

Reviewing *Chitrangada*: *The Crowning Wish: An Exploration of the Issues of Adaptation and Gender- crisis in Rituparno Ghosh's 2012-Film*

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Abstract: Gender studies has spread its wings and has taken a flight to a horizon of various possibility. Though it started with 'Feminism', but with passing of time the term 'Queer' has been tagged with it. This paper gives a glimpse of a gay, who fights vigorously with his inner and outer self, fights with society and himself in search one's 'self'. This paper is a juxtaposition of the issue of 'Adaptation' and the fight of a gay personality in a society, where 'gay' and 'lesbian' are mere words taken as taboo or as mere psychological disorders.

Keywords: Section 377 of Chapter XVI, postmodern 21st century literature, 'Visva-sahitya' and 'Weltliteratur', my choice, androgynous, nrityanaty, adaptation.

Foreword:



“My body, my mind, my choice; [...]
My choice. To love temporarily or to last forever; [...]
My choice. **To love a man, or a woman**, or both; [...]
My choices are like my finger prints, they make me unique; [...]
I am the Universe, Infinite in every direction.
This is MY choice”

– Deepika Padukone ¹

Even before specific explanations by the Austrian psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, wishes and desires have been considered by intellectuals and common people alike to be an integral part of the workings of the human psyche. The supreme importance of wishes and individualism has also been upheld in the definition of the 'Fundamental Rights' in the Constitution of India, which guarantee civil liberties to Indian citizens. These liberties champion individual rights by including under their

purview such clauses as the right to **equality before law**, the freedom of speech and expression, the freedom to congregate in peaceful assemblies, the freedom to practice religion, and so on. The Fundamental Rights guaranteed to Indian citizens in the Constitution could be further defined as **elements of individual freedom which every Indian citizen has the right to enjoy** for a wholesome development of personality. **These rights universally apply to all citizens, irrespective of race, place of birth, religion, caste, or gender.**

However, there is a certain section in the Indian *Code of Criminal Procedure*

The New Untouchables.
The Discrimination Of
LGBT And Article 377



(Cr.P.C.) – **Section 377 of Chapter XVI** – which identifiably comes in opposition to the enjoyment of fundamental rights. The stated section of the Cr.P.C. describes 'Unnatural Offences', which has been further described in the same Cr.P.C. as being 'against the order of nature' and is almost solely directed to criminalisation of homoerotic intercourses. Such 'offences' are liable to invite imprisonment for life or for ten years, including fine. Though the Hon'ble Delhi

High Court declared the section 'unconstitutional' on 2 July 2009, the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India overturned the judgement in disfavour of the homosexuals and the transgender-populace on 12 December 2013.

The Hon'ble Supreme Court's judgment has led to vigorous debates within the Indian Parliament and all over the country. Both individuals and civil-rights-activists are considering this judgement to be in opposition to the Fundamental Right of Choice. In such a scenario, the transgenders have become most directly affected. Having had exceptionalities in their physical features, they cannot enjoy intercourse other than through anal-sex, which in the Cr.P.C. has been identified as being 'against the order of nature'. The judgement has led to the questioning of whether these transgenders are Indians at all. When Somnath/Manabi Bandyopadhyay, a transgender, can successfully become the Principal of *Krishnanagar Women's College* (Krishnanagar, Nadia, West Bengal)², in 2015, such an issue should not have raised itself. The section and the judgement do not answer what transgenders should do if they desire to love a person of their own 'gender'. There has been also the questioning of why these persons should undergo a sex-change operation in order to marry the person they love or adopt children. The extent of gravity of these issues and dilemmas can be perceived when one rereads the story of *Chitrangada* in *The Mahabharata*, in



Rabindranath Tagore's 1892 dance-drama-version, or in the 2012 Bengali-language-film *Chitrangada: The Crowning Wish*, directed by Rituparno Ghosh (1963-2013), who himself had voluntarily turned himself into a transgender prior to his untimely death. The principal aim of this paper is to examine the issue of gender-crises in Ghosh's film vis-à-vis Tagore's adaptation (in the 'nrityanatyā' or 'dance-drama' form) of the *Mahabharata*-story of Arjuna's wife from Manipura.

