to have been composed!). Appropriately, in the visuals, India is represented by a collage of faces, all male, representing ‘Punjab, Sindhu, Gujrat,

After their sudden attack, the revolutionaries left the spot in haste. Then suddenly an enemy bullet hit Preetilata. She dropped to the ground. The rest had moved ahead considerably. The injured Preetilata was losing her consciousness. Masterda’s voice could be heard from a distance. All arrangements have been made for the attack on the European Club. Preeti remembers her pleas to accompany the rest — I want to go to, Masterda! — Just one opportunity... she was accepted at last, and she was entrusted with the responsibility of the entire expedition. She remembered that she was wearing the armour of a soldier — she was now a warrior of the Indian Republican Army. Masterda had patted her on the head and remarked on how good her dress was. He then asked her to return with the song of victory on her lips. On reaching the precincts of the European Club the first thing she observed was the notice

put up on the door —
Dogs and Natives Not Allowed.
What? Indians being
humiliated and insulted in
this manner? Immediately she
thundered out her command:
Charge!

প্রক্রমণ শেষ করে বিপ্লবীরা দ্রুত পায়ে স্বামি ত্যাগ করেছিলেন। হঠাৎ শত্রুর গুলি এসে লাগল প্রীতিলতার গায়ে। তিনি পড়ে গেলেন। অন্যেরা তখন অনেক দূর এগিয়ে গেছেন।

আহত প্রীতিলতা চেতনা হারাচ্ছেন। দূর থেকে যেন ভেসে আসছে মাস্টারদার কণ্ঠস্বর— ইউরোপিয়ান ক্লাব আক্রমণের প্রস্তুতি শেষ। ২৪শে সেপ্টেম্বর আক্রমণের তারিখ ঠিক হয়েছে। কিন্তু তার নেতৃত্ব দেবে কে? প্রীতির মনে পড়ছে তিনি মিনতি করছেন—আমি যাব মাস্টারদা। আমায় একবার বিপ্লবীসুখের সুযোগ দিন। তার একান্ত ইচ্ছা। শেষ পর্যন্ত মঞ্জুর হল—প্রীতি, এই অভিযানের নেতৃত্ব তোমাকেই দিলাম।

প্রীতির মনে পড়ে যায় তার পরনে পুরুষ সৈনিকের বেশ, তিনিও এখন ইন্ডিয়ান রিপাবলিকান আর্মির একজন যোদ্ধা। মাস্টারদা মাথায় হাত দিয়ে বলছেন: নিশ্চয় হয়েছে তোমার পোশাক। যাও, জরী হয়ে ফিরে এসো। ওখানে পৌঁছেই দেখলেন ক্লাবের দরজায় লেখা— ডগস্ আনড নেটিভস্ আর নট অ্যালাউড্ (কুকুর এবং ভারতীয়দের প্রবেশ নিষেধ)। কী! ভারতীয়দের এই অপমান! তারপরেই তাঁর বন্ধকণ্ঠে আদেশ: চার্জ!



Pic.11b

Maratha ... Bango' (Kishalay 5, old; also see the visuals of 'Swadesh Hit' in Sahitya Sourav 6). Satyendranath's poem 'Bangladesh' presents rural nature in Bengal as soft, feminine and nurturing (the references to the soft grass, golden crops, lotus), yet it is referred to as the land of our forefathers ('Pitri-pitamahaer') rather than of our mothers. Pieces like 'Prabhatsurya' (Kishalay 3) describe Subhash Bose's call to the nation, inspired by Vivekananda, embracing the downtrodden, the poor and the low caste. Although the language used remains bourgeois ('Neech jaati, Murkha, Daridra, Agya, Muchi, Mathor (sweeper) ...' p. 51), the sentiment is inclusive. However the call is fraternal ('since all are brothers, your blood, all Indians'; 'Prabhatsurya', Kishalay 3, p. 51) and does not even pay lip service to women.

Although the nation is imagined as the iconic, ahistorical Bengali mother, women remain on the margins of the histories of the national struggle. They are at best imagined as assistants to male leaders or as uncomprehending participants swept into the independence movement.

The popular piece by Abanindranath Thakur (variously called 'Swadeshi Chetana' and 'Swadeshi Joog') refers to the Swadeshi Movement of 1905 against Curzon's notorious decision of partitioning Bengal and the unprecedented participation of the working classes (*mute majoor*, domestic servants) and women in it. The two groups are clubbed together, regarded as subalterns who usually take no interest in matters of national import: '*barir ginni theke chakor bakor, keu baad chilo na*' (from the housewife to the servants, nobody was left out of the movement). The piece does not question or frame this bourgeois / *bhadralok* perspective of the account of the mass involvement in the Swadeshi Movement which refuses to grant equal political status to the working classes and to women.

