

***Dracula* and *Dracula* in Bengal and in Bengali**

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This paper, after listing some translations of Stoker's novel into Bengali, chooses to focus on two adaptations which totally Indianize the novel and its characters, particularly the titular antagonist, placing them, in one case, in newly-independent India and Calcutta, and in the other, in an India and a Calcutta around two decades after the independence of 1947. In the process, the vampire is queered in both adaptations, and, in the earlier one, so are its human opponents, whereas the later adaptation follows a more homophobic opposition of a queer alien and unambiguously heterosexual humans, despite there being no major feminine presence in it. We attempt some deductions regarding why the two Bengali adaptors took their respective stances.

Keywords: *Dracula, Bengal vampires, Bengali adaptations of Dracula*

1. *Dracula* in Bengali

A visit to College Street, the Mecca of books in Kolkata, will yield any number of adaptations of Bram Stoker's novel into Bengali. Three examples may be cited. The first, published in 1982, abridges Stoker's novel in Part 1, followed by the story of the 1966 Hammer film *Dracula Prince of Darkness* in Part 2. Part 3 renders an independent horror tale with no *Dracula* connection. The second, published in 1996, similarly abridges Stoker in the first seven sections, going on to render two more stories, one totally unrelated to *Dracula*, and then another which links *Dracula* with what the story calls the Egyptian Draco cult. The third, which appeared in 2000, and characterizes itself on the publication page as 'Collected Stories for Children', summarizes Stoker in nine sections, going on to translate another vampire story in which the word '*Dracula*' is used as a common noun, meaning 'vampire'. In addition to these three, from the collection of Professor Abhijit Gupta, we have obtained a 24-page comic-book version of Stoker's novel. Finally, there is a curious paperback product which claims on its title page to have translated Stoker's novel, but is an unabashed piece of soft porn which has nothing

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whatsoever to do with either Stoker or Dracula, but simply capitalizes on the popularity of the novel to trick the unwary buyer.³

2. Dracula in Bengal

Far more interesting are works which Indianize the Stoker novel. One of the earliest such is the 1949 *Bishalgarer Duhshasan* 'The Tyrant of Bishalgarh', by Hemendra Kumar Roy (1888-1963), a pioneer of genre fiction in Bengali for children.⁴ The second one is entitled *Bidehi Atma*, 'The Disembodied Spirit' by Sunil Kumar Gangopadhyay, which was published in 1967.⁵ The vampire count becomes Indian, hailing from 'Madhya Bharat' (modern-day Madhya Pradesh) in the first adaptation and from Assam in the second adaptation.

Dracula's name carries meaning, as all names originally did:

Vlad, or Dracula, was born in 1431 in Transylvania into a noble family. His father was called "Dracul," meaning "dragon" or "devil" in Romanian because he belonged to the Order of the Dragon, which fought the Muslim Ottoman Empire. "Dracula" means "son of Dracul" in Romanian.⁶

In both the Bengali adaptations, the 'Count' is called 'Raja,' a generic term in Indian languages, whose meaning ranges from 'king' to '(local) chief'. Roy's 'Raja' is the Rajput *Rudrapratap Singha*, ruler of the once-independent (but no longer so, the first sentence of Roy's novel makes this clear) kingdom of *Bishalgarh*. *Rudra* translates as 'terrible',⁷ and *Pratap* as 'might' or 'power'. The surname *Singha*, meaning 'lion', is a common title all over north India. The name therefore has connotations of the fearsome and the predatory. The name of the kingdom is a compound of *Bishal*, 'massive' and *garh*, 'fortress'. Gangopadhyay's Raja has the name *Kritanta Barma*, and he lives in the equally appropriately-named

³ Details of these publications are given in the Bibliography.

⁴ Hemendra Kumar Roy, "The Tyrant of Bishalgarh" (Abhyuday Prakash Mandir, Calcutta: 1949; 3rd reprint: 1964; rpt. in Roy, *The Complete Ghost Stories for Adolescents*, Vol. 2 [Patra Bharati, Kolkata: 2006, rpt. 2007]) 50-118. All textual references are to the 2007 reprint, except when the foreword to the novel is referred to or quoted. This is only found in the stand-alone novel published by Abhyuday Prakash Mandir.

