

Inside Mother's Womb: A Study of Cultural Composition and Popular Beliefs in the Mines of Asansol-Raniganj, Paschim Burdwan, West Bengal, India

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"Khyapa Khuje Khuje Phire Poroshpathor"

[*"The madman looks for the sorcerer's stone"*]

—Rabindranath Tagore, 'Raktakarabi', 1924

Since time immemorial, curiosity has discovered the path of progress. It might be a question of how progress can be defined. The definition itself contains the fundamental origin of curiosity. Origin leads toward the formation, which Foucault once mentioned while talking about the truth of every episteme.¹ Tagore perfectly depicts this reality in words mentioned above. The lust for gold remains the same, but the ideals associated with gold have changed. Capital is material based on utility, thus, demand. Sometimes it is a loaded moral icon of capital, and sometimes, the immorality of resources creates the apparent essence. Eventually, the sense of capital changed. The pure demand for gold turned into a world full of mechanical solidarity. In a transglobal era, we buy time nowadays. In the primary era of capitalism, we have witnessed beautiful discoveries to satisfy the imaginations humankind dreamt for a modern lifestyle. It was the fundamental nature of civilization to seek out comfort. The defining factors of comfort are dependent on the respective lifestyles. In the age of mechanical solidarity, Durkheim explains the division of labour as marginal changes in dynamic relations.² The transition from the feudal stage to an era dependent on capital has achieved certain mobility. The Western world hence imagined a modern world. Nature was indigenous. On the contrary, imposing that specific vision on the ground

clearly shows ignorance of the importance of differences. The differences hence led towards a dialectical relation. The madman is indeed looking for the sorcerer's stone in the pile of ashes.

"Here we reach 600 ft. beneath earth's surface," says Sreemanta Khan while entering into Lower-Kenda colliery of Raniganj, West Bengal, India. Streams of underground water flowing like mountain streams. Long tunnels continued their way to darker alleys from where we stood. Workers with proper protection, moving towards those areas. Trolleys were going upward, filled with piles of coal. Empty trolleys are following the workers' path. A whole new world with no active connection with the society, functioning as a base of the core of modernity. Indeed it is the place Tagore pictured in 'Raktakarabi'. This play is based on a gold mine where workers are working constantly, being cursed. Makor Raj is the emperor of that place, known as 'Yakshapuri.' The poetic style of narration uses myths as the language of society.³ Tagore uses the language of myths to symbolize various factors in the entire play. He pictures the greedy approach of capitalism and its exploitative nature through the analogy of 'Yakshapuri'. The totemic symbolization of 'Yakshapuri' and its workers shows ideology engages in shaping the mind. Makor Raj and Ranjan both belong to this cursed world. But what was the curse? Did Tagore try to mention the unskippable consequences of capitalism? Ranjan, the male protagonist of the play tries to bring a positive attitude having being cursed. On the other hand, the king himself admits the curse as a mandate whereas it depicts a probable liberating individual strictly following the norms of capitalism. The female protagonist, Nandini whose unique ornament is 'raktakarabi' or the red oleanders played a vital role in depicting the author's vision on freedom. Tagore in

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his other writings expressed similar thoughts which he channelized through Nandini.⁴ It is very fascinating to see similarities in the thoughts of Rabindranath and Marx. Both tried to indicate the exploitative nature of the industries. Tagore denoted the workers with numbers which are very similar to the Marxist vision on alienation of the proletariats. The denotation with the numbers associated with an individual reduces the humanity of that person. The inhumane conditions thus indicate the exploitation.⁵ The workers do not have any authority over the production system. It is systematically monitored. The increasing nature of inhumane conditions hence deprives the sensory function of the workers. An invisible act of interpellation constructs alienation. Only the creative selves can assemble the consciousness focusing on the contexts. Marx and Rabindranath visualized almost the same pattern. Marx's direct assertion of seizing the means of production here might face a rupture. Tagore's remarks on 'atmashakti' or the power residing inside one individual create his uniqueness as an author. The dialogue of Marxist thoughts and Tagore's vision takes another turn when we locate the entire debate in Althusser's conception of ideology and the various forms of state apparatuses. The state apparatuses are very apparent in 'Raktakarabi' but how is it relevant, elaborating popular beliefs associated with the mines of Asansol-Raniganj? Is religion giving birth to this ideology?