Pic.12a



In aggressively nationalist narratives of the struggle for independence, women emerge either as mothers or as a means to establish the greatness of the men — as assistants and followers. They are also required to prove that they can be as aggressive and as violent as men. The Kishalay 5 text has a piece on Preetilata Wadedar (See Pic 11a,11b). The introduction to this anonymous piece enjoins the teacher to make sure that the student, by reading the article, gets a clear picture about colonised India, British exploitation, the role of Masterda (popular name of the Bengali male revolutionary, Surya Sen) in leading the revolutionary movement and the heroic attack on the European Club. As in the piece, so also in its stated aim, the narrative of Preetilata's dying moments as

□ পশ্চিমবঙ্গ পাঠ □

হে মোর দুর্ভাগ্য দেশ, যাদের করেছ অপমান
 অপমানে হতে হবে, তাহাদের সবার সমান।
 মানুষের অধিকারে
 বঞ্চিত করেছ যারে,
 সম্মুখে দাঁড়ায়ে রেখে তবু কেলে দাও নাই স্থান
 অপমানে হতে হবে তাহাদের সবার সমান ॥

মানুষের পরশে প্রতিনিহিত ঠেকাইয়া দূরে
 ঘৃণা করিয়াছ তুমি মানুষের প্রাণের ঠাকুরে।
 বিধাতার রক্তরোষে
 দুর্ভিক্ষের স্বারে বসে
 ভাগ করে খেতে হবে সকলের সাথে অন্নপান।
 অপমানে হতে হবে তাহাদের সবার সমান ॥

তোমার আসন হতে যেথায় তাদের দিলে ঠেলে।
 সেপায় শক্তিরে তব নির্বাসন দিলে অবহেলে।
 চরণে দলিত হয়ে
 ধূল্য সে যায় বয়ে—
 সেই নিম্নে নেমে এসো, নহিলে নাহি রে পরিত্রাণ।
 অপমানে হতে হবে আজি তোরে সবার সমান ॥

যারে তুমি নীচ ফেল সে তোমারে বাঁধিবে যে নীচে,
 পশ্চাতে রেখেছ যারে সে তোমারে পশ্চাতে টানিছে।
 অজ্ঞানের অন্ধকারে
 আড়ালে ঢাকিছ যারে
 তোমার মঙ্গল ঢাকি গড়িছে সে খোর ব্যবধান।
 অপমানে হতে হবে তাহাদের সবার সমান ॥

শতক শতাব্দী ধরে নামে শিরে অসম্মানভাষ,
 মানুষের নারায়ণে তবুও কর না নমস্কার।

Oh My Unfortunate Country
Rabindranath Tagore

Oh my unfortunate country,
 those you have insulted...
 And now, in turn, you are
 insulted
 Compelled to become their
 equal.

You had deprived them of their
 rights.
 Of their humanity.
 They stood in front of you, and
 you refused
 To acknowledge them.

Today you must be insulted in
 equal measure.

...

You pushed them away from
 your seat.
 Neglected, undermined and
 denied your own strength
 By exiling them from you.
 Ground underneath your feet
 They drifted away in the dust
 Now descend to the level of the
 ground, otherwise
 There will be no emancipation
 for you.
 The slurs and slights pour in,
 making you their equal.

The one you throw down can
 hold you down too
 The one that you kept behind is
 pulling you behind as well.
 The darkness of ignorance
 casts a shadow
 Upon you; whom do you call
 upon in a corner?
 Your assumption of greatness
 — it has increased the
 distances.
 The slurs and slights pour in,
 making you their equal.

she remembers her 'guru' is really the story of Masterda, his planning and leadership. Also, Preetilata's male disguise (as a sepoy) underlines her desire to be like the men in the 'Republican Army', which would legitimise her ability to fight for the country. It is when Masterda sees her in her disguise that he acknowledges her as a worthy soldier of the 'Republican Army' and this is the moment that she recollects most powerfully as she lies dying. Here Preetilata is a female martyr only to proclaim the glory of Masterda.

For many centuries this burden
 of humiliation rests upon your
 head
 And yet you do not recognise
 the inner divinity of 'lesser'
 humans.

Pic. 12b

the piece is, ‘Because this was not only a rebellion against the dikus or outsiders — it was against the real outsiders and enemies of India, the British’. The story can thus finally be rehabilitated as a middle-class narrative of nationalism rather than as problematising as it does, the notion of the nation, of the insider and outsider. A similar collapsing of a subaltern rising against both the British and local Indian zamindars into a simple nationalist narrative occurs at the end of the piece entitled ‘Bansher Kella’ (Kishalay 4), which describes the heroic rebellion of Titumir, a Muslim peasant leader.

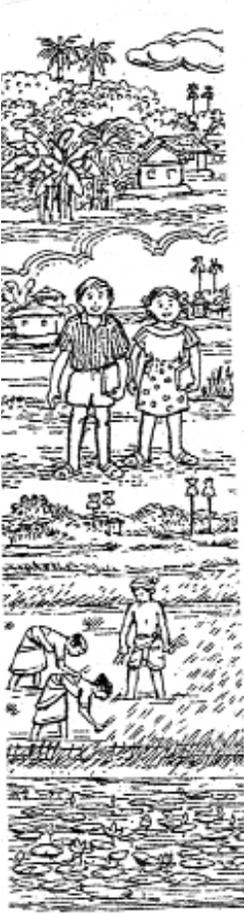
Like the new government textbooks, the Sahitya Path 8 Madrasah text has a piece on the woman tribal leader Elishaba Qui by Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay, which focuses on how a Ho woman participated in the nationalist struggle and established a free government in her region (See Pic 16a, 16b). The piece is written from the perspective of a middle-class writer who meets her when she is released from jail and is a much-respected leader. The author recognises her as a labourer called Champu, whom he used to know. The piece tells us the story of the spectacular transformation of a simple woman to an able administrator who successfully ran a Congress government in Lohardaga for a few months, with great efficiency, ensuring the safety of all, particularly the British people living in her area. Although this gives us a different and more inclusive perspective on the freedom struggle, at the end of the piece the identity of Elishaba Qui collapses into that of Champu, the tribal labourer, and therefore remains problematic. It could be read as a story of transformation, but it could equally be interpreted in terms of the persistence of the subaltern identity which can never be overcome. Although the Bangla textbooks problematise the mainstream discourse of the Nation in many ways, the powerful image of the mother-nation naturalised through its association with topography and landscape proves difficult to dislodge.