⁵ Sunil Kumar Gangopadhyay, *The Disembodied Spirit* (Mandal Book House, Calcutta: 1967). All textual references are to this edition.

⁶ "Dracula: The Terrifying Truth" – Infoplease www.infoplease.com/spot/dracula1.html, 21 May 2016. Emphases as in the original internet entry.

⁷ Paradoxically, *Rudra* is also the name of the god *Shiva*, who is seen as the wrathful destroyer in the Hindu pantheon, and who has many ghosts in his service. *Rudrapratap*, like his Transylvanian prototype, does command the services of apparitions – like his three brides – and beasts.

Bhishangarh. *Kritanta* is another name for the Hindu god of death, *Yama*, who rules the underworld. The surname *Barma* is the title of a *kshatriya*, a person belonging to the warrior class in the Hindu caste system. *Bhishan* translates as 'terrible, horrible'. *Garh* has already been explained. Gangopadhyay's antagonist and the place he lives in have names which are more obviously suggestive when compared with Roy's.

Stephen D. Arata says that Dracula's 'lust for blood' denotes both 'the vampire's need for its special food, and also to the warrior's desire for conquest. The Count endangers Britain's integrity as a nation at the same time that he imperils the personal integrity of individual citizens.'⁸ Dracula's attack is therefore a case, according to Arata, of reverse colonization.

Roy makes his vampire a Rajput, by implication associated with those who have historically looted Bengal and collaborated with the British, thereby raising issues related to the colonization of India. Dracula, in Stoker's novel, engages in reverse colonization, as noted above. In *The Tyrant of Bishalgarh*, the Rajput Vampire comes to attack Calcutta, at one time the capital of British India, but which lost that status to Delhi in 1911 precisely because Calcutta, as the capital city of Bengal, became the centre of what the British called 'terrorist' activities against British rule. The challenge of this invasion by a ([pro-] imperialist) vampire is taken up by two Bengalis, Benoy and Abinash-babu.⁹ Benoy, given his profession of apprentice attorney, has some links with the establishment that British rule in India produced. It is precisely this link that Rudrapratap uses to acquire a base in Calcutta. It is Benoy's firm that helps him buy the house on the outskirts of the city. Abinash-babu, the amateur spiritualist and the Van Helsing figure, without whom Benoy would be helpless against Rudrapratap, has no such links whatsoever. Thus, it is Macaulay's effeminate Bengali who takes up the challenge of eliminating the threat posed by the Rajput (admired by and historically on the side of the British) Vampire without seeking any help whatsoever from the British-Indian establishment.

3. Sexuality in Roy's *Tyrant of Bishalgarh*

In an invaluable foreword to *The Tyrant of Bishalgarh*, Roy has this to say, among other things:

⁸ Stephen D. Arata, 'The Occidental Tourist: *Dracula* and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization', in Stoker, Bram, *Dracula* (1897, Norton Critical Edition, ed. N. Auerbach & D. J. Skal, W.W. Norton & Company, New York, London: © 1997) 465. All textual references are to this edition.

⁹ The name of our Bengali Van Helsing is related to the adjective *abinashwar*, 'imperishable', while that of the Bengali Harker, *Benoy* denotes 'submission'! One wonders whether Roy chose these names deliberately, just as Gangopadhyay would choose the name of his Assamese Dracula.

‘The Tyrant of Bishalgarh’ ... cannot be described quite as a translation of ‘Dracula’ ... The original ‘Dracula’ is a text for adults. But I have had to write keeping children in view. I have totally omitted some characters and incidents of the original book. And in many places, there is no relation between my writing and the source-text – in such cases I have become the author of an original story.¹⁰

Roy is ostensibly writing for children. However, this foreword ends with a very curious sentence:

Further, nowhere have I forgotten that ‘Dracula’ is an outdated novel and my readers are ultra-modern.