Introduction: In the postmodern 21st century, literature is no longer bound by the perceptively-artificial and narrow parameters of nation, genre or ideology, but instead occurs as what the 18th-century German philosopher Goethe defines as 'Weltliteratur', or – in Rabindranath Tagore's words – the 'Visva-sahitya', where texts circulate and are encountered in a global space. Films, principally based on important literary works, have understandably been included under the purview of 'Weltliteratur'. As deconstructionists maintain that no text can stand in isolation, the film/text of Rituparno Ghosh's 2012 production also cannot have an isolated existence. In fact, the title of Ghosh's film – *Chitrangada: The Crowning Wish* – in itself connotes its subject to the immortal epic of the *Mahabharata* and, thereafter, Tagore's 1892 nrityanatyā, *Chitrangada*. Both the epic and Tagore's publication are parts of 'Weltliteratur', and Ghosh's film connects with its source texts through its title. This connection is highly effective. As in the case of a parent-child relationship, the child imbibes few of his/her parents' traits, Ghosh's film also imbibes the central idea of both the source-texts. In such a scenario, it will be impossible for one to proceed if s/he does not concentrate on the tension that is present in the source texts to understand the tension that is created by the film-director Ghosh in projecting a modern outlook of the legend of Chitrangada. Bengali literature, it may be mentioned here, contains a proverb – 'Jaanei Bharat-ey, taa nei Bharat-ey' – the first 'Bharat' indicating Vyas's work and the second 'India'. It means that if any aspect of life is not described in the epic, it cannot be found anywhere all throughout India. Naturally, *The Mahabharata* has inspired numerous literary works and artistic adaptations. The legend of Chitrangada has also emanated from the same source. Nevertheless, the Chitrangada-episode in *The Mahabharata* occurs very briefly. According to Vyas, Chitrangada was the daughter of Chitravahana, the ruler of the naturally-beauteous Manipura. Since the king did not have a male heir, he brought up his daughter like a son. The Pandava prince Arjunafirst met her when he was on pilgrimage in penance for having barged into the private space of his wife Draupadi and his elder brother Yudhishtira. Enthralled by Chitrangada's beauty, Arjuna asked Chitravahana for her hand in marriage. Chitravahana agreed to the proposal on the condition that the son born to Chitrangada would be the ruler of Manipura. Arjuna and Chitrangada married, and Babhravahana was born to the couple whom Chitrangada brought up as a Pandava prince, inculcating in him higher values and bravery of his father Arjuna.



The legend of the 'androgynous' Chitrangada was rekindled during the 19th-century socio-cultural movement of the Bengal Renaissance, which brought along with it countless new approaches to the concepts of society and societal norms. Influenced by the

Renaissance and enlightened by his illustrious *Brahma* family's unorthodox approaches, Rabindranath Tagore went on to remodel the Mahabharata-legend into a critically-acclaimed nrityanatya. All the dance-dramas of Tagore – be it *Chitrangada*, *Chandalika*, or *Shyama* – comprise a genre quite unique in its time and milieu. They portray the radical nature of Tagore's conception of women and the maturation of their selfhood. The dance-dramas illustrate Tagore's bold and perceptive experimentation with various literary forms and techniques, and the radical nature of his ideological orientation. The theme of female desire, which was a tabooed subject in Tagore's times, indeed, is found even now not only in Bengali literature but in several other literatures as well.

In *Chitrangada*, Tagore's views about women and the requirement of assertion of their selfhood are identifiably radical. Empowering the female subaltern, he attempts to describe the female desire of transcending the limitations of their sex. By adding a feminist connotation to one of the more well-known legends from *The Mahabharata*, the Nobel Laureate has successfully presented a new, postmodernist approach to the story. It is understandable that through the masterly narrative style of Tagore the legend of Chitrangada soon attracted international attention. He reconstructed the epic-episode without robbing it of its essence. In the narrative/dance-drama, he focuses principally on the character of the Manipura-princess Chitrangada whose dynasty had had received a divine blessing that a 'prince' would be born in it to rule. However, when a princess is born, King Chitravahana brings her up as a 'male', and instructs her in the sciences of warfare and governance. Though Chitravahana's action gives Chitrangada a gender-identity-crisis, she gladly accepts this forced 'maleness', and develops herself into a warrior and protector of her land. During a hunting trip she discovers a pilgrim (Arjuna), and his qualities and appearance generate within her the desire to be pursued in love and be treated as a woman. But Arjuna mistakes her for a male, especially due to her male dress, shield, and weapons. A frustrated Chitrangada realises the extent of her own gender-crisis, and wants to be transformed from the male 'Kurupa' (full of ugliness) to the female 'Surupa' (full of grace). She requests Madana/ Kamdeva, the Hindu god of sexual love, to transform her into a desirable, beautiful female, who is ready to subject herself to the male gaze. Through Madana's machinations Arjuna falls in love with Chitrangada, without knowing her disguised self. Her falsity torments her, nevertheless, and she