Nature

Nature is by far one of the most popular themes in Bangla textbooks; considered safe, educative, moral and aesthetic, it is treated in different contexts and genres. Whether as descriptions of pastoral landscapes, patriotic evocations of the motherland or as botanical or zoological forays geographical accounts of natural resources or as environmentally conscious pieces on conservation, nature figures in both prose and poetry. But whether it is idealised or aestheticised in poetry or treated in a more rationalistic, positivistic contexts in prose, it is inevitably feminised and associated with motherhood.

Nature-Mother-Nation

The Bangla texts construct a Bengali identity that is rooted in the nurturing and fecund ‘motherly’ landscape of rural Bengal. In many of



কোন দেশেতে তরুণতা
সকল দেশের চাইতে শ্যামল
কোন দেশেতে চলতে গেলেই
দলতে হয় রে দুর্বা কোমল?
কোথায় ফলে সোনার ফসল,
সোনার কমল ফোটে রে?
সে আমাদের বাংলা দেশ
আমাদেরি বাংলা রে।

কোথায় ডাকে দোয়েল শ্যামা,
ফিঙে গাছে গাছে নাচে?
কোথায় জলে মরাল চলে
মরালী তার পাছে পাছে;
বাবুই কোথা বাসা বোনে
চাতক বারি যাচে রে?
সে আমাদের বাংলা দেশ
আমাদেরি বাংলা রে।

কোন দেশের দুর্দশায় মোরা
সবার অধিক পাই রে দুখ?
কোন দেশের গৌরবের কথায়
বেড়ে ওঠে মোদের বুক?



Bangla Desh

Satyendranath Dutt

Name the country the trees and climbers of which are as green as in no other country

Name the country where you tread upon delicate grasses whenever trying to walk

Name the country where golden crops are harvested

Name the country where golden lotus blooms

That country is our Bangla Desh, only our Bangla Desh

Where Doel Shyama keeps on calling, Finge dances from twig to twig

Where gander walks on water, with goose in tow

Name the country where the Babui weaves its home

And the Chatak yearns for water

That country is our Bangla Desh, only our Bangla Desh

these pieces from the nineteenth century, natural descriptions of Bengal villages are pastoralised, idealised and invested with the traditional values of familial bonds and communal harmony conceived in terms of kinship. The Bengal countryside becomes an epitome of freedom and a source of Bengalinness threatened by British rule. It comes to symbolise a timeless, borderless idyll, more subjective than real, heavily imbued with the tropes of motherhood. It is a dreamscape protected from the depredations of colonial and feudal oppression where the male subject of these texts is protected, sustained and loved unconditionally. The eternal nature of the Bengal village stands as a vigilant and compassionate mother, a bulwark against the contingencies of history. Dispossession from this land is tantamount to exile and motherlessness.

The quintessential articulations of the feminised, maternalised nature of the Bengali village takes place in Tagore's poem 'Dui Bigha Jami' (new Path Sankalan 9 and 10), which is about how an exploitative zamindar deprives a poor villager, Upen, of his only possession, two bighas of land. Here the land is seen not merely as property, but in the larger context of a man's attachment to the motherland, to his mother, to the native village — to everything which defines him and to which he

Name the country the plight of which causes us the deepest pain

Name the country the magnificence of which fills us with pride.

Where our progenitors' memories are to be found?

That country is our Bangla Desh, only our Bangla Desh

Finge - species of fork-tailed passerine bird

babui - weaver bird

Chatak - pied cuckoo

Pic. 17

belongs. The lines '*namonamo namosundari mamo janani janmabhumi/ gangar teer snigdho sameer jibon jurale tumi/ ...chaya sunibir shantir neer choto choto gramguli*' (I salute you O mother and motherland/ you comfort me with your pleasant Ganga bank and your gentle breeze... and your shady and peaceful villages) or '*Bukbhara madhu banger badhu jal laye jay ghare/ ma balite praan kare anchan, chokhe ashe jal bhare*' (The sweet-hearted bride of Bengal carries water home/ my eyes fill with tears when I think of my mother) are oft-quoted and well remembered. Although the poem is a strong critique of zamindari exploitation, its most powerful affective charge lies in evocations of the beloved motherland.