On the face of it, we have, in Roy, a Queer Rudrapratap even more persistently targetting the Bengali Harker, Benoy, than Stoker’s Dracula, who, as noted by Craft, decorously switched to women once in England.¹¹ Our Rajput Vampire, while ordering his three brides away from Benoy, thunders, “No one has any right over this man apart from me!” (71) Also, once again restraining the brides outside Benoy’s room, Roy’s Rudrapratap, most interestingly, utters in Bengali the sentence Stoker omitted from the British edition, “Tonight is mine. Your night will come tomorrow.” (81)¹² What is more, in Calcutta, every Saturday at dusk, Rudrapratap, in bat-shape, comes and perches on a jackfruit tree outside Benoy’s house, and

¹⁰ This foreword is only to be found in the stand-alone edition of the novel published by Abhyuday Prakash Mandir. It occurs on the leaf after the title page, facing the one giving publication details. Note that at least one of the straight translations of Stoker cited in the section ‘Dracula in Bengali’ above also states that it is a collection for children.

¹¹ Christopher Craft, “‘Kiss Me with Those Red Lips’: Gender and inversion in Bram Stoker’s Dracula’, rpt. from *Representations* 8 (Fall 1984) in the Norton Dracula, 444-59.

¹² Dracula’s words are quoted below as they appear in the 1899 American, rather than the 1897 British, edition:

‘Back, back, to your own place! Your time is not yet come. Wait. Have patience. **Tonight is mine.** Tomorrow night, tomorrow night, is yours!’ (52; emphasis ours, words added from fn. 2 on that page in Norton)

As the Norton editors say in their footnote to this speech, where they provide the sentence missing from the British edition, this is a bold statement ‘that Dracula plans to feed on Jonathan. Stoker’s deletion of the sentence was understandable, for it leads to a different novel, one probably unpublishable in 1897 England; Stoker may have imagined that the America that produced his hero Walt Whitman would be more tolerant of men feeding on men.’(52). In his 1872 letter to Whitman (which Stoker finally posted four years later!), Stoker did describe the American poet as ‘a man who can be if he wishes father, and brother *and wife* to’ Stoker’s soul (Our emphasis. Quoted from the *Paris Review*, <https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2016/10/31/something-blood-part-3/> 6 April 2021.

We are grateful to Vampire Scholar Andy Boylan for bringing this to our attention.

fixes his eyes – which Benoy recognizes as the Raja’s – on Benoy’s face. Benoy feels that someone is trying to drag him out of the house. Terrified, he moves away from the window. On one Saturday night,¹³ Benoy hears his name being called. Suspicious ever since his return from Bishalgarh, he shines the torch out of his window, and sees a huge bat flying away. Add to this the fact that, in Calcutta, all of Rudrapratap’s victims are male. The one victim, Pulinbihari, whom we actually see attacked, is in his bed when Rudrapratap, again in bat-shape, lies on top of him, sucking his blood, until surprised by the victim’s wife. The scene is remarkably similar to the attack by the lesbian Carmilla/ Millarca on Bertha as portrayed in Le Fanu’s vampire novella *Carmilla*. It is a man, General Spielsdorf, who interrupts the female vampire from feasting on a girl. It is Pulinbihari’s wife who similarly interrupts the male Rudrapratap feasting on her husband. The Queer is, apparently, seen in homophobic light in Roy, as in Stoker.¹⁴

Roy’s position is, however, far more complex than it appears at first sight. Turning to the antagonists of Rudrapratap, we find Roy indulging in the practice seen elsewhere in his adventure or detective narratives, where Roy’s usual tendency is to depict his male heroes as bachelors who stringently shun domesticity in favour of adventure and sleuthing. Indeed, Abinash-babu, the Van Helsing figure in *The Tyrant of Bishalgarh*, is explicitly described as a man who has avoided the troublesome business that is marriage because, while the thrill of romancing a newly-wed bride is not all that bad, it is fast over, and once children enter the equation, all that a man can look forward to is domestic drudgery. Roy’s fictional universe is a largely homosocial one, and in this universe, the heroes—Benoy and Abinash-babu in this particular novel—do not fret, as does Harker, over fiancées, because fiancées – Lucy and Mina – do not exist in this Bengali tale. Any relationship we see is between the men; it is bromance that rules the roost in Roy’s works.¹⁵

It is the second encounter between Harker/Benoy and the three brides of Dracula/Rudrapratap that brings home to us the full irony of Roy describing his readership as ‘ultramodern’ in the foreword quoted above. The second appearance of the three brides in Stoker comes towards the end of the novel. The ‘Crew of Light’ is tracking Dracula to his lair in Transylvania. Having reached the Borgo Pass, Van Helsing

¹³ Saturdays and Tuesdays are, in Hindu mythology, associated with the goddess Kali, who is attended by ghosts. Saturday, called *Shanibaar* in Bengali and Hindi, is, additionally named after the god Shani, who was cursed by his wife, as a result of which, anyone he gazed on was destroyed. In other words, he had the evil eye. When the night call is heard by Benoy, it is actually 3 a.m. of the following Sunday by western standards, though it would still be Saturday night to an oriental mind.

