

## ***Buro Angla*: Re-evaluating the Notion of ‘Experience’ through the Interplay of the ‘Big’ and the ‘Small’ as Categorical Imperatives**

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### **Abstract:**

Underneath its apparentness of being the chronicle of a child, meant specifically for child readers, Abanindranath Tagore’s (1871-1951) *Buro Angla* (1953) actually encapsulates issues of human experiences, issues that make subjective consciousness function categorically in the construct of meaning. The thumb-nailed protagonist Ridoy, of *Buro Angla*, is made to undergo a reversal of his normative practice of experiencing life as he sets for himself a passage (through the medium of dream) to an absurd world of the unknown/meaningless. By situating Ridoy in between the spaces of the ‘big’ and the ‘small’, Abanindranath appears to contemplate on how one’s ontological journey of ‘being’ to ‘becoming’ reflects the self’s coming to terms with new experiences and meanings that every changing phase of life channels in. *Buro Angla*, as such sets to re-order things-in sizes and in values, in its depiction of changing perspectives essential in experiencing a multifaceted meaning of life. This paper will try to understand this very strategy of the usage of the binaries of big and the small in representing human understanding of the meaning of a holistic existence. In attempting to unravel the trope of size and positioning, the paper will also aim at discerning Abanindranath’s supplanting the curricular discourses of geography and history with alternate methodical means for deciphering those. This will in turn generate an insight into the artist-author’s construct of ‘national’ identity that gets validated through the relational realm of lived time and space.

**Keywords:** Experience, Self, Dream, Meaningless/Meaningful, Absurd, Big/Small, Perspective, Discourse, Geography and History, Nation.

Usually read as the chronicle of a child's coming to terms with a new mode of existence, Abanindranath's Tagore's (1871-1951) *Buro Angla* (1953) captures a much deeper understanding of life corresponding to the individuality of an author who refuses denial of history and time. The child in the text, in fact, becomes the conveyance of transgression from 'being' to an order of 'becoming' and as such gets placed within the context of a connotative surveillance of self-experiencing and contemplation. The journey from 'being' to 'becoming' that Abanindranath depicts in *Buro Angla*, appears to replicate the Nietzschean (1844-1900) idea of describing something about the world we inhabit and know. Nietzsche's idea of 'becoming', the process of knowing, relies on the Heraclitun (c.535-c.475B.C.) wisdom of repudiating 'what does not become'. Nietzsche writes- "But Heraclitus will remain eternally right with his assertion that being is an empty form (Kaufmann "Reason", 2). As such 'becoming', for Nietzsche "is not moral but an aesthetic phenomenon" (Nietzsche 113) In *Buro Angla*, the process of 'becoming' that Abanindranath's protagonist goes through, is also achieved through the realization of an aestheticism. But this aesthetic understanding also cognises role of the moral element in the formation of a subjective consciousness that tries to reconcile opposites and transgress the chaos. Abanindranath's initial introduction of these opposites can be read in terms of Derrida's (1930-2004) 'différance'. He seems to probe into the space where Derrida and Nietzsche converge, where the experience of 'becoming' gets comprehended with the sets of opposites. Christoph Cox writes that Derrida's "neologism is perhaps a better name for the complex notion of becoming" (Cox 203). It captures both senses of becoming we find in Heraclitus and Nietzsche. In effect Derrida's 'différance' is an assemblage of differences and opposites, as a productive conflictual movement, the active moving discord of different forces and differences of forces. Abanindranath deals with the aesthetic phenomenon of becoming by making his protagonist understand the differences of the big and the small, the politics of dualisms in existence. He places his protagonist in an 'aporia' (a puzzle) as Derrida calls it and undermines Husserl's (1859-1938) apprehension of temporality. As we try to decipher Abanindranath's portrayal of the self, employing Derrida's concepts, we find that it stands in close connection to Derrida's idea that "what is really going on in things, what is happening is always to come" (Caputo 31). It is this very state of the unpredictability of a future with a pre-ordained meaning that makes the protagonist of *Buro Angla* reassess the categories of the big and the small. As will appear in the course of the essay, Abanindranath, however, does not halt here. With an elaborative meditation

on the issues of essential unity and reconciliation, he brings in another order of signification for the self to realise. This depiction of the self's location in an array of constructive possibilities, in *Buro Angla*, then transcends the normative generic categories of children's literature to enter into a broader zone of universal revelation/re-evaluation of humanly cognition. Abanindranath craftily blurs the boundary line between childhood and manhood, reality and dream or freedom and attachment. The result is that his readers get stuck in an absurdist avenue of meaningful meaninglessness.