The beginning question should be why we began with 'Raktakarabi'? The text itself is oriented on a mine. If we look at the history of mining in Asansol, the name of 'Carr and Tagore Company' comes first as it played a massive role, shaping the country's coal mine industries. Prince Dwarakanath Tagore jointly owned the colliery. Even Rabindranath used to come to the collieries in his childhood with Debendranath Tagore. 'Carr and Tagore Company' started near the banks of the Damodar river in 1836.⁶ In 1898, Rabindranath wrote in a magazine, 'Bharati' about a North American gold mine, named 'Klondike.' He mentioned the gold rush, comparing human greed with insects' attraction towards the light.⁷ Gold symbolized eternity. Alchemy turned out to be a way of getting eternal. The anthropological explanation lies in the language of myths. On the other hand, the aspect of resource allocation, the Western's expedition towards colonization led towards the drainage of wealth. The market economy emerged and colonisation functioned as a refined form of capitalism. In 'Raktakarabi' the 'Makor' as an animistic totem symbolized the heavy industries. The totemic representation is the foundation of history, Rabindranath mentioned in 'Bharatbarsher Itihaser Dhara' ['Studies in History of India,' 1912].⁸ The kingdom has been compared with 'Swarnalanka' of 'Ramayana' and scholars argue, the king represents the current

situation of 'Ravana.' In 'Japan Jatrir Diary', Tagore states that the smoke of industry is very straight, just like a win over civilization but life is extremely like a curved line.⁹ Tagore's vision matches with any industrial town as the pattern is very similar regarding basic functionality. In 'Raktakarabi', Tagore admits the limitation of human beings, facing the natural phenomenon. The coal mines used to get flooded during the monsoons. In the play, Ranjan symbolizes Indra, the deity. Indra brings spring and agriculture. Tagore shows how agriculture is a form of 'atmashakti' whereas heavy industries create suffocation. The red oleanders depict the revolutionary phenomenon as in the end, even the king wants that from Nandini. Nandini herself introduces as a human feeling through her love affection towards Ranjan. Tagore finds love and happiness as the ultimate freedom and revolution which even can change the king. In the play, Gosain acts as the ideological state apparatus of the region. The act of interpellation of being cursed is hidden in the 'shantimantra'. The workers' ideology was driven in a way that they believe they are living the incarnated life of 'kurma' or tortoise, another use of animistic totemism in the text. The work would transform into another incarnation, the life of 'baraha' or pig where the hard shell of the tortoise would be gone and large teeth would appear. Even in the text, the workers were left as 'rajar ento' or the leftover of the king. The greed of gold nuggets presumed the curse.¹⁰ Thus, 'Raktakarabi' is a brilliant analogy of the amalgamation of religion and modernity and capitalist impressions. Now the question arises how an industrial space such as Asansol follows vividly the same rite of passages? The following section will discuss how an industrial space with/within its premises responds to local beliefs.

An industrial space is a so-called representation of modernity. The activism of modern rationality appears in these spaces. The cognitive mind with prejudices engages in a long debate, results in a transglobal platform. In a transglobal era, the local is also very much globalized. With various forms of spaces, Arjun Appadurai has excessively shown the modern period upholds rational thoughts along with being an agent of platform for the prejudices.¹¹ If we look at the collieries of the Asansol-Raniganj area, we can see the premises have their unique design different from the outside. It is the demography that causes the fusion of religious beliefs in such a modern space. In a guideline manual, Singapore Urban Re-development Authority declared the community hall to function partially for religious activities in industrial premises.¹² The guidelines show certain limitations but, on the other hand, secular capitalism can uphold its people to every aspect. In the case of the collieries, local beliefs associate profit maximization