¹⁴ The implications of the power of the lesbian vampire are particularly disturbing in Le Fanu’s tale. See E. Signorotti, ‘Repossessing the Body: Transgressive Desire in “Carmilla” and “Dracula”’, *Criticism*, vol. 38, no. 4 (fall, 1966) 607-32, www.jstor.org/stable/23118160, accessed 18-10-2017.

¹⁵ Also, in one of the tales featuring Bimal and Kumar, the two globe-trotting swashbuckling heroes of Roy, they practically drive a *ghatak* or professional matchmaker out of their home because of the man’s attempts to convince them to get married.

and Mina Harker, the latter already infected by Dracula, proceed towards their ultimate destination. As night falls, Van Helsing draws a ring round where Mina is sitting, passing over it some of the holy wafer, breaking it into fine pieces:

Then, alas! ... the wheeling figures of mist and snow came closer, but keeping ever without the Holy circle. Then they began to materialize, till ... there were before me in actual flesh the same three women that Jonathan saw in the room, when they would have kissed his throat ... They smiled ever at poor dear Madam Mina; and ... they twined their arms and pointed to her, and said in those so sweet tingling tones ...

'Come, sister. Come to us. Come! Come!' In fear I turned to my poor Madam Mina, and my heart with gladness leapt like flame; for oh! the terror in her sweet eyes, the repulsion, the horror, told ... God be thanked she was not, yet, of them ... They could not approach me ... nor Madam Mina whilst she remained within the ring, which she could leave no more than they could enter. (317)

The temptation that the three brides subject Mina to is both incestuous and queer, and Van Helsing approvingly records how Mina is more than impervious to both aspects; she expresses horror and repulsion towards them, and is 'not ... of them'.

In Roy too the second encounter occurs during Benoy's second journey to Bishalgarh to kill Rudrapratap, when the brides appear before him and attempt to seduce him into abandoning his protective amulet (Roy's equivalent of Harker's cross). Instead of Van Helsing and Mina – a man and a woman – we have two men pursuing Rudrapratap. Out in the open, Abinash-babu, like Van Helsing, draws a ring on the ground while chanting a *mantra* or incantation Benoy cannot decipher. Benoy is told that they are completely safe within the ring, but since the vampire has physically touched Benoy, the Raja can delude him in spite of the amulet he wears. Unlike Van Helsing, Abinash-babu calmly goes off to sleep. As in Stoker, the three brides materialize. This is how Benoy describes them:

The three young women had bodies like undulating creepers. My eyes had never beheld such exquisite beauty. Fairy-tale princesses were nothing to them. Their bodies were as white as the wings of swans, and the eyes of one gleamed with a roseate light, another's with purple, and the third with blue. I had never known that eyes could gleam like that.

The three young women came close and stood next to each other.

The roseate-eyed said in a voice which sounded like the playing of a stringed instrument, "Friend, can't you recognize me?"

I recognized her, but I was struck dumb.

The purple-eyed now approached, and said in a voice sounding like a flowing brook, "Come, friend, come here. The moon wants to play with the children of the earth!"

The blue-eyed imploringly stretched out her hands, and, sounding like a surging wave, said, "Friend, o friend! Can't you recognize me today? That day, you looked so wonderful! But today I see some ugly thing made of copper dangling round your neck. Give it to me – I'll throw it into the river. Does such an ugly thing fit such a beautiful body? Give, give it to me, don't bear its weight anymore!" saying this she outstretched two hands as soft as petals.

I arose, tottering like a drunkard, oblivious of the whole world. Unknown to myself I disengaged the amulet from my throat and moved forward to step out of the ring.