*Buro Angla* is the story of the adventure of Ridoy, the menace who undergoes a transformation in his size under the curse of Lord Ganesha. Ridoy, a resident of the small village of Amtali, indulges himself in a series of mischievous acts, starting from inserting rats into the nests of birds to dispersing wasps inside cowsheds or hiding cockroaches in the pots of pickle stored by his mother. His motive of playing pranks on those around bars the establishment of kinship of any sort with his home and its surroundings. Ridoy's experiencing of his home is an objective one owing to his disapproval of the beauty underlying his small hut and its neighbourhood. With the continuation of his misconducts, Ridoy, in the absence of his parents, attempts to unlock the old casket of his house, the one which holds a religious significance to his mother. As he struggles to open the trunk up, slumber takes over him. Ridoy then discovers Lord Ganesha and his mouse unravelling themselves before him. Succumbing to his behavioural traits of annoying others, the twelve-year old troublemaker devises a plan to entrap Ganesha and his mouse when it so happens that the plan conversely turns out to be catastrophe for his own. Ganesha's wrath on being defiled brings in a curse for Ridoy. He finds himself as being transformed into one with the stature of a thumbnail. Ridoy's constant pleas for mercy prove to be futile as Ganesha turns a deaf ear to those. Feeling helplessly forlorn, Ridoy plans to visit Mount Kailasha, the abode of the God to seek redemption. It is at this juncture that he begins his journey with the aid of the lame goose, tamed by his mother, posing as his soul saviour. Abanindranath chooses to employ the metaphoric journey of Ridoy as a trope for featuring the worth of an individualistic knowledge of one's own homeland. As such he makes Ridoy undertake an extensive journey covering small localities to widespread forts, islands, forests, mountains and waterbodies. Ridoy re-discovers the grandeur of his beautiful country in the course of the journey, the journey where the animal world ceases to function differently from that of the human. The boy finds no dearth of communicative language in between these two.

The journey opens new vistas of experience and understanding for Ridoy. It evokes in him a love for his small home and an urge to return to his own space of belonging. The overlap of nostalgia and melancholia finally acts as a stimulant to bring back Ridoy to his real time and space- the space that he had indeed sought to escape. Ridoy realises that he has traversed the space of wonder and mysteries only through a dream. His sojourn of fantasy meets an end with his mother prosaically reminding him of his lack of maturity as he wakes up in a regular mode.

The fantasy of a child's morphed world being the fulcrum of *Buro Angla*, the text thoroughly fortifies the mode of a magic-realism actuated through the element of daydreaming. The reader too, is henceforth bestowed with a vision that betrays an established schema of forethought and knowledge. Abanindranath's identity as a creative artist, in fact, draws its strength from this very construct of a non-real world-the magnified realm of an imaginative excess. Almost all characters in his works emerge as some who have, at some point of time, been conferred with a new understanding of the self via experiencing the subtleties of the life process. There is always a self-recognition that characters undergo, and this leaves us in an alley of interrogative analysis of existence of both the mundane and the transcendental order. The whole of *Buro Angla* abounds in the turning down of the known. Ridoy's journey facilitates the transgression of his as well the reader's everyday world so as to ascend to an acknowledging the spatial worth in the construct of a quintessential living. The constant mobility as depicted in the text lands us up in a momentum of poetic creativity that refuses stagnation. It conforms to Abanindranath's theorisation on creativity as a continuous process, as an uncontrolled pleasure, '*aniyantrito ananda*' (Tagore BA 124) as he terms it. This becomes in turn like the uncontrolled dream (of Ridoy) - a state of being/ non-being that recurs throughout our lives without a halt.