wishes to be loved for her *real* 'Kurupa'-self. Meanwhile, enemies attack Manipura. Chitrangada is called upon to fight and save her people. She succeeds, but also reveals her true self to Arjuna, uttering the famous line 'Nohi Devi, nohi samanya nari' ('Deity though I may not be, I am also not an ordinary woman') thus delivering the underlined moral of women empowerment and self-dependence. Following this revelation about the true self of Chitrangada, Arjuna marries her for *what she is* and accepts her as one with him.

The lately-deceased film-director Rituparno Ghosh – like numerous other Bengali/Indian intellectuals – was deeply influenced by Tagore's writings, other than having a working knowledge of various legends of *The Mahabharata*. He, therefore, attempted to give a startling and personal interpretation of both the epic-episode and Tagore's



nrityanatya in his *Chitrangada: The Crowning Wish*, which was produced by *Shree Venkatesh Films* and made on a budget of 10 million Indian rupees. The director also acted in the film which received the *Special Jury Award* at the 60th *National Film Awarding Ceremony*. The film stars Ghosh as the homosexual choreographer Rudra 'Khokon' Chattopadhyay; Jisshu Sengupta as 'Partho', a drug-addict percussionist; Raima Sen as 'Kasturi', a renowned dancer; Anjan Dutta as 'Shubho'; Deepankar Dey as Chattopadhyay's bewildered father; Anashua Majumdar as Chattopadhyay's mother; and Sanjay Nag as 'Rohan', Chattopadhyay's former homosexual partner.

Dedicated to Tagore, Ghosh's 2012 film focuses on the gradual sexual maturity of Rudra or 'Rudy' who is a gay choreographer but with obvious androgynous desires. Rudra attempts to stage Tagore's *Chitrangada*. An actress from the play, Kasturi, introduces Rudy/Rudra to Partho who is a drug-addict but a brilliant percussionist. A passionate relationship soon develops between the two, and they consider adopting a child. Rudy, therefore, decides to undergo a sex-reassignment-surgery. The film depicts the mental state of Rudy through the different stages of the operation, his parents' bewildered reactions, and their effects on Rudra's relationship with Partho. Following Rudy's refusal to become an engineer, his parents see his decision to go for a sex-reassignment-surgery as a further disappointment. Moreover, Partho is unhappy with the idea of a relationship with a 'false woman', and moves on to Kasturi, but later seeks help from Rudra for an abortion of the foetus of his child with Kasturi. With nobody to support him and help him with the mental trauma of the change that he goes through during the sex-change operation, Rudy's psyche creates an imaginary friend. This hallucinatory friend sees him through most of his operation, till before the last major operation of a genital transplant, which he finally refuses, and tries to be

what he is: a person with the body of a male and a soul of a female. The 'Crowning Wish' of the film's title is an assertion that human beings should be what they want to be.