with the deity. Chandrakanta Ghatak of Amritnagar mentioned, "Without Kali's blessings, the production does not go well".¹³ We have witnessed a small temple of an Indian goddess, Kali everywhere on the premises. It was extremely fascinating to witness a temple of Kali beneath the earth at 600 ft. underground in a coal mine where Sreemanta Khan took us. Nite recognized this phenomenon as the Khadan-Kali cult in his paper based on the collieries of Jharia, Jharkhand, India.¹⁴ For the safety measurements and to avoid occupational hazards, Kali stands there receiving prayers from the workers. Blood sacrifice is very common as an offering to the mining deity. The fear has shaped the worker's mind. Interestingly, it has created a cultural syncretism. Irrespective of caste, class, religion, ethnicity, everyone prays to this mining deity. But the depth of devotions has differences. The Muslim worker definitely appreciates the divinity but also chants the name of 'Allah'.¹⁵ Local thoughts on other deities such as Manasa got entirely replaced with Kali, but still the Bauris worship Manasa in the colonies and the premises. The collective acknowledgement shares space for cultural integrity. But the question comes, why Kali? Here we need to focus on the changing role of Kali in popular beliefs. It is mostly recognized as a tribal goddess, taking the shape of an orthodox structure. It requires two essential understandings. Initially, Kali has a dual nature. On the one hand, it is 'Annapurna' or the goddess who provides 'anna' (rice) to its children, on the other hand, a deity of death and 'shakti' (power). The fear of death originated this cult, assumes Nite.¹⁶ Secondly, it indicates an understanding of cultural hegemony. Asansol-Raniganj area has plenty of local cults worshipping 'shakti' in various forms. Similarly, the Bengali 'bhaddarloks' (middle-class emerged in 19th-century Bengal) have a deep attachment with Kali as Ramprasad Sen and Ramakrishna emerged as an icon of the elites.¹⁷ The temple of Kalighat had no association with any references from the *purans* but the emergence of Kolkata in the colonial time reflected a huge role in worshipping Kali. Gopimohan Thakur spent Rs 25,000 for worshipping in the temple. Even the British used to send offerings before any establishment. Major General Charles Stuart was known as 'Hindu Stuart' for his devotion towards Kali. The Bengali sentiment attached to Kali is very old. Even in 'Raktakarabi,' the author has mentioned about the 'Maran-Chandi Cult'. It was a deity worshipped for death rituals.¹⁸ In Bankim C. Chatterjee's writings, we have witnessed indigenous movements getting inspired by Kali.¹⁹ Apart from the elite Bengali middle-class association, references of Kali were also found in tribal cultures. 'Rankini' is a tribal deity that represents poor women of the Adivasis. Till 1890, local lower caste groups of Bauris and Adivasi communities

were fully engaged in mining activities. The tribal theologies indicate an association of Kali. It's assumed, tribal goddess 'Shabar' is Kali herself. The blood thirst shows savage totemism. Offerings were made to fulfil her hunger. So it may have differences but the emergence of Kali was very natural. But how did it sustain for a long time? Nite argues the beliefs have shaped the offerings to satisfy the deities. But the accidents are not considered unnatural in local beliefs. Entering into the coal mine is symbolized as entering into 'mae's (mother's) womb' where death casualties are often recognized as the deity's thirst. In the gold mines of South Africa or the tin mines of Bolivia, certain deities reside according to popular rituals. It is very interesting that in all the cases the deities have a dual nature. On the one hand, they protect the workers. On the other hand, dissatisfactory remarks cause major accidents resulting in numerous cases of death casualties.²⁰ Focusing strictly on the cultural hegemony over the space, Kali played a huge role. Is it because of its geographical presence? Initial Bengali investment and the local beliefs indicate Kali as a major deity. But apart from the Bengali investments and tribal association with the cult, the Bauris had their association with worshipping Manasa. Along with the temples of Kali, the Bauris have established some temple of Manasa as well in the premises.²¹ Though Chandrakanta of Amritnagar mentioned about the fear of evil spirits. Kali was also worshipped to omit all the evil spirits.²² Even in the writing of the famous writer, Shailajananda Mukhopadhyay, we have noticed socio-cultural involvement regarding the beliefs in evil spirits. His short-story 'Bhuture Khad,' mentions a tribal ghost who died due to fatal accident.²³ In the case of the collieries in Pakistan and Afghanistan, the workers claim that their fate is dependent on Allah.²⁴ But is it always about cultural hegemony? Let us focus on another deity, Vishwakarma, who is considered the god of major industrial belts.