Abanindranath's ideation on creative artists as enquirers who pose innumerable questions before nature in order to unravel the mysteries of life (Chanda 33) gets implemented through the presentation of a self as a perennial accumulator of new experiences. This self is one that situates itself in a sort of in-between ness of the small and the big, the lower and the higher, animal and the human worlds, home and the world and dream and the terrestrial zones. Interestingly the protagonist too, in *Buro Angla*, is placed in a transitional phase. Ridoy is an adolescent – encapsulating the passage of the powers of boyhood to manhood. He becomes that essential modal point that emanates the primary existential question of where to derive experience from.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century European Romantics attested the child's cerebral faculty because they tried to view the familiar world with the freshness and wonder of a child. To be bewildered by looking at the familiar meant that the poet must regain a special simplicity, which Wordsworth and Coleridge compared to that of a child. Coleridge declared in a lecture- "The poet is one who carries the simplicity of childhood into the powers of manhood; who with a soul unsubdued by habit, unshackled by custom, contemplates all things with the freshness and wonder of a child" (Abrams 286). This partly led to a renovated meaning of life whenever it tended to reach a 'telos' of experience. Abanindranath views childhood as endowed with a freshness that happens to discover newer possibilities of existence and understanding. It is through deferring from the rational that the child's vision gets juxtaposed with an order of cognition which otherwise appears insignificant. Childhood stands as the upholder of a potency that has the capability of challenging everything associated with the hackneyed experiences of routine labour. The child thereafter gets equated with the poet, the creative individual who turns down the linearity of any mechanical order of experience: "*Kaajer jagate chalachal korte korte ei otyonto kaajer parkala eto shakto hoye amader chokhe-dekha, shune-dekha chhunye dekhar upore bose jaay je mone hoy chirodin eibhabe dekhe cholai bujhi sob manusher kaaj; kintu otyonto chhelemanush jara tara amader ei dharona ulte diye jay, kobira ulte diye jay, shilpiri ulte diye jaay, ar thik sei manushgulikei amra balakpagal nirbudhhi bole uriye diye nijeder budhhimottar dabi swapraman kore choli*" (Tagore BSP 25) (Stirring through the world of work for a long time, certain ideas perch on our outlook and perception in a manner that we tend to believe that it is the only way to see the world eternally; but these beliefs are challenged by the ones who are naive, the poets, the artists, whom we ignore by calling them childlike and imbecile only to establish the claims of our intellect). Abanindranath's Ridoy is able to 'see' because he wants to indulge himself in an active mediation between that which is readily available and that which is not. This mediation arises out of the wonder that Ridoy's childhood provides him with. As we approach the end of *Buro Angla* we are made to confront the whole process of choosing or abandoning the elements that concretise experience. The process germinates a dilemma. Whether to reconstruct an untrammelled path of knowledge aided with a fresh dream-like vision like that of Ridoy or whether to be satiated by the comfort zone of one's own reality is the question that crops up. This seems somehow to make the reader as well as the author himself consent again to the in-between position of experience. The latter is now shown to be indebted to the dualities of

both old and new. Here emerges a conglomerate of magic and realism, of the romantic and realistic approaches to life. The process of amalgamation is no kind of prescriptive inference. Rather Abanindranath defers from a closely-knit conclusion by initiating an awareness of the continuous renewal and never-ending mechanisms of life that resembles a journey much like that of Ridoy's. Thus, the functioning of Truth in 'being' gets rebuilt on a simplistic superstructure of imagination rooted in reality.

There would indeed be less chances of paucity of reality in the oeuvre of a creative artist like Abanindranath given his position in a crucial period of national history. *Buro Angla* sets to let one perceive the topography of one's place of belonging. This overlaps with the foregrounding of self-awakening culminating in with an experiential self-questioning as well as a need for recognition of a circumscribing locale. Geography becomes an intermediary, rather than a discourse, for the constant dialoguing between the self and its surroundings- the given prerogative for individual sustenance. Hence the close adherence to source text *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils* (Selma Lagerlof, 1906) does not become, for Abanindranath, an unavoidable necessity. He succumbs to a verifiable knowledge of the geography of his country; yet presents that from a sort of anti-curriculum referral point. This is an understanding placed in sharp contrast to a superficial construct of a discursive education. Abanindranath's aim is to revoke in his countrymen a feeling of attachment to idea of home. Ridoy's being empowered with the ability of seeing the country from his different positioning caters to counteracting the vague, hardly accessible idea of nation laid down in textbooks. The geography that the author-artist represents in the text therefore escapes the confines of maps ("*Bhugoler ek ekta patay koto nod nodi parbat seigulo porei to prithibi dekhar kaaj hoye jete parto*" (Tagore BSP 192) (One could have experienced the whole world through the pages of Geography books which are full of mountains, rivers and lakes and pertains to a wisdom of exploring and seeing). The author meticulously depicts the potency of the sense of wonder in the human mind that gets renewed with each discovery enabled by an individualistic and a heterogenic way of seeing of one's space. Strategically this has a conjunct with Abanindranath's schema of letting his colonised countrymen rethink of formulating a bond with the nation. The bond is to be conceived through an essentially subjective consciousness that has mobility like that of *Buro Angla*'s journey. A nationalistic rendition of the literary medium is thus made available by Abanindranath. The

imaginative travel narrative of fantasy does not nullify the real chronotope of Indian struggle for freedom.