Several of the poems that celebrate the nature-mother of the Bengal countryside included in these texts are by Muslim authors, and some are by Bangladeshi Muslim poets. For instance Bande Ali Mian's 'Aamader Graam' Our Village; Kishalay 3), which describes the small village with its paddy-fields, water-filled ponds, its light and twilight as an expression of motherly affection; or Nazrul's 'Pallimayer Roop' (The Beauty of the Village-Mother; Sahitya Navoday Class 8 text) in which the overarching sky is described as a watchful mother. In 'Rakhal Chele' (Shepherd Boy) Jasimuddin, the Bangladeshi poet most commonly included in the State texts, provides a romanticised picture of a Bengali village where a maternalised Nature nurtures the shepherd boy — the plantain leaves fan the boy and the dew-drops wash his feet, spoiling him with kingly attention. And in the midst of all this the shepherd boy's mother is in a small cottage waiting for her son. A poem by Jasimuddin, 'Nimontron' (Invitation) in the old Sahayak Path 9 and 10, invites the reader to his village where shady trees and creepers create an atmosphere of love which is augmented by the love of mothers and sisters.

Pic. 18a

For both Hindu and Muslim poets, this familiar and loved nature-scape provides a space that they can lay common claim to, a fund of imagery



সামর্থ্য :	১. যথাযথ উচ্চারণ ও বিরামচিহ্ন অনুযায়ী পড়তে পারা।
	২. পাঠের বিষয় বুঝতে পারা ও বুলিয়ে বলতে পারা।
	[পাঠের বিষয় :
	(ক) চায়ের চাষ ও চা শিল্পের কারিগরি দিক সম্পর্কে জ্ঞান।
	(খ) চা চাষের ইতিহাস ও চা শ্রমিকদের জীবনযাত্রা।
	(গ) চা শ্রমিকদের (সেই সঙ্গে অন্যান্য শ্রমিকদের) সামাজিক গুরুত্ব।]
	৩. পাঠের নতুন শব্দের বানান ও অর্থ লিখতে পারা।
	৪. পাঠের শব্দ দিয়ে স্বাধীন বাক্য তৈরী করতে পারা।

চা বাগানে প্রতিদিন প্রচুর শ্রমিক কাজ করেন। শ্রমিক হিসাবে পুরুষদের সঙ্গে মেয়েরাও কাজ করেন। চা বাগানে গেলেই দেখা যাবে মা-শ্রমিক কোলের শিশুকে কাপড় দিয়ে বুকে বেঁধে নিয়েছেন। তাঁর পিঠে রয়েছে কাপড়ের পুটলি বা বেতের ঝুড়ি। পাতা তুলে তাতে বোঝাই করছেন। এঁরা খুব সরল, সাদাসিধে আর পরিশ্রমী। ছুটির দিনে বা পরবের সময় এঁরা মাদল বাজিয়ে নাচগান করেন।

শ্রমিকরাই চা বাগানের সম্পদ। রোদে বর্ষায় তাঁরা অকাতরে কাজ করেন। জঙ্গল সাফ করেন। পাতা তোলে। মেশিন চালান। তাঁদের প্রতিদিনের কঠিন শ্রমেই চা আসে আমাদের ঘরে ঘরে। চা-শ্রমিকরা তাই আমাদের পরম বন্ধু। সুযোগ পেলে চা বাগানে গিয়ে এঁদের সঙ্গে আলাপ করে এসো।

that they share, the common familial trope of a mother who loves all her sons regardless of the history of communal tension and carnage. This mythical space, which becomes identified with the nation and motherland, remains unbound by geographical borders. Ambiguously referred to as 'Bangla-desh', village-Bengal does indeed become a 'desh' or nation which is unaffected by the historical events of the independence of the nation, the partition of Bengal and the creation of Bangladesh (See section on Nation). In Satyendranath's poem 'Bangladesh' (Kishalay 4), the loving evocation of the familiar landscape of lush greenery, golden harvests and the songs of the doyel and finge birds is easily associated with the nation, and with sentiments of patriotism (See Pic 17). This conflation of a specific Bengali naturescape with the nation is illustrated in the visuals which juxtapose details of the Bengali countryside with an image of a gathering of people around the national flag with a suggestion of a flame in the background, indicating perhaps the swadeshi movement and the burning of foreign goods.

This carefully specific, yet also transcendently generalised, nature of rural Bengal becomes an epitome not only of the nation but also of the world. In Jibananda's poem 'Banglar Mukh Ami Dekhiyachhi' (Path Sankalan 9 and 10; this poem is in the Class 10 syllabus), the poet does not wish to see the world because he has seen the face of Bengal. Although his 'Rupashi Bangla' (Beautiful Bengal) poems are not celebratory — they evoke a landscape which is sad and haunting — but there is an abiding presence which comforts by its unchanging qualities, and calls the poet back to it through reincarnations. He wishes to be reborn in future as the birds, *shankhacheel*, the *shalik* or the owl which haunt the Bengal countryside.

The Story of Tea
Paritosh Dutta

Abilities:

1) To pronounce words correctly and read according to punctuations

2) To comprehend the text and to narrate it in one's own words
[Text: i) Knowledge about the cultivation of tea and its technological aspects

ii) History of growing tea and the lifestyle of tea-plantation workers

iii) The sociological importance of tea-plantation workers (and other kinds of workers)]

3) To write new words learnt from the text and their meanings

4) To construct original sentences using words from the text.

(...)

Hundreds of workers work in tea plantations every day. Women work along with men as labourers in the tea gardens. A familiar picture in tea gardens is of the mother, with her infant tied to her chest with a sheet, picking tea leaves and filling the basket tied to her back. These men and women are simple, honest and hard-working. On holidays and festive occasions, they sing and dance to the beat of the madal.