Vishwakarma has a unique character. It functions as a popular icon and locally celebrated deity, but also it has several attachments with various activism. Nite argues, Vishwakarma appeared as an elite deity to be celebrated at the collieries.²⁵ In the Asansol-Raniganj area, heavy machinery was worshipped. Vishwakarma is a deity of industries, celebrated with various rituals. In most parts of Bengal, a traditional ceremony followed by 'kichuri' distribution or flying kites in the sky are often noticed. A worker of UP has noticed a marginal difference in the rituals of worshipping Vishwakarma. "In UP, only heavy machinery are worshipped but here in Bengal, local households also celebrate the day with their machines and vehicles," said Ganga Dayal Singh.²⁶ A teenager living in an ECL workers' quarter said, "We used to celebrate Vishwakarma Pujo grandly, but due to COVID protocols

it is not happening. On this day, we could access to the premises of the collieries and see the heavy machinery."²⁷ Mira Mukhopadhyay here adds an important reference of worshipping Vishwakarma. She mentioned two points mainly. Initially, Vishwakarma is a community that was associated with various industries in pre-colonial times. The trans mobile nature shaped it into a majorly celebrated South Asian deity. On the other hand, this community was assumed as Buddhist too. The Buddhist philosophy of 'work is salvation' seemed like the main characteristic of this community.²⁸ Hence Vishwakarma is very important in an industrial space. Interestingly, Kali is not treated in the same way in other industrial spaces. It is the collieries that involve such devotion towards this deity. In 'Raktakarabi,' the 'shantimantra' functioned as a divine force, constructing the ideology, helps the workers to work for salvation.²⁹ In case of South African gold mines or Bolivian tin mines, we would see similar ideologies channelizing the production system. We already mentioned the syncretic nature of the Asansol-Raniganj area. It is more apparent when we connect to the localities apart from the collieries. The Pir of Raniganj and the Satyapir of Dishergarh witness participation from every religious community in everyday life. The festival to celebrate the Pirs bring joyfulness to every community. Not only that, during the colonization procedure, Asansol has witnessed a Christian mission of educating the east. In the collieries, the Khadan-Kali cult remains the same.

The history of mining in India is very ancient. Mehergarh civilization had plenty amount of usage of copper in everyday life. Not only in Mehergarh but also Harappan civilization, a massive amount of bronze and copper were used. Archaeologists argue that the metals were brought from the Bikaner area of Rajasthan which is very near to these places. Town management and constructions, planned in a good manner, all were based on the foundation of metal. It indicates the rich history of mining in pre-colonial times.³⁰ Tribal leader 'Hudurdurga' who was the leader of 'asuras', generally considered as the evil force, defeated by Aryan goddess, 'Durga'. Discussing this myth, It is important to know why 'asuras' were treated as a powerful force. 'Asuras' knew how to use iron tools which made them a stronger opponent while engaging in a battle.³¹ It clearly shows, in a pre-Vedic era, usage of iron must have involved mining. Also, not only in Rajasthan, Gujarat area. These instances were also found near the Singbhum area. Also in Ramayana, 'Swarnalanka' denotes gold mines being protected by Ravana.³² In Buddhist 'vamsa' literature, we can see references to Sri Lankan gold mines. In the 'Thuppowansa' and the 'Mahawansa' of Sri Lanka, there are certain instances of gold mining.³³ In the precolonial times, the Puri-goers noticed in the Asansol-Raniganj

area that a stone is not catching any fire but food is getting prepared. It depicts the pre-colonial knowledge of the usage of coal.³⁴ In the case of Bolivian tin mines, the devil or the 'uncle' lives inside the caves and mines, is a pure construction of collective faith. Sacrifices are offered to 'panchama' on various occasions in the Andes regions of Bolivian mines and caves. The devil's name is Tio, who protects the workers, also requires sacrifices. The greed of colonized capital reached South America. The devil's contribution is not only a mere faith that protects the workers. Along with that, it takes a form of indigenous resistance. Through the theological dialogues, the workers stay alive which Tagore tried to mention in 'Raktakarabi'. Tagore's interpretation of 'atmashakti' or self-power has a devotional base in the case of Latin America. Very similar to Khadan-Kali, Tio has a duality in his nature. It has vast similarities with the South-African gold mine deity, 'imbawla' which is eventually a totemic representation of snake or dragon.³⁵ The nature-worshipping aspect of the tribals creates an alternative space for guarding the environment.