The next instant, a massive pull of a hand threw me to the ground.

Angered beyond control, Abinash-babu shouted, "Thank God I suddenly woke up, or else what would have happened to you? Whom were you going to hand the amulet to outside the ring? You are a fool; I can't find words to abuse you. Sit quietly here!"

This time it wasn't fiendish laughter; suddenly from who knows where and in whose voice, arose a howl of pain never heard even in hell.

Immediately, those three exquisitely beautiful but unearthly female shapes moved further and further away. As one watched, their bodies started dissolving like some aerial substance into air. Where were the roseate, the purple, or the blue lights? A strange lamentation started sounding increasingly like a distant echo. Then even that faded away. Only the normal and full moonlight remained. (108-9)

This is far more drawn out and threatening than in Stoker. Unlike the strongly-resistant Mina, Benoy succumbs, and is barely saved by Abinash-babu who fortuitously wakes up at the last moment. The seduction is heterosexual, not queer as it was in Stoker, but it is foiled by another man.

That it is the intervention of Benoy's same-sex companion and mentor which stops the young man from crossing the circle imparts a distinct queerness to their relationship. Benoy and Abinash-babu's camaraderie resembles the erastes-and-eromenos dynamic. 'According to the paradigm', says John F. Makowski, 'the older man, the *erastes*, partners with a younger man, the *eromenos* or *paidika*, in a relationship marked by asymmetry in that the *erastes*, being more mature, is something of a mentor to the younger and serves as role model and teacher of civic and military virtue...The chief hallmark of the *eromenos* is the physical beauty of youth along with the desire for the edification that association with the *erastes* will bring'.¹⁶ Such a relationship was called pederasty, which Makowski sums up as 'homoerotic love in its conventional ancient form', 'whereby an older male loves a younger one'.¹⁷

¹⁶ Makowski 2014, 491

¹⁷ Ibid., 490

This description is applicable almost in its entirety to Abinash-babu and Benoy's relationship. The asymmetry is obvious in the constant guidance Benoy needs in his fight against Rudrapratap from Abinash-babu, with instructions to fight vampires taking on both military (since it involves combat; in the end, there is even a fight and shootout between Benoy and Abinash-babu on the one hand and the gypsies who serve Rudrapratap on the other) and civic (because Rudrapratap's presence is a threat to the entire populace of Kolkata) significance. Benoy's physical beauty is mentioned, if only in passing, by the Brides during their seduction of him, and edification comes in plenty for Benoy in his conversation with Abinash-babu, most notably after the said seduction scene. Finally, there is the age gap between them—Abinash-babu is in his fifties while Benoy is much younger, as is the case in any erastes-eromenos relationship.

Further, unlike those of Dracula, the victims of Rudrapratap die rather than turn into vampires themselves. Dracula is threatening because he can turn others into queer beings like himself, but Rudrapratap does nothing of the sort, his own queerness notwithstanding. He does not 'spread' vampirism/queerness, thereby lessening the possibility of reading queerness as a contagious disease, and challenging the very notion that sexual orientation is something transmitted (like a disease) rather than being something innate. Therefore, the associations between homosexuality and pathology are far less pronounced as far as Rudrapratap is concerned. Moreover, unlike Dracula, he makes no grandstanding statements about taking over the human race and making them all "mine", which goes with the aforementioned fact that his victims do not become vampires. Rudrapratap, at worst, is like the wolves he commands: an animal on the hunt rather than a perversion intent on spreading itself like a plague. Furthermore, Abinash-babu is not a doctor, so the queerness-versus-medicine underpinnings of the antagonism between Van Helsing and Dracula are largely absent from the fight between Abinash-babu and Rudrapratap. Most importantly, Renfield is eliminated altogether from Roy's novel, leaving even less of a possibility for queerness to be read as a disease.

Finally, a study of Roy's other writings reveals his acute, and sympathetic, awareness of alternative sexuality.¹⁸ One may therefore plausibly argue that the inclusion of homoeroticism in *The Tyrant of Bishalgarh* is not an inadvertent outcome of de-sexing the novel for children, but rather, a conscious attempt to produce at least a more homosocial, if not a more queer-friendly text than Stoker's novel.