The workers are the wealth of the tea plantations. They work tirelessly in sun and rain. They clear away forests, pick tea leaves, operate the machines. It is thanks to their hard labour that our teacups get filled every day. That is why tea-garden workers are some of our greatest friends. Go and meet them at the tea gardens if you ever get an opportunity.

Although the State textbooks construct nature mostly in terms of pastoralised Bengal ruralscapes, the alternative textbook series Anando Path attempts a much more realistic and class-conscious representation of village life where nature is not merely generalised and idealised. Villages are presented as geographically-specific spaces and nature is seen not just romantically but in all its terrifying and damaging dimensions. Also, nature is not spontaneously fecund and has to be transformed through hard human labour, for instance in Ishwar ch. Gupta's poem, 'Barshay Loker Abasthya' (People's Condition in the Monsoons — 'Tears in the kitchen because all the fuel is wet ...') in Anando Path 5, p. 99. The exercises for this lesson ask the students the difference between the wealthy and poor in their reactions to the monsoon. In the poem 'Manush' by Jatindra Sengupta, the seasons are presented as bringing new forms of misery for village people oppressed by poverty. Village people are seen as struggling against the seasonal variations of nature in their attempt to grow crops ('Those who have to plough the red soil in the heat of the jaishta month, they also have to bear the brunt of the storms and rains', Anando Path 5, p. 90). Here Nature is neither benign nor romantic nor motherly. The Practice Exercise Book 8 directs students to write an essay on a village which should include details about population, professions of people, the problems of agriculture, the water situation, health and transport.

But these images of the realities of rural nature are not frequently encountered in the State textbooks, particularly in the poems. Some of the prose pieces which document the hardships of village life do so more in terms of feudal exploitation or grinding poverty, not in terms of people's relationship with nature.

Nature as Resource

Most of the State texts have prose pieces on natural products such as tea or jute. These are written in a 'scientific' tone much in the way that the Geography textbooks look at nature as a resource to be exploited for human needs, to be extracted through human labour. This non-affective, positivistic tone is on the surface very different from the kind of sentimentalised accounts of the Bengali naturescapes discussed above, but certain tropes persist and connect these very different kinds of writing. For instance, the prose piece 'Shilpa Bhabana' (Thoughts on Industry — Sahitya Path 8) lists the natural resources of what is framed in the introduction as 'amader Banga bhumi' (our land of Bengal, p. 41) in which the phrase, '*sujala, sufala*', is an echo of '*sujalang, sufalang*' in Bankim's 'Bande Mataram' (pure water and productive earth), the quintessential example of the conflation of nature / nation / mother. In the course of the article there are no clear indications of the geographical limits of this undistinguished 'Banga bhumi' rich in natural resources. In the introduction '*Banga bhumi*' is also referred to as '*ei desh*' (this nation) which could be Bangladesh or even West Bengal, or even a space consisting of the two, in a conflation of a state and international

so the aim should be to impart not just skills, which might be different for different students, but an integrated system of leading lives (pp 11-12). While these arguments are sound, what actually happened through this nomenclature controversy was a sweeping of the sex education agenda (with which both teachers and parents were uncomfortable) under the carpet.

No Sex Please!: Falling Between the Medical and the Moral

There are interesting elisions of the body and sexuality right from the introductory chapter (p. 1) of the Lifestyle Education textbook, which begins to talk about physical changes in an adolescent and then slides over it by saying that, since all teachers are supposed to know what these changes are, it is unnecessary to discuss them. In fact, many biological details from the first draft were omitted and the material was then included in the new secondary level Biology textbooks. This was perhaps done in response to teachers refusing to discuss ‘sexual matters’ outside an academic context. Ironically, however, the text fails to go beyond a clinical discussion of anatomies, infections and diseases, and that too in a rather shifty, perfunctory way. The approach is clinical and pedantic, without any attempt to engage the student, merely listing long catalogues of symptoms and diagnoses (see the grids and lists on pages 145-147, and Pic 2) and textbook descriptions of our bodily systems. The reason for this curious detachment is the uneasiness of the framers with issues of the body and their lack of experience in talking about it in any context other than the clinical. While one of the aims of this education must be to provide information about the processes of the body and its disorders clearly and unambiguously, surely these chapters should do slightly more than recapitulate a Biology lesson.

In fact the book suffers from a split between an ‘objective’, ‘scientific’ medical discourse on the one hand, which seeks to demystify misconceptions about bodies and infections, and a dogmatic, moralistic discourse which valorises denial, on the other. The category of the sociological seems curiously absent. Between the medical explication of sex and the moralistic denunciation of sex outside marriage, the issues of social construction of sexuality and gender as well as of disease, health and medicine, and the problematic relationship of these constructions with moral discourses remain missing.