If we strictly focus on Asansol, we would see that the town is very diverse. It was very cosmopolitan from the beginning. Now the workers exhibit a picture of fraternity, in the earlier times, the town itself was originated from conflicts. In 1855, the Bengal-Nagpur railway extended till Raniganj-Asansol, which enhanced better transportation. Before that, the first coal mine was introduced by S.G. Hitley and John Summer on 11 August 1774 near Chinakuri. In the 1820s, Mr Jones who was famously known as 'Guru Jones' in Calcutta, started finding several more coal mines near Raniganj. In 1836, Dwarkanath Tagore and William Carr jointly bought a coal mine from Alexander and Co. near Dishergarh. Till 1855, transportation was very seasonal as it was dependent on river water. In 1896, Asansol emerged as a municipality and in 1906, it converted into a subdivisional headquarter. The conflict began when railway staff came and turned the place into a rail colony. The draft for becoming a municipality always faced objection from the European employees associated with the railway. The question of sanitization and purity became a huge issue as the Europeans considered the natives as savage and unhygienic. A municipal corporation would bring upon social solidarity, the rail authorities worried. Now the increasing demand for coal flourished and Asansol expanded as a town already. The commissioner of Burdwan further pursued the procedure and thus, in 1896 it finally turned into a municipality.³⁶ The birth of the town was made out of the conflict between the colonizers and the colonised. The diversity emerged gradually from various regions. Till 1890, it was the local Bauri community people and Adivasis such as Santhals,

Munda, Konra, etc. who were engaged in mining activities. In the collieries of Chinakuri, it was mostly the Bauris, who were usually associated with fishing and agriculture. In the Raniganj area, it was mostly the Santhals who migrated from Santhal Pargana.³⁷ Once the Bauris were taken to Raniganj and the Santhals responded violently. Looking at the history of migration, after the 1890s, workers from Bihar (United Bihar and Jharkhand), United Province (Uttar Pradesh), Central Province (Madhya Pradesh), Orissa mostly came in huge numbers. The Biharis and the workers from Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh worked as labourers. They were mainly lower-caste people.³⁸ The pushing factors were land issues, loans from local elites and sometimes socio-economic development of the community. Along with the North Indians, the Marwari and Gujarati people also came but with a white-collared job.³⁹ Migrant workers of Orissa were appointed as wagon-loaders. A population of Urdu-speaking Muslim migrant workers from the eastern side of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar came with a designation of stone carvers. Some Punjabi population joined the mines for various reasons, along with some Nepali speaking communities, appointed as security guards. In 1894 two-third of the population of migrant workers were Hindi speaking communities of various regions. This is why the Bengali dialect of Asansol is very mixed up with Hindi words.⁴⁰ A paradigmatic shift occurred due to heavy migration in the 1890s. Even during the 1920s, inter-state and inter-district migration increased due to epidemics such as Malaria, Cholera and Influenza, but the Asansol-Raniganj area exhibited a completely different scenario where people joining the industries in numbers. In Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and other places, 'Sirdars' were appointed to gather workers from these areas and were sent off to the collieries. Workers resembled the same scenario which Tagore has shown in 'Raktakarabi'. There was no escape way for the migrant workers. The local people were aware of that and did not join the industries. The cultural amalgamation caused a mixed culture but the vast Bengali majority remained the same. In colonial times, the Bengali 'bhaddarlok' class joined the industries at the managerial level along with the Europeans. Along with British investments, Italian and Armenian investments were also occurred along with Marwari, Marathi and Gujarati investments. In 1961, Bengali population turned into 82.34 per cent from 91.98 per cent. The gradual development of growth was seen in Hindi speaking communities such as 8.51 per cent from 4.78 per cent. Santhals from various places joined which turned the growth rate into 4.88% from 2.57%.⁴¹ In the case of Santhals, they were the aboriginals of the region along with the Bauris but other Santhals migrated after the