¹⁸ The early novel *The Light of the Will o' the Wisp* (1918) shows a clear awareness of same-sex attraction between women, while the much later "The (Female) Beloved and the (Male) Lover/Loved One" (published in the mid-1950s) is a fascinating study in cross-dressing and transgender love through the colourful figure of the apparently subaltern social outcast Piru Thakur.

4. Sunil Kumar Gangopadhyay's Adaptation

Ironically, a second Bengali take on *Dracula*, published eighteen years after *The Tyrant of Bishalgarh*, opted to follow in the footsteps of Stoker rather than challenge his views the way Roy did. *Bidehi Atma (The Disembodied Spirit, 1967)* by Sunil Kumar Gangopadhyay, appeared in the same year in which the British decriminalized homosexuality even as its former colonies (like India) held on to the homophobic laws. Gangopadhyay replaces Transylvania with the remote regions of Assam, where the fictional realm of Bishalgarh is ruled by Kritanta Barma, the counterpart of Count Dracula. In the fort-like abode of this Assamese vampire, the Bengali Harker, now called Ashoke Lahiri, encounters, not three Brides, but three *male* subordinates of Kritanta Barma, one fair-complexioned and the other two dark. Once the fair one sinks his fangs into Ashoke's throat, the fury of Kritanta Barma takes on a new resonance of jealousy at being upstaged by a subordinate when the Raja drives the threesome away, with the proprietorial, "This man is mine, yes mine!" (Gangopadhyay, 43) One of the three, far more defiantly than Stoker's or Roy's Brides, shouts back, "Why will only you alone take him? A man has come after so many days – give us our share too." Far more explicitly than *Dracula* or *Rudrapratap*, Kritanta Barma says, "Once I get him to do all I want, I will give him to you. Then you can suck blood from his body as you like" (Ibid., 43-44). The second time Ashoke sees them outside his door, Kritanta Barma, like *Rudrapratap*, and *Dracula* in the American edition of Stoker's novel, and, again, more explicitly than in either, says, "All the blood tonight is mine. Come tomorrow. Tomorrow's night is allotted to you" (Ibid., 55).

All of this queers Kritanta Barma beyond any scope of doubt, but the trouble lies elsewhere: unlike Roy, where not only the antagonist but also the protagonists are queer, Gangopadhyay restricts queerness to the vampiric villains only. The Crew of Light in *Bidehi Atma* is as heterosexual as the one in Stoker's novel, though Gangopadhyay takes a different route to ensure this heterosexuality. Ashoke, the Harker of this book, is portrayed as a married man with a son, and this son, Aloke, is the Mina Harker figure here. This has the result of assuring readers that Ashoke is heterosexual (unlike the unmarried Benoy in Roy, with his attachment to an older man, Abinash-babu). Besides, by rendering this heterosexual character's son vulnerable to the queer Kritanta Barma, homosexuality is turned into a threat that must be eliminated for the sake of heterosexual marriage and parenthood to survive. Similarly, Lucy is turned into Shibu, the younger brother of Tarun, the Arthur Holmwood counterpart. Shibu's mother is also present, thus ensuring that this too is a 'normal', heterosexual household which, like Ashoke's, is under threat from the queer vampire. Thus, when Ashoke, Tarun, Arup Kar (John Seward), Sanatan Mitra (Quincey Morris) and Shankar Chakrabarti (Van Helsing) come

together to rescue Alope from the vampires, the three latter men become, presumably, surrogate uncles to the young boy who must be stopped from being seduced into queerness/vampirism.