The interactive ‘games’ designed for the students are all constructed to teach them to distinguish between ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ — whether in terms of medical fact or in terms of moral rectitude, and often the two are indistinguishable and often both appear to leave enough scope for debate. For instance, on p. 200, in explaining that sometimes the HIV virus is not immediately evident in the blood and that it can take up to three months to produce antibodies which can be detected by tests, a

অনুশীলনী : ৬-এর কার্ডের বয়ান

রোগসমূহ	প্রতিরোধ বা নিরামা
(১) হাম (measles)	(১) রোগ যাতে না ছড়ায় তার জন্য রোগীকে অন্যদের থেকে আলাদা রাখতে হবে। দর্শনাধী নিষেধ। (২) লক্ষণ অনুযায়ী চিকিৎসা করতে হবে। পরবর্তীতে ব্যাকটেরিয়ার সংক্রমণ প্রতিরোধের জন্য ডাক্তারের পরামর্শমতো অ্যান্টিবায়োটিক দেওয়া যেতে পারে। প্রচুর জল খেতে হবে।
(২) জলকণ্ঠ (chicken pox)	(১) বসন্তের পুষ্টি পুরোপুরি মিলিয়ে না যাওয়া পর্যন্ত রোগীকে আলাদা রাখতে হবে। জ্বর সম্পূর্ণভাবে ভালো না হওয়া পর্যন্ত বিশ্রামে থাকতে হবে এবং শরীর পরিষ্কার রাখতে হবে। (২) সাবধান। কোনোভাবেই আক্রান্ত ব্যক্তির সংস্পর্শে আসা যাবে না।
(৩) সর্দিজ্বর (influenza)	(১) পূর্ণ বিশ্রাম। (২) জীবাণু বিস্তার রোধের জন্য হাঁচি এবং কাশির সময় নাকে-মুখে ভূমাল চাপা দিতে হবে। রোগীর ব্যবহৃত ভূমাল আর কেউ ব্যবহার করতে পারবে না।
(৪) চোখের প্রদাহ/চোখ ওঠা (conjunctivitis)	(১) চোখের কাছে মাছি আঁচতে দেওয়া যাবে না। (২) পরিষ্কার ঠাণ্ডা জল দিয়ে বারবার চোখ ধুয়ে কেলেতে হবে। ডাক্তারের পরামর্শমতো জীবাণুনাশক চোখের ড্রপ ব্যবহার করা যেতে পারে।
(৫) বস্কা (tuberculosis)	(১) নির্দিষ্ট সময়ে শিশুকে বি সি জি টীকা দিতে হবে। (২) এর জন্যে নিকটতম স্বাস্থ্যকেন্দ্রে যোগাযোগ করতে হবে। (৩) রোগীকে অন্যদের থেকে আলাদা রাখতে হবে। দর্শনাধী নিষেধ।
(৬) এইচ আই ভি/এইডস	(১) এর কোনো প্রতিরোধ নেই। মৃত্যুই একমাত্র পরিণতি। (২) অনিরাপণ যৌনমিলনের সময় প্রতিবার কন্ডোম ব্যবহার করতে হবে।
(৭) নিউমোনিয়া	(১) রোগীকে পুষ্টিকর খাবার দিতে হবে। (২) ডাক্তারের পরামর্শমতো অ্যান্টিবায়োটিক ইনজেকশন দিতে হবে।
(৮) টাইফয়েড	(১) প্রতিরোধ ব্যবস্থা নিতে হবে। টাইফয়েডের টীকা দিতে হবে। (২) ডাক্তারের পরামর্শমতো সুনির্দিষ্ট অ্যান্টিবায়োটিক খেতে হবে। সেই সঙ্গে জ্বর, ব্যথা-এসবের ওষুধ।
(৯) কলেরা	(১) বাতাব্যাবার ভালোভাবে দেখে করতে হবে। খাবার ঢেকে রাখতে হবে যাতে মাছি না বসে। (২) কলেরা-প্রাদুর্ভাব এলাকায় কলেরার টীকা দেওয়া যেতে পারে।
(১০) গোম রোগ (filariasis)	(১) মশা যেন কামড়তে না পারে সেই ব্যবস্থা করতে হবে। (২) বসতবাড়ির চারপাশ পরিষ্কার বেবে মশার বংশবিস্তার রোধ করতে হবে।
(১১) ম্যালেরিয়া	(১) মশার কামড় প্রতিরোধ করতে হবে। (২) মশার বংশবিস্তার রোধ করতে হবে।
(১২) ডেঙ্গু জ্বর	(১) মশার কামড় প্রতিরোধ করতে হবে। (২) মশার বংশবিস্তার রোধ করতে হবে।
(১৩) ডিপথেরিয়া	(১) শিশুর দুই থেকে তিন মাস বয়সে ডিপিটি টীকা দিতে হবে, যা একই সঙ্গে ডিপথেরিয়া, হুপিং কাশি এবং ডিটেনাস বা ধনুটংকার প্রতিরোধ করবে।