Santhal rebel occurred in the mid-nineteenth century. The Santhals of Chinakuri usually migrated from the Chhotonagpur Plateau area but the Santhals of Raniganj came from Santhal Pargana.⁴² From 1901 to 1921, most immigrants of inter-district movements came from Bankura for better opportunities.⁴³ In case of inter-provincial migration, number of Biharis enumerated in Burdwan were 36,193 in 1891, 59,647 in 1901, 45,074 in 1911 and 94,299 in 1931.⁴⁴ Number of Oriyas enumerated in Burdwan were 17 in 1872, 536 in 1891 and 889 in 1901.⁴⁵ Number of migrant workers from United Province enumerated in Burdwan were 11,103 in 1901, 10,270 in 1911, 8,885 in 1921 and 10,795 in 1931.⁴⁶ Number of people who migrated to Burdwan from Punjab were 472 in 1901, 915 in 1911, 789 in 1921 and 1,747 in 1931.⁴⁷ Number of Marwaris who came to Burdwan for economic opportunities were 2,674 in 1872, 17 in 1891, 1,619 in 1901, 1,427 in 1911 and 1,625 in 1921.⁴⁸ Number of migrant workers from Central Province enumerated in Burdwan were 40,486 in 1881. In 1911, 432 workers additionally came, in 1921 which was 1,064 and in 1931 which was 4263.⁴⁹ Some of the workers are from Bilaspur who had a giant community near the Girmint Colliery of Asansol. People from Madras presidency also came and joined as high-ranked employees. It was six in 1872, 75 in 1901, 166 in 1911, 112 in 1921 and 276 in 1931.⁵⁰ In 1921 census, members of various ethnic communities associated with collieries were enumerated which were 20,725 Bengalis, 2,684 Biharis, 12,128 people from Chhotonagpur, 18 from Orissa, 653 from Uttar Pradesh, 10 from Madras and 950 from other states.⁵¹ During the World Wars, Coalfield Recruiting Organization or CRO appointed a huge number of workers from Gorakhpur. Usually, the workers used to form colonies or 'dhaoras' with a homogenous crowd. In case of the huge no. of workers from Gorakhpur were settled in 'Depo Para' of Asansol. They were tortured at an extreme level. They were not allowed to meet their family members. They were treated as slaves. In 1953 this inhumane system was demolished. From 1972 onwards nationalization procedure was initiated. It was not a step for capitalism or socialism.⁵² To encourage Indian colliery activities this step was taken. It helped to develop the areas and socio-economic aspects of the surrounded areas. On the other hand, some workers started hiring people who used to work for them. They also had another wife in the localities. But the wages and properties were for the government-appointed workers.⁵³ It is worth mentioning that despite the cultural composition, the cosmopolitan shared its devotion towards the Khadan-Kali cult. It is a fact that the workers eventually migrated and got involved in many socio-cultural events, giving birth to a cosmopolitan atmosphere. Despite that, the mines turned into a social institution

itself. Answering the question of sustainability of the Khadan-Kali cult lies in its absolute transformation into a driving force. The origin of cultural hegemony is an end result of pre-existing prejudices turning into an apparatus. In the end, it did not include other ethnic groups' most celebrated deities. Eventually, Kali is being acknowledged by everyone, but the alternative path of history could replace that. It indicates the manifestation of certain application of power-plays on the social body. In simpler words, the hegemony sustained.

'Ghagarburi' is a tribal goddess, celebrated in the form of 'Chandi' in the Asansol area. Followers take their vehicles to the temple for worship. Being a local cult, the devotion also gets associated with the locality. Similarly, another instance of local cult can be seen in the temple of Kalyaneswari, another goddess of 'shakti'. The temple of 'Chhinnamasta Kali' is also very unique, placed in Dishergarh in the banks of Damodar. Asansol-Raniganj area has Damodar in the South creating its border with Purulia and Bankura, Ajay river flowing in the North creating its border with Birbhum. Asansol is a subdivision of Paschim Burdwan, (former Burdwan) district. In the West, the Barakar river is creating the border between West Bengal (also Paschim Burdwan) and Jharkhand. These local cults are famous in the adjacent areas too. Not only that, even a similarity in rituals made it a homogenized phenomenon. In the temple of Kalyaneswari, Ghagarburi or Chhinnamasta Kali, offerings and other rituals are very similar in nature. Khadan-Kali cult has various forms of similarities when it comes to ritualistic practices. The concept of mother's womb summarizes its initial foundation. Along with festivals associated with Hindu rituals such as Charak, Rath, Jhulon, Manasa, Chandi, Durga, Kali, Shiva, Dharma, Ram Sita, Hanuman, Santhal rituals are also performed. In Ghagarburi's temple, the Santhals also worship the deity along with the Hindu priests. Sanjay Beshra, a local Santhal tea-vendor claimed, "It was our temple, then they took but in the winter festival, we also perform."⁵⁴ The fairs of Pirs (Islamic syncretic icons) also involve various types of people. In 'Bhadra' (August-September) 'Bhadu' is celebrated and in local idioms, it is sometimes associated with the collieries.⁵⁵ Adivasis celebrate the Tusu and Karam festival. Two major sects of Christianity can be depicted through various convent schools and churches. Roman Catholic Church and Methodist Church both exist in the area. In 1872, this Roman Catholic Church established the first girls' school in that area.⁵⁶ The Biharis often celebrate the Chhat. The North Indians celebrate Mahabir Jayanti, Ramnavami, Chaita, Holi and other festivals on a massive scale. In Holi, the North Indians invite and celebrate the festival on a grand scale. The Marwaris and the Marathis celebrate Diwali and Dhanteras in this area. In the workers'

