DHAKA SATURDAY, JUNE 29, 2019

ASHAR 15, 1426 BS

Mohammad Anwarul Kabir's

Wisdom and Beyond

TRANSLATED BY SUBARNA KHAN

One

Golam Kibria, the Philosophy professor of Ibrahim Khan college, has a reputation of being very student-friendly. He is so popular that the Principal himself is jealous of him. However, he has so far failed to create an excuse and complain against him. Mr. Kibria is a scholarly person, very serious about his job. Students have been achieving good grades in his subject in the board examinations as well as in National University exams. However, his hanging out with students on random occasions seems unpleasant to the Principal. Even though the he has already told Professor Kibria about this in a rude way, he doesn't seem to care.

He rather tells the Principal that to properly educate students, a teacher must maintain a friendly relationship with them. The Principal has not been able to come up with any counter argument.

Two

During break time, students hang out in the

college field. They form a circle around Golam Kibria as they listen to his words. On one such occasion, he is heard to say, "Don't get married to the one you love...."

"Why not, Sir?"

Anik throws this question at him shrply. He has been in a relationship with his classmate Rina for two years. Most probably this is the reason why he got impulsive. Just like Anik, a lot of students keep on looking at their teacher eagerly.

Mr. Kibria starts laughing, "The lessons we learn at school come in handy in our professional lives, and sometimes they don't. But there are lots of lessons outside the walls of formal education that are earned through life experience. We can call these lessons pseudophilosophy or wisdom. I said that thing on the basis of pseudophilosophy. Get married to someone you've never been in love with. Lovers get married only to bring disappointment in their lives."

As soon as the professor stops speaking, the outspoken Dipon hurls a question, "Sir, is it based on your life experience?"

The professor gently smiles.

Three

The principal has made a serious complaint against Professor Kibria to the governing body, claiming that the teacher has been encouraging the students to be in relationships, but has also told them not to marry the ones they love. This issue will be addressed in today's urgent meeting. The Upazila chairman is present among them as the chairman of the governing body of this college. He asks the professor directly, "Are these allegations against you true?"

The court scene of Socrates' trial pops up before Professor Kibria's eyes and he smiles.

Mohammad Anwarul Kabir is a poet and micro-story writer, presently teaching Computer Science at AIUB; Subarna Khan is an avid reader and also publishes her poems and short stories and book reviews on G+, Mirakee, Wattpad and many online platforms.







Violet Flower

TOMA ROY

I can see you You are a blooming flower Looking at me

Your violet petals are scattering Scattering like my dream does Your petals attract me

Your centre is yellow Yellow like an egg yolk But for me it is the sun

Oh, my violet flower Your name is unknown to me But your egg yolk like centre Displays a hopeful future to me

Your centre is the sun
Brightening with hope
But it doesn't have life
As life doesn't exist in you.

You are nothing
But a flower made of paper
My dreams are nothing
But the sting of chili pepper.

Toma Roy is a last semester MA student of Creative Writing at ULAB.

Distance and Togetherness: A Reading of *La Nuit Bengali* and *Na Hanyate*

ABDULLAH AL MAMUN

Written forty years apart from each other, La Nuit Bengali (Bengal Nights) by Mircea Eliade and Na Hanyate (It Does Not Die) by Maitreyi Devi are yet two sides of the same coin. While some may call them another version of unsuccessful teenage love, the New York Times described the two novels as "an unusually touching story of young love unable to prevail against an opposition whose strength was tragically buttressed by the uncertainties of a cultural divide." They are pitched differently; one being written as a fascinating and exotic love-story by a young European explorer, the other a mature Indian woman recalling and exploring her own past in response to

Interestingly, both these narratives have a different development (although having similarity in events) where various discourses force to their separate points of views. The eventual meeting of the two protagonists, their coming together, and departure in the context of their cultural, racial, gender, familial, and regional differences lead to their play of life. Yet among all these dissimilarities, "love" continues to remain the common factor without which the last meeting between them more than four decades later would not have been possible.

the fervent tale.

These two novels— one published in 1933, and the other more than 40 years later in 1973, in response to the first by two renowned intellectuals retell the story of their love affair from two widely divergent perspectives. These dissimilar points of views work as a catalyst to their "separation." Eliade (1907-1986), best known as a theologian, tells his version of the romance with Devi in a thinly disguised autobiographical novel. While his one is written before his 30s, Devi's, on

the other hand, comes around her 60s, at a very experienced and mature stage of life. It is vividly discernible in La Nuit Bengali that Eliade sees in Maitreyi Devi what the West has stereotypically seen in the East: a mysterious pool of spirituality, "irrationality" and sensuousness. And Devi in her rejoinder Na Hanyate (It Does Not Die) goes in contrast to Eliade refuting his claim of physical relationship mainly and his miscomprehension of Indian culture, etiquette and hospitality. She breaks down the West's stereotypical notion about the East and emphasizes the psychological and philosophical union rather than the physical. Additionally, a sort of self-censorship is also seen in her narrative as well which is implicit in her words.