DISEASE	CURE/PREVENTION
1. Measles	1. The patient has to be kept in isolation in order to prevent spread of the disease. 2. Treatment is to be done according to the symptoms. In order to prevent further bacterial infection, the intake of antibiotics in accordance with doctor's advice is important. Drinking a lot of water is essential.
2. Chicken Pox	1. The patient has to be kept in isolation as long as the spots on the body are visible. The patient also needs to take rest till fever is completely cured. Keeping the body clean is very important. 2. Beware! Do not go near an infected person under any circumstances.
3. Influenza	1. Take complete rest. 2. The patient should cover face with a handkerchief while coughing/sneezing. One should never use the handkerchiefs used by an infected person.
4. Conjunctivitis	1. Do not let flies come near the eyes. 2. Wash eyes repeatedly with clean, cold water. Apply eye drops prescribed by the doctor.
5. Tuberculosis	1. Administer the BCG Vaccine to children at the right time. 2. Contact the nearest health centre for information on the vaccine. 3. Keep the patient in isolation. Visitors should not be allowed.
6. HIV and AIDS	1. There is no cure for this. Death is the only outcome. 2. Use condoms every time during unprotected sex.
7. Pneumonia	1. The patient has to be on a nutritious diet. 2. Administer antibiotic injections according to doctor's advice.
8. Typhoid	1. Prevention is possible through vaccination. 2. Take antibiotics according to the doctor's advice. Apart from antibiotics, medicines for fever and body ache should also be taken.
9. Cholera	1. Boil food properly before consumption. See to it that the food is covered and safe from flies. 2. In cholera-affected areas, arrange for mass vaccination.
10. Filariasis	1. Prevent mosquito bites. 2. Stop mosquito breeding with immediate effect in the neighbourhood.
11. Malaria	1. Prevent mosquito bites. 2. Prevent the mosquito growth and regeneration in the neighbourhood.
12. Dengue Fever	1. Prevent mosquito bites. 2. Prevent mosquito breeding in the neighbourhood.
13. Diphtheria	1. Give children the DPT Vaccine when they are 2 to 3 months old. This vaccine prevents Diphtheria, Whooping cough and Tetanus.

rather dangerous blanket statement is made: ‘Tests are utterly useless for detecting the disease’. While one appreciates the text’s attempt to tackle issues of exercising caution in testing and the uncertainties of detection, such a statement is very dangerous. This, coupled with the fact that there is no clear information about what the Eliza test implies or where and how to get it, the book can actually mislead young minds.

In the section dealing with addiction, like the one on AIDS, the information seems wholly inadequate and there seems to be an awkwardness in saying things plainly and objectively. Since the data seems to be wholly derived from the West (p.125), culturally and even (presumably) medically accepted norms of drinking (three times a week) have been presented as excessive (three times a week — no mention has been made about the number of units of alcohol). Here moral norms seem to obscure medical notions.

Middle class morality, marriage and family seem to be the only contexts in which sexuality may be discussed. The paradigm is essentially heterosexual and there is no mention of any alternative sexuality. One of the principal concerns of adolescence is thus entirely glossed over. There is also no acknowledgement of desire, pleasure or even curiosity, except in a negative context in the entire book. All desire is to be repressed and regarded as ‘temptation’, which is to be then tackled through various ‘strategies’. The section on sexual abuse is also pitifully sketchy — this will be discussed later in the section on violence.

Sometimes conflicting signals are given: for instance, in discussions of menstrual hygiene in one section girls are encouraged to lead normal lives and in another they are asked not to exert themselves (p. 117).

Whose Education? By Whom and How?

The distribution of the book is shrouded in near occult secrecy — it is to be made available only to teachers and guarded from students, so that they do not go astray by reading it on their own. The textbook is therefore more of a manual or a teacher’s guide. This has also complicated the address of the text which speaks to teachers about students — so students appear as a kind of ‘them’ (words such as *era* and *ora*, ‘these people’, ‘them’ are used; p. 74) about whom certain assumptions are being made. The students are often being talked down to, and they seem to have little to offer in this transaction of ‘Lifestyle’ skills.

There is some attempt to make the text interactive, liven it up with games and discussions and get students to participate and express themselves. But there seems to be a mismatch between the interactive form and the staid, moralistic content that reflects educators’ and education policy makers’ concerns rather than the students’ own. This becomes particularly problematic in light of the fact that there is little

or no place for ambivalence or ambiguity or actual ‘play’ of multiple possibilities in the ‘games’ designed for the students, which set out to acquaint them with certain ‘facts’ and clear some ‘doubts’. The stress seems to be less on exchange and discussion and more on learning relevant ‘facts’ and behavioural norms. Although teachers are strongly and repeatedly urged to allow students to speak freely, yet they are also given very detailed and specific instructions of what is acceptable or not.

The hypothetical scenarios provided seem in many cases far removed from the realities of most students’ lives and the language they are supposed to speak in these situations are often ridiculously out of sync with either the attitudes or the idiom of real adolescent speech. The text repeatedly urges students to learn to say ‘no’ to peer pressure and provides strategies of refusal. Apart from the rather heavy-handed moralistic approach which characterises the peer group as a constant source of ‘temptation’ (*prorochona*), refusing to engage with issues of desire or pleasure or even curiosity, the language in which students are counselled to say ‘no’ appears utterly alien and often incongruously absurd and therefore useless: ‘*daya kare aami ja balchi shono*’ or ‘*eta karle ami dukkhito habo*’. (‘I entreat you to listen to me’ or ‘If you do this, it would hurt me deeply.’)

Not only are these model responses alienated from the rhythms of adolescent speak, they often seem derived from another culture. Perhaps the textbook has been put together hurriedly, often with little conviction on the part of its framers, often battling resistance from different quarters. The text sometimes smacks of a cut-and-paste job done by translating bits from various existing English language manuals (in many places the syntax remains unfamiliar, often obscure, and the text is full of repetitions and abrupt transitions). A lot of the data provided about AIDS and alcoholism or drug abuse is from the West or the ‘developed countries’ (*unnata bishwa* — see p. 125). Apart from this, the text emerged through several consultations with educators, psychiatrists and officials, often having very diverse opinions. This has often led to a peculiar mishmash of values, tone and a slight confusion about the target audience.