Even more unfortunately, Gangopadhyay seems to have entirely internalized Stoker's nineteenth-century view of homosexuality as pathology. The victims of Kritanta Barma, like those of Dracula, become vampires themselves; worse still, they seem to prey only on members of their own sex, thus strengthening the image of the homosexual as a violent figure who attempts to swell his cabal by seduction, coercion, and transformation.¹⁹ Shibu, after being vampirized, is reported to be feeding on both boys and girls (Ibid., 99) but we see him attack only boys (Ibid., 102-106). Furthermore, Shankar Chakrabarti and Arup Kar are, like Van Helsing and Seward, doctors, and their expertise is sought in the fight against the queer vampires, which only underscores the influence of the medical model of homosexuality that influenced Stoker, and, it is obvious, Gangopadhyay too. Renfield also shows up in *Bidehi Atma* under the name Binayak, who, like Renfield, utters rhapsodies about Kritanta Barma. Therefore, in this adaptation, the warring sides are those of 'healthy', heterosexual men, and 'diseased' queer ones, and the outcome is a foregone conclusion. Strangely, Gangopadhyay includes a belated appearance by the three Brides of the vampire towards the end of the book, which means it is unlikely that he turned Mina and Lucy into boys merely to keep his work free of heterosexual seduction scenes. The Brides in this adaptation may address Alope as "brother" (Ibid., 160), but like the use of the term "sister" by Dracula's Brides to address Mina, the feelings expressed are hardly fraternal/sororial.

Gangopadhyay is so singularly focussed on Kritanta Barma's queerness that he is unable to add any more dimensions to the character. Since the book is set in the 1960s, and the action spread across Assam and Bengal, the tensions and clashes between the Assamese and Bengali-speaking communities that were taking place at the time could have possibly added a fascinating subtext to the tale of an Assamese vampire and the Bengali Crew of Light fighting to bring him down. But for Gangopadhyay, Assam seems to be no more than a mysterious, quasi-exotic setting (much as Transylvania was to Stoker and his fellow countrymen in the nineteenth century), and consequently, Kritanta Barma's ethnicity turns out to have no separate significance. *Bidehi Atma* has little interest in using the vampire figure's background to offer some insight into the socio-political circumstances of the era it was written in, in contrast with the way Roy uses Rudrapratap's Rajput ancestry to tacitly address the camaraderie of interest between the British and the Indian ruling class, or even the way Stoker aligns the Count with Russia to remind

¹⁹ The only exception is Kritanta Barma stalking a young girl at Sodepur, just as Dracula stalked a young woman at Hyde Park corner. But, neither here, nor anywhere else in Gangopadhyay, are we actually shown a woman victim.

his readers of the threat that country posed to Britain's colonial interests.²⁰ The contrast with Roy's work is notable in other ways as well. Rudrapratap's villainy stems from the fact that he kills, and that he is in league with the colonizers, neither of which has much to do with his sexual proclivities. But as Kritanta Barma's bite spreads his 'affliction' instead of merely claiming the victims' lives, and since little is made of his being Assamese and no commentary, subtle or prominent, offered about the perils of parochialism as manifested in the then-raging Bengali-Assamese conflict, it is his queerness that attracts the maximum attention, and hence becomes the defining tenet of his villainy.

This proves, more than anything else, that belonging to a newer generation or writing in the later half of the twentieth century does not guarantee progressive thinking. *Bidehi Atma* is dedicated to three men, one of whom is Amiya Kumar Chakrabarti, to whom Hemendra Kumar Roy dictated – on account of pen cramp – *Bishalgarh-er Duhshasan*, and who subsequently published it from his publishing house Abhyuday Prakash Mandir.²¹ It is possible, then, to assume that Gangopadhyay had read Roy's adaptation, and found the latter's embrace of homosexuality a bit too much to bear. Little else explains his fastidious adherence to the homophobic tenets of Stoker's original.

The homoeroticism in Roy, therefore, is likely more deliberate than accidental, much like the violence and the heterosexual liaisons. Considered in conjunction with the more explicit references to homosexuality in his adult novels (See above, fn. 16), the most legitimate conclusion to arrive at, on the basis of the contents of *Bishalgarh-er Duhshasan*, is that subverting the homophobia of Stoker was part of Roy's stated aim of updating an 'outdated novel'.

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²⁰ The Count's East European ancestry links him to Russia, and this link is highlighted when he travels from Transylvania to England on a Russian ship called the *Demeter* (Norton *Dracula*, 79). Relations between Britain and Russia had been strained throughout the nineteenth century, largely owing to what has come to be known as the Eastern Question.

²¹ Chakrabarti himself relates this incident in the introduction to Vol. 12 of the collected writings of Roy being published by Asia Publishing Co., Kolkata. *The Writings of Hemendra Kumar Roy*, Vol. 12 (Kolkata: Asia Publishing Co., 1992)

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