Chitrangada: The Crowning Wish - A Film Beyond Its Genre:

Throughout the history of the development of literature – including that of the Indian English and diasporic literatures – various changes have been made in narratives by the authors according to the-then changes in societal and cultural perceptions. The stories from epics like *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata* have been rewritten by Indo-Anglian writers in different perspectives. For example, when one reads novels like Chitra Banerjee-Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* and Shashi Deshpande's *Hear Me, Sanjaya*, s/he must admit that these are highly successful and postmodern retellings of well-known legends. It is therefore necessary to discuss aspects of Tagore's writings because Ghosh's film efficiently retells Tagore's rendering of the *Mahabharata*-legend. Tagore might not have belonged to the 21st century, but his writings, including the story of *Chitrangada*, defy any period-based assessment. So do his experimentations. In his 1892 production, he makes the Manipura princess the centre of his attention, while the *Mahabharata*-legend steadily focuses on the exploits of Arjuna. While making an apparently-androgynous character the principal protagonist of his nrityanatya, Tagore deals with the concept of female empowerment, and, in extension – according to postmodern interpretations – also indirectly champions the rights of the transgenders. This 'different attitude' of Tagore's rendering has been adopted by Ghosh in his 2012 film. Ghosh's production, identifiably a film way beyond its genre, constantly relates itself to the postmodern complexities of human psyches and orientations while maintaining the 'originality' of the 'principal theme'. With the passage of time scenarios related to the development of the story of *Chitrangada* have changed, and Rituparno Ghosh successfully captures those changes. It is very interesting to read this movie. The *Chitrangada*-play within the film – in a way – helps spectators to perceive the dilemma of modern *Chitrangada*. When 21st-century audience watch Ghosh's early films, they are woken up to the domestic problems and tensions between males and females, and the patriarchal domination of Indian women. In his later films, Ghosh explores the issues of homosexual relations and transgender desires as articulations and effects of freedom, which one can also observe in *Chitrangada: The Crowning Wish*. With time Ghosh's *Chitrangada* develops an angle different from Tagore's version of clichéd romance between a man and a woman – that is, the Arjuna-*Chitrangada* romance. Instead, it begins to focus on the affection between two males, one of whom is inclined to become a transgender. There is also an attempt at drawing parallels between the dilemma of existence, the desire of *Chitrangada*, and the complexities in the character of Rudy.

Rituparno Ghosh's Masterly Reshaping of Tagore's 1892-Production and Exploration of The Issue of Gender-Crises:

When *Chitrangada: The Crowning Wish* is reviewed, one can remember that Andre Bazin, in one of his essays, says, "All it takes is for the filmmakers to have enough visual imagination to create the cinematic equivalent of the style of the original, and for the critic to have the eyes to see it" (p. 58). A painting can also be adapted as a film, and, therefore, it would not be erroneous to call Ghosh's film a part of a brilliant and artistic adaptation. *Chitrangada: The Crowning Wish* is highly inspired by Tagore's *snrityanaty*, and, like an adaptation, its "equivalence in meaning of the form" (p. 58) is maintained. This equivalence is retained by 'borrowing' the crux theme of the 'source text'. According to Dudley Andrew, "[...] borrowing is the most frequent mode of adaptation" where "the artist employs more or less extensively the material, ideas, or form of an earlier, generally successful text" (p. 67-68) in case where subject of title is borrowed in the targeted text (film). He further elaborates, "[...] here the main concern is the generality of the original – its potential for wide and varied appeal [...] and [it] rests on the issue of their fertility not their fidelity". When readers/audience/critics analyse the Ghosh's film, they get the aura of the spirit of the original text. However, if they try to find anything else other than the spirit, then they would certainly be disappointed. As in this 2012 film (which I am calling 'an adaptation'), one does not get 'Chitrangada' in flesh and blood unlike in other adaptations, but her wish for transformation and the suffering during transition and her final decision to be a woman equal to Arjuna with proper respect for being 'Kurupa' for the rest of her life, is explored through the dilemmas of Rudra. Not only this, a broader scenario can be perceived, where one can 'experience' the crisis that a person encounters when s/he is forced to practice norms declared by traditional societies as being 'normal'. These norms sometimes extend to extreme levels, and force the 'subaltern' to rebel and explore the prospects of 'ultra-femininity', ultimately resulting in sex-reassessment-operation.

Rituparno Ghosh is a master story-teller and director. A practitioner of objective correlative, he knows to divulge proper information at proper places using mere suggestions. When critics start reassessing the film, they find that it is the dialogue and the *mise-en-scene* that build the inner side of the character Rudra. The film steadily focuses on the choreographer Rudra, and it will not be wrong to say that like in Mahesh Dattani's *Dance like a Man*, its plot thickens because of Ghosh's constant travelling between the past and the present which simultaneously brings out the darker sides of the character of Rudra.