The text is intended for all secondary schools under the State Board, which would mean a large number of rural, semi-urban and urban schools, comprising mainly a student body drawn from largely lower middle class and middle class households. Yet many of the examples in the book relate to primarily upper-middle-class students’ recreational activities: students are urged to choose ‘cola’ over beer at parties, to learn to say ‘no’ to friends who offer rides in their cars or invite you to parties to which you do not wish to attend. Many of these imaginary scenarios could actually prove to be culturally alienating for some students. References are made to diseases like anorexia and the practice of tattooing. The nutrition chart urges students to eat lettuce, noodles, grapes, etc. Equally, the same party-going, cola-drinking students

are urged to take a stance about witch-hunting, which is presented almost as an everyday occurrence which marks all our lives and buying a shirt worth Rs. 350 is seen as a luxury demanding condemnation. Simultaneously there are lessons urging students to be cautious about advertisements, not to be 'tempted' by branded goods, to make wise distinctions between 'luxuries' and 'necessities', and the text predictably engages in an anti-globalisation rhetoric. Interestingly, global brand consumerism and feudal superstition are presented together in the last chapter as different aspects of similar kinds of false belief. This indeed is a culturally mixed worldview, which places history, tradition and modernity in a curious light.

Tradition and Modernity

Not only does the text suffer from a colonial Victorianism, it re-enacts the terms of the nineteenth century brahmacharya debate. Just as at the turn of the nineteenth century Hindu nationalist values of abstinence (with its association of conservation of semen leading to virility, which would make for a militant patriotism) were asserted in the face of the political aggression of the British (which had 'effeminised' the colonial subject, particularly the Bengalis who were labelled by the British as a 'non-martial' race posing no threat) at the turn of the twentieth century the forces of globalisation — with its twin threats of sexual laxity and AIDS — appear to pose a similar challenge and call for similar measures on the part of Indians. The text paradoxically echoes the attitudes of the fundamentalist Hindu right although it comes out of a Marxist, 'progressive' State. The anti-globalisation rhetoric of the Hindu orthodoxy, which equates economic liberalisation with the erosion of values, the 'corruption' of youth, 'free sex' and AIDS, sounds little different from the leftist critique of globalisation associating the new economic regime with a bourgeois culture of consumerism and sexual irresponsibility leading to the proliferation of 'Western' diseases

(১) সমাজ ও রাষ্ট্র ব্যবস্থার বাক্যে এবং তজ্জানিত সাংস্কৃতিক ও নৈতিকতার অবক্ষয় যে মূল সমস্যা সে বিষয়ে বিতর্কের অবকাশ নেই। বাণিজ্যিক সমাজব্যবস্থাই নিঃসন্দেহে এই অধঃপতনের প্রধান কারণ। এর সামগ্রিক ফল হিসেবে মানবিক মূল্যবোধ ও সামাজিক অনুশাসন ভেঙে পড়ছে, বিপন্ন হচ্ছে সভ্যতা। এই অসুস্থতার লক্ষণ প্রকট হয়ে উঠছে। তরুণ সমাজকে পরিকল্পিতভাবে বিপণ্যচালিত করা হচ্ছে। এই পরিস্থিতিতে সমাজ বদলের প্রয়োজনীয়তার কথা আজ সবার কণ্ঠেই শোনা যাচ্ছে। . . .

. . . কিন্তু এই মুহূর্তে এই অধঃপতনের সর্বনেশে প্রভাবগুলি থেকে চোখ ফিরিয়ে রাখার উপায় নেই। সামাজিক পরিবেশ যদি নিষ্কলুষ থাকত, বয়সোচিত কোমল, নির্দায় মানসিকতাকে সংশুদ্ধ করে কোনো কুটিল ক্রেদান্ত উপকরণ যদি বাতাসে ছড়িয়ে না পড়ত, তাহলে শিক্ষা ব্যবস্থার এই উদ্যোগ প্রয়োজন হত না। পরিস্থিতি স্পষ্টতই তেমনটি নয়। বিশেষ স্বার্থবাহী নাগিনীদের নিঃশ্বাস দিকে দিকে ছড়িয়ে দিচ্ছে মারাত্মক গরল। তাই শিক্ষাব্যবস্থার উদার নিশ্চেষ্টতা পরিহাস না হলেও আগামী প্রজন্মের বিপর্যয়ের জন্যে পরোক্ষে দায়ী থাকবেই।

There is no doubt that the distortion of social and state systems, leading to the gradual degeneration of culture and morality, is a major problem. A consumerist social system is undeniably the main reason behind this decline. The result of this is the breakdown of human values and social order, leading to a crisis of civilization. The symptoms of this disease are becoming clearer each day. The youth of our nation is being systematically led astray. In this condition, many people are expressing the need for social change...

It is impossible to change the society overnight... But at the same time, it is equally impossible to turn a blind eye to the dangerous effects of this decline. If the social ambience had been unpolluted, if youth's simplicity had not been contaminated with deceitful and unclean elements, then there would not be any need for this education (Lifestyle education). But the situation is different. The poisonous breath of self-interest is spreading fatal toxins in every direction. The indifference of the education system in these circumstances will remain indirectly responsible for the devastation of future generations.