colonies and the colliery areas, it was mainly the temple of Khadan-Kali which was apparent. Inside the collieries, due to the safety measurements rituals are very limited rather it is mostly conceptual. In the long tunnels, pictures of Kali are hanging sometimes. Outside the colliery, there are multiple Kali temples. Colliery and the outside are very distinguishable. In the workers' colonies, companies used to arrange athletic activities. They used to exhibit movies in open fields. There was a massive fandom for 'Yatra' plays. Artists from Kolkata and locality used to perform. The Hindi-speaking community arranged 'Zulu dance' for entertainment.⁵⁷ The drinking habit increased. In 'Raktakarabi' similar activism can be found. But alcohol was denoted as 'somras' or the juice of the moon. The poetic approach indicates the entertainment in the name of freedom is another form of ideological state apparatus used in the 'Yakshapuri.' Though, Nandini has been often referred to as 'som' or moon in the text.⁵⁸ The question thus emerges, the workers' refreshment was by choice or by indirect manipulation?

Asansol is situated beside the Grand Trunk Road constructed by Shersha. The occurrence of migration was very natural as it was also very near to the Jharkhand-Bengal border. The cultural composition has a direct impact on its people. We eventually asked some of the workers and family members of workers of ECL how the lived experience is shaped in their daily lives. Even eminent writer, Shailajananda Mukhopadhyay wrote about his hometown in several writings. In his novel, 'Koylakuthir Desh,' he has shown many references of primary instances of people's lived experiences with the coal mines. "*Koylar Daam Baarle, Manusher Anondo Hoy*" ["When the price of the coal increases, people become happy"] clearly shows how the everyday life was so much dependent on the coal mines.⁵⁹ Ganga Dayal Singh of Amritnagar Colliery mentioned that the region has a vast majority of Bengalis which caused the cultural hegemony over Kali.⁶⁰ On the other hand, Maharani Kisku, spouse of an ECL worker at Chinakuri, thinks that Santhals participate in every festival, but others do not get along with their culture. She worships Manasa but the Hindu community has never been seen to worship any tribal deity.⁶¹ The sense of cultural hegemony is very apparent from the last two interviewees. Mahendar Ram of Chinakuri belongs to a Hindi-speaking community but he forgot where his 'desh' (origin) is. For multiple generations, his kins stayed in Bengal.⁶² The non-traceable origin depicts Appadurai's opinion on 'nostalgia with no memory'. Mahendar Ram associates himself with Bengal for generations, but does the origin do so? But all of them affirmed that currently, no communal tension is happening in this area. Diversity with the same purpose might be shaping the heterogeneous crowd into a homogenous aspirant. Is

this how capitalism functions to flourish its wings in the psyche? The adaptation into a new syncretic view is very fascinating. The communal tension could not be more orthodox as the rational psyche cannot lose the safety measurements. The Khadan-Kali cannot be treated with proper arrangements, it's just some flowers and a small idol. The acceptance of limitation is the synthesis of the duality between religion and modernity as we observe. The presence of religion in workspace and private-space is not only dependent on empirical grounds. It is clearly distinguishing the lives within and outside the colliery.

Concluding all the arguments, it is obvious that the imposition of the imagined community did not go well. In the western world, it was very much indigenous. In the case of the Orientals, the occidental culture was interpreted in a way that had no other alternative. The transformation of political power did not focus on the small voices of history. The workers' belief came out as a compulsion. To what extent it could be a choice? Also, improvising the psyche required a long duration as the transformation skipped the centuries. In the Western world, knowledge meant power and in the East, it meant salvation. In the name of salvation, the colonizers upheld the power in every aspect. Here comes the aspect of the spiritual and the material. Indeed the East was fascinated with materialistic knowledge, but the spiritual prejudices played a big role in objecting to the transformation of the psyche.⁶³ In 'Raktakarabi' the destructive spirit did not let the workers seize the power. For them, it was the desire for salvation. Replications matched with reality as the 200 years of mining (before nationalisation of coal mines) in the Raniganj-Asansol area and the tin mines of Bolivia respond in the same manner in this context. Thus the cultural composition exhibits a broader perspective of the collective imagination. Does modernity contain the value of progression or just an act of automatic paradigmatic shift? It was very interesting to cultivate how the secular aspect of capitalism upholds the conflicts along with the collectivity. Capitalism did not initiate a new form, rather it incorporated the majority which originated the mobility. Establishment of Khadan-Kali is not only an end result of 'bhaddralok' influence but also it involves the local beliefs. In the end, all the interviewees referred to social harmony. The question remains the same, the secular capitalism made it a choice or a compulsion?