Ghosh's 2012 film can be identified to be a 'confessional movie' where the story-teller bluntly speaks of himself, like Kamala Das in "An Introduction" where she says, 'I am the sinner, I am the saint [...] / I am the beloved and the betrayed [...] / I too call myself I' (p.273). Ghosh's film stands on 'I'; if not an outrightly-autobiographical-work, it offers the

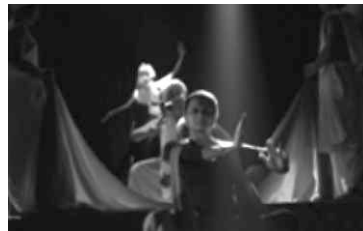
glimpse of the biography of a gay dancer- choreographer. It also reminds watchers of Judith Butler's words: "[...] the impossibility of a full recognition, that is, of ever fully inhabiting the name by which one's social identity is inaugurated and mobilized, implies the instability and incompleteness of subject-formation. The 'I' is thus a citation of place of the 'I' in speech, where that place has a certain priority and anonymity with respect to life it animates [...]" (p. 19).

In Ghosh's film, the voice-over by Rudra in the opening scene – after the introduction of the characters of 'Rudra' and 'Shubho' – runs as:

"It had to be an heir that was all the father knew. To carry on the name and family pride, and so it began. But the child to be a girl or boy, did anyone ask? Or even want to know? Children have dreams beyond their parents' expectation and they wish on stars and fallen eyelashes. Sometimes wishes comes true and unexpectedly to crown a life and turn the everyday inside out" (02:13min-03:03min)

The voice-over is supposed to be the prologue to the play *Chitrangada* that is scheduled to be performed by Rudra and his group. This voice-over is immediately responded to by Shubho, who asks the important question on behalf of the audience and critics: "Eta je *Chitrangada* seta bojha jabe?" (in English: 'Will the audience realise that this is *Chitrangada*?'). To this, Rudra answers, *Goratei galpota bole debo bolcho? Dekhbe to loke!* (in English: 'So you are asking me to reveal the story in the beginning itself? Would the audience watch it thereafter?'). But this is what Rituparno Ghosh identifiably wants: to reveal the story of *Chitrangada* – though not in a straight cut, but through jumps of episodes. The next dialogue is even more loaded, when Shubho says, *Ektu beshi autobiographical lagchena? Naki tumi setaii chaicho?* (in English: 'Do not you think that it is being overtly autobiographical? Or do you want this to be exactly so?').

The audience know the exact answer. Even if one does not relate the personality of Rituparno Ghosh to the character of Rudra, s/he can at least state that this film is a palimpsest of a gay's crises and hurdles. It would be an understatement if Ghosh is reviewed as an adept. He knows 'what to be put when' and, therefore, after the conversation with Shubho, Rudra drinks from the ocean of nostalgia. The way this aspect is projected on screen is enticing and mesmerising. The window of the sex-changing hospital's room soon becomes the stage, and the curtains open to expose thenrityanatya that Rudra has had been so obsessed with to choreograph. He becomes both the spectator and the choreographer, who scrutinise the nrityanatya, to which he (Rudra) has given his own flavours for changing the monotony of Tagore's composition. This experiment also



helps to excite the intricate details, heightening the plot of the original nrityanatya (that is, 'dance-drama'). The constant flash-backings, which start with the stage practice of Rudra's group, serve to advance the film's narrative. An efficient and practised postmodern director, Rituparno Ghosh easily but suitably plays with Tagore's composition. The simple expedition of young hunters, which is simply presented in the original nrityanatya through the song- *Guru guru guru guru ghomomegho* ('the clouds are rumbling'), is highly modified in the 2012 film. Ghosh uses Afro-Indian music to be juxtaposed with Tagore's composed songs. He elaborately shows the hunting practices and rituals that heighten the effect of royal hunting (which is missing in Tagore's nrityanatya). The most important aspect is Arjuna's entry. In the dance drama, Chitrangada is shown to disturb Arjuna's sleep by stepping on him. But Rituparno Ghosh makes sure that Arjuna is brought in from outside the stage: he is all tangled in rope, which is actually a trap to hunt animals. Therefore, his rage is more effective. It becomes a masterstroke when Ghosh envisions Kamadeva/Madana of Tagore's play as a plastic surgeon