Both novels attempt to recount the identical history of a romance set in the colonial past of India. Both tell the story of an actual, cross-cultural romance that unfolds in the pre-independent period of India. Interestingly, these two textually interrelated documents possess a serious mismatch in the perspectives of the authors. Facts are disputed here most notably whether or not the romance involved physical union or something beyond that attachment. In Devi's recount it is clearly evident that love is not only and simply the physical intercourses; rather love has deeper association with mentality, family, friends, relatives, and society. She in her story says Sergei (A countryman of Eliade who had read

his novel):

"If he (Eliade) really was so much in love, why did he run away at one snubbing from my father? Had he no duty towards me? Have you ever known of

such cowardice?" (Devi 10)

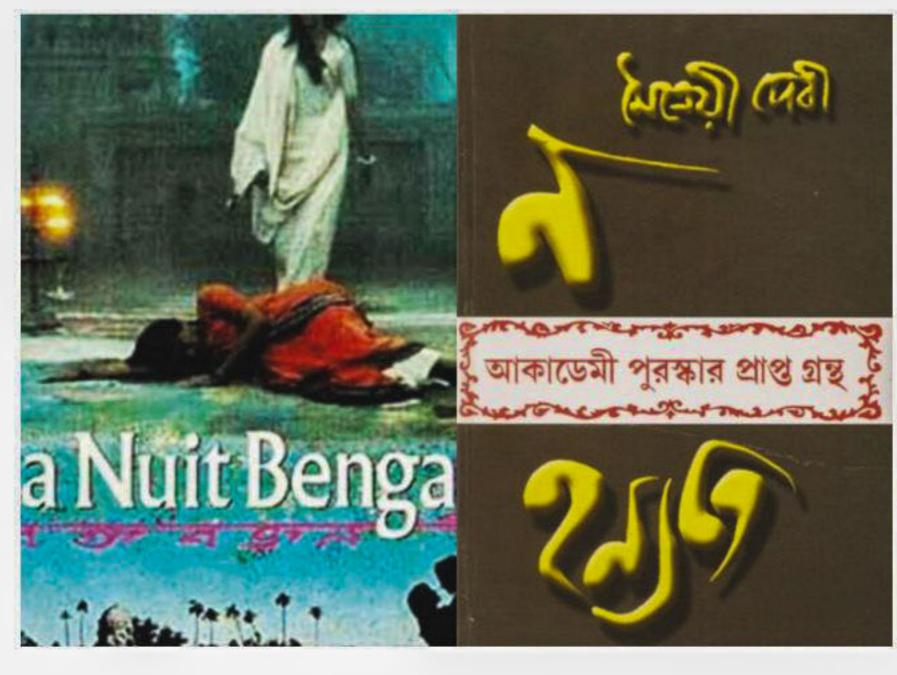
These lines by Devi and her thoughts

on life's fulfillment affirm how much both love and family are important for her. She neither could leave her father, nor be with her beloved. Her education, ideology and philosophy does not allow her to get segregated from her society and culture. These doings and beliefs by Devi substantiate her devotion to Indian mores and values.

It is not unlikely that in a larger context of intercultural exchanges there

will be collisions and conflicts. For example, In La Nuit Bengali and in Na Hanyate Western consciousness and its focus on ego (superiority), individuality, veracity and science collide with Indian consciousness and its focus on unity, scholarship, philosophy and truth that makes the collision almost inevitable. For example, when Eliade is told to leave Devi's house, he seems to think that the girl also should bear some responsibilities. But he never hears from her. Devi, on the other hand, feels it is Eliade who has to come forward and assure Devi's family, especially her father in winning her hand. The beliefs also collide in Eliade's general attitude which shows his suspiciousness of Sen's (Devi's father) courteousness and his offer to his young Eoropean pupil to reside with his family. He starts believing that they actually want him as their son-in-law. Interestingly, the reply from Devi ex-

plains this particular gesture as a sample of Mr. Sen's belief of liberal education. He felt that if Eliade resided with them, there would be an opportunity of the exercise of Indian and Western culture together. In addition, Eliade would get a home as he came to India from a far-off country. Moreover, Mr. Sen admired him as he found him to be an excellent learner of Sanskrit. Indian culture



certainly did not really invite inter-racial marriage as the young Eliade imagined. Apart from the familial and cultural conflicts, there are some gender and racial clashes which are also found in Eliade's description as if he were rediscovering Indian women and race. Firdous Azim identifies this as the typical western observer positioning himself as an explorer who seems to ascertain the secrets of the "other" world. The woman is seen to be the repository of those secrets, made to open the secret to the explorer. On his first encounter with Devi, Eliade observes, "Her (Devi) uncovered legs, darkish face, crimsoned lips, deep black eyes, and slightly curly hair reminds me (Eliade) of the bohemian girls of our country." Again, the passage following this episode castigates the native for her lack of knowledge of western ways, Devi

who does not know where to look.

Finally, age plays a significant role in both narrations. By the time Devi writes her part, it seems to be far more graced with maturity, experience, knowledge, and understanding compared to Mircea Eliade's novel, which is more like a narrative written by an angry teenager decrying the injustice he has suffered. Of course, Devi wrote her version much later and she seems to exonerate Eliade, her father, and her society by glorifying the theme of celestial or platonic love that is beyond physicality, culture, and race reminding us the lyric from Rabindranath Tagore "Tumi robe nirobe hridoye momo."

Abdullah Al Mamun is currently pursuing an MA in Comparative Literature at Jadavpur University.