Notes

1. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-77*, 37.
2. Ritzer, *Sociological Theory*, 39.
3. Ghosh T., "Raktakarabi o Smritilok," 57.
4. Ibid., 51.

5. Ghosh S., "Rabindranath's Idea of Alienation: An Interpretation of Raktakarabi," 2.
6. Basu, "Raniganjer Itihas," 24.
7. Ghosh T., "Raktakarabi o Smritilok," 56.
8. Ghosh T., "Raktakarabi o Smritilok," 51.
9. Ibid., 49.
10. Ghosh S., "Rabindranath's Idea of Alienation: An Interpretation of Raktakarabi," 2.
11. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, 3.
12. "Guidelines for Non-Exclusive and Limited Religious Use in Industrial Premises."
13. Ghatak, interview.
14. Nite, "Worshipping the Colliery Goddess", 2.
15. Dhar, interview.
16. Nite, "Worshipping the Colliery Goddess", 3.
17. Banerjee, *Logic in a Popular Form*, 43.
18. Ghosh T., "Raktakarabi o Smritilok", 53.
19. Chatterjee B., "Durga", 877.
20. Nite, "Worshipping the Colliery Goddess", 19.
21. Khan, interview.
22. Ghatak, interview.
23. Mukhopadhyay S., "Bhuture Khadan", 49.
24. "The fatally hazardous environment in Pakistan's largely unregulated coal mines."
25. Nite, "Worshipping the Colliery Goddess", 21.
26. Singh, interview.
27. Bauri, interview.
28. Mukhopadhyay M., *Vishwakarmar Sondhane*, 18.
29. Ghosh S., "Rabindranath's Idea of Alienation: An Interpretation of Raktakarabi," 11.
30. Srivastva, "Mining of Copper in Ancient India," 179.
31. Bhadra, lecture.
32. Srivastva, "Mining of Copper in Ancient India," 173.
33. Nawaratne, "The Potential of Discovery of Gold Deposits in Sri Lanka," 125.
34. Gupta, "Kalo Koylar Kotha," 125.
35. Ghosh S., "Rabindranath's Idea of Alienation: An Interpretation of Raktakarabi", 19.
36. Chakraborty, "Asansol: Ek Rail Sohorer Itikothe", 98.
37. Chandalya, "Kalo Hirer Padabali", 23.
38. Ibid., 27.
39. Haan, "Migration in Eastern India", 69.
40. Roy, "Khani Oncholer Bhasha Samassya", 61.
41. *West Bengal District Gazetteers*, 63.
42. Chandalya, "Kalo Hirer Padabali", 29.
43. Chattopadhyay H., *Internal Migration in India: A Case Study of Bengal*, 179.
44. Ibid., 275.
45. Ibid., 291.
46. Ibid., 328.
47. Ibid., 330.
48. Ibid., 337.
49. Ibid., 349.
50. Ibid., 353.
51. Ibid., 362.
52. Jash, "Bardhaman Jelar Koylakhoni Oncholer Itihas", 418.
53. Bhattacharya, "Koyla Shilpe Sromik - Firey Dekha", 113.

54. Beshra, interview.
55. Acharya, "Khoni Oncholer Lokjibon", 213.
56. Chakraborty, "Asansol: Ek Rail Sohorer Itikotha", 93.
57. Acharya, "Khoni Oncholer Lokjibon", 215.
58. Ghosh T. "Raktakarabi o Smritilok", 58.
59. Mukhopadhyay S. *Koylakuthir Desh*, 29.
60. Singh, interview.
61. Kisku, interview.
62. Ram, interview.
63. Chatterjee P., *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*, 73.