who transforms 'Kurupa' to 'Surupa', a desirable woman. This change is talked about openly in the film, where the manager of Rudra's dance-group reads out an article while travelling in car from an Orissa locale to Kolkata, where he praises the choreographer to visualise Kamadeva as a plastic surgeon. Rudra – that is, Ghosh himself – gives a definitive shape to Madana, who was originally defined as 'awesoriri' ('without a body, an invisible entity'), and the ritual with all the 'dhupdhuno' (incense) creates an ambience where the 'rupantar' (transformation or metamorphosis) occurs. This plays as a metaphor for today's operation theatre and further support a transsexual choreographer's desire to become a woman through a sex-reassignment-surgery. The play within Ghosh's film is an important factor as it is the source which present before people Partho, the percussionist. He is definitely not Arjuna, even if Rudra, his partner, is equivalent to Chitrangada. Partho instigates the compassionate feelings of Rudra. It is very interesting when Rudra says to 'Mala' (a cameo by Aparajita Addhya) that due to 'ostracism' faced by both the characters, Rudra feels



the utmost need to recuperate Partho from his addiction and ostracism. Rudra is also lonely as his situation is not understood by his own parents. He connects with Partho rather than with any of his previous affairs, because Partho was the person who challenges 'Rudy' to let go, and Partho is the partner who eradicates Rudy's loneliness. The loneliness felt by Rudra is the bottom line of Rudra's frustration. This loneliness is due to the set norms of the society,

which restrain the society to understand about 'gender'. Judith Butler very aptly says,

“It is important to emphasise that although heterosexuality operates in part through the stabilization of gender norms, gender designates a dense site of significations that contain and exceed the heterosexual matrix. Whereas it is important to emphasize that forms of sexuality do not unilaterally determine gender...The misapprehension about gender performativity is this: that gender is a choice,...a role, ... a construction that one puts on, as one puts on clothes in the morning, that there is a “one” who is prior to this gender, a one who goes to the wardrobe of gender and decides with deliberation which gender it will be today” (p. 27).

This idea is also expressed in the film when Rudra scolds Kasturi, who gives the excuse of wearing saree as the result of her femininity in her character. Rudra echoes the 'misapprehension' and corrects her by saying,

Tui sari pore achhisna pant pore achhis ('whether you are wearing a saree or a pair of trousers') that is not the matter Kasturi.

Chitrangada, in Tagore's story, was conditioned to be a man. That is how she was brought up. This idea is reinforced in Rudra's dialogue:

Toke saree pore thakleo chele-dermoto dekhano uchit ('Even if you are wearing a saree, you are conditioned to behave like a man'),

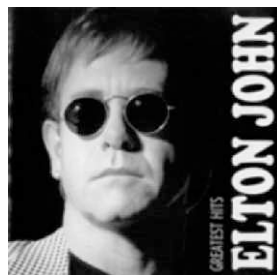
which in Butler's definition is:

“Gender performativity is not a matter of choosing which gender one will be today. Performativity is a matter of reiterating or repeating the norms by which one is constituted: it is not a radical fabrication of gendered self. It is a compulsory repletion of prior and subjectivating norms, one which cannot be thrown off at will, but which work, animate, and constrain the gendered subject...” (p. 22-23).

In Ghosh's film, one finds that Rudra's loneliness is due to his parents' inconsiderate attitude towards his gender. This is later perceived by Rudra's mother when she has to see Rudra going through all the operations for implants. She feels that they should have accepted the real fact, instead of stubbornly bargaining: *Cheleyto cheler motoi hobe* ('A boy will be like a boy'), which her husband misunderstands and says, *Cheleyto cheler motoi hobe ete jederki ache bolo? Eta to swabhabik* ('What is stubborn in claiming a boy should be like a boy? It is but natural').

The wife and mother realises that her husband must be clarified and she says, *Jar jeta swabhab setai to shabhabikna? Swabhabero to ekta ichha ache* ('The habits accrued by each person is the habit which is normal. Even habit must have a wish'). In Rudra's case, the 'swabhab' is his wish to choose his gender. It would be erroneous to blame just Rudra's parents for forcing him to undergo the operation. Rudra must also be criticised. It is true that “Identity can become a site of contest and revision”, (p. 19) in terms of J. Storey, but for Rudra, he himself was confused about the way to shape his identity. He falls in love with Partho. Realising that Partho loves children, he thinks of going through a gender-reassignment-

surgery. Rudra knows “We don't live in Elton John's country”. Elton John is a knighted English pop-singer who openly announced being a gay since 1988, and after gay marriage became legal in England, wed Furnish. He continues to be a champion for L.G.B.T. social movement and same sex-marriage worldwide. As stated before, the dialogue of Ghosh's film itself provides the background of the crisis. In India, gay couples are not given the permission to adopt children or to marry. Thus, Rudra says that it is not England where they could marry or adopt kids. Due to this reason he decides to go through the operation. He prepares his mind and goes for a surgery, for which he is not prepared. He has had always said that he is not afraid or doubtful about the surgery but he tries to avoid visitors and also creates a 'friend-councillor', Subho. Butler theorises, “In psychoanalytic terms, the relation between gender and sexuality is in part negotiated through the question of the relationship between identification and desire” (p. 28). Rudra identifies his desire to be 'female' but the connection he feels with 'femininity' (being gay) in him is nothing compared to the step he is going to take. Shubho is his inner psyche, who questions him, corrects him, and even makes him realize. The plot reaches its culmination when Rudra has to choose his physical self to a self he has never had connected with. When Shubho brings Rudra on beach though hallucinating, Rudra conveys his feelings, just like Chitrangada. He lips that he wants to *firey jabo* (go back) to his previous self.



This confusion faced by Rudra is also faced by numerous other entities. Being a transgender does not mean that one has to go through a physical change. It is the soul which instructs one to choose a gender. For Rudy the physical self is a forced implantation, which he thinks of going through because he feels that he could connect with his parents and Partho in a more intricate relationship. But like many, he too prays, *nutonopranodao* ('bless me with a new life'). But this “new life” was nothing compared to Chandalika's “notunjonmo”. For Chandalika, it is enlightenment to castaway 'caste'. For Chitrangada and Rudra *notunjonmo* or *nutonpran* is the enlightenment where they realize their 'identity', and to respect god-made-features. Rudra's parents accept him when he accepts himself. It is a story of one's own acceptance, and a desire to accept one's gender.

Conclusion: Joseph Conrad, in the 'Preface' to *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* famously wrote that “My task which I am trying to achieve is,

by power of written words to make you hear, to make you feel- it is before all, to make you see” (<http://archive.org/stream/theniggerofthequ17731gut/17731.txt>). A similar echo pervades through Rituparno Ghosh's film. It is felt that the filmmaker wants to shout through heavy and clear dialogue and make the spectator 'see' the challenges that fall on a particular group when, in the name of culture, ignorance is spread all over. In “Poetry in time of terror” Robin S. Ngangom comments that “Today when heart-rendering things are happening all around a poet, when he hears only chilling accounts of what man has done to man, how can he close his eyes to brutalisation of life and remain narcissistic?” (p. 426). Although Ngangom's context is solely on North-Eastern condition and deals with the theme of inspiration of poetry through the “war zone”, distinct similarities can be found in Ghosh's film due to the 'heart-rendering things' happening towards the transgender which instigate the 'poet' (artist) to compose his/her work.

End Notes :

1. These are excerpts from Deepika Padukone's speech in the 'Women Empowerment' video for the Vogue magazine (2015). The 2:34 video, in black-and-white, and available on YouTube, is directed by Homi Adajania. The Telegraph (Kolkata) has done an exclusive report on the video in its T2-Story supplement on 3 April 2015 (U.R.L. http://www.telegraphindia.com/1150403/jsp/t2/story_12263.jsp).
2. Susnata Choudhury, in his “How I became Manabi”, published in *The Ananda Bazar Patrika – Rabibashario*, 7 June 2015 Sunday (Kolkata edition), recalls the various challenges Manabi Bandyopadhyay faced in his/her early life as a transgender intellectual.

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