In his presentation of geography then Abanindranath simultaneously takes cognisance of history. This history again is the resultant product of the ‘hysteria of imagination’ (Tagore CG 440) as Abanindranath defines it. He substantially contributes to a nationalistic revival by articulating historical/popular narratives through the aesthetics of a storyteller in *Buro Angla*. We have then the age-old *Mahabharata* presented in a comically native narration. Regional religious myths like that of ‘*Biswakarma*’ (the Bengali version of the Hindu God of architecture) as the divine mechanic have been brought alive. The interpretative capacity of the author as a manipulator of myths thus strengthens the notion of individual treatment of a pre-ordained order. An acknowledgement of the indigenous versions of social practices always stood for Abanindranath the crux for building a national cultural identity. Regional details validate themselves through a lyrical meticulousness of the native tradition of ‘*chhora*’ (rhymes meant especially for children). The deployment of an alternative version of canonical narratives amplifies the subordination of broader category of the national to the local. The binaries of the ‘big’ and the ‘small’ thereby get turned down.

Cogitation on size does virtuously run throughout the whole of *Buro Angla* as a constitutive motif. Ridoy’s transformation into a dwarfish figure postulates an undermining of the hierarchical structure of power implementation that valourises the dominant. The mischievous boy who had once been a torment to the small powerless animals is shown to live with the mercy of petty animals; the latter now endowed with might. He has to experience the reversal of a system which he has been acquainted with for so long. The reversal of fortune theme brought in by Abanindranath emerges as the metaphor for the transient nature of power that puts the ‘big’ and the ‘small’ upside down at specific points of time and space. Interestingly this may be considered as an oblique marker of the colonial psyche that a cultural reformer as Abanindranath sets to mould.

In the chapter *Hangpal* (Tagore BA 173) of *Buro Angla*, the thumb sized Ridoy’s situation is again shown to be in a state of flux. From the meek entity seeking shelter amongst animals Ridoy, here, turns out to be a saviour, a hero, though small, yet ideally matching his spatial significance. By a subservience to the reality of his country Abanindranath attempts a

juxtaposition of the denominators of size, power heroism in the context of 20<sup>th</sup> century Indian nationalistic consciousness. He tries to throw open the nomenclatures of hero by making his native readers ponder on its meanings and scope.

In effect it is more of the category of the human self than that of a hero that *Buro Angla* prioritises. The text codifies the romantic journey of the self from its constricted shield of habitual propensity to that transcendental and unified living— to which Samuel Taylor Coleridge gives the name of “One Life” (Abrams 65). Ridoy’s ‘becoming’ from ‘being’ becomes synonymous to his perceiving a utopic order of living amid the vastness of differential substantiation of the earth. This is not regardless of the adversities of existence. It mentors the boy, in the process of being a man, that the reciprocation of the universe accordingly befits the requirements of life. Ridoy finds shelter from the shivering cold by covering himself with the feathers of the lame goose (otherwise viewed as worthless); the hay sticks spread on the marshes relieve him from the harsh climatic conditions (*Chaka Nicobar*) (Tagore BA 158). Abanindranath also devises the refrain of man’s coming to terms with every possible means of valuing the meaning of life with a capital ‘L’. The constituents of this ‘Life’ are heterogeneous and hence a single viewpoint becomes irrelevant as the yardstick for measuring experience. It is therefore that the author places Ridoy on different planes. Sometimes he is posited in the azure and his tiny size then equates with the sizes of earthly things as observed from above. His small stature thereby effaces disgrace. This is again Abanindranath’s play with the politics of size. Readers, in no time, have the inkling of Wordsworth’s formulation: “Throughout objects derive their meaning not from what they are actually in themselves but from that has been bestowed on them by the eyes of the observer” (Selincourt 705).

The basic unity of man with the universe being established, the author then contemplates on the other aspect of this harmonious living. In chapter *Hangpal* of *Buro Angla* Ridoy is metamorphosed to a “*valo manus*” (a good human being) (Tagore BA 176) as the author calls him instead of “*valo chhele*” (a good boy). This ‘becoming’ presupposes humanity’s unity with even the smallest living creatures on earth and an essential understanding of the worth of their existence thereby attaching a ‘moral’ content to ‘becoming’. The regulating principle of both the anthropocentric world and that of animals has love, in its various manifestations, as the unifying category. Abanindranath acknowledges ‘individual love’ in the anecdote of the lame goose and



the beautiful duck being enthralled by a couple-bond or Ridoy's recounting his parental love. Plus, he also fictionalises the notion of universal love through the protagonist's regained connection with the world. Since the underlying inertia of Life force is love, the denouncement of harmonious coexistence becomes absurdist for Abanindranath. All episodic narrations of struggle for power retain the garb of a comically meaningless fancy throughout *Buro Angla*. It is the comic grandeur that the author employs to arrive at the serious inference on the worthlessness of duality of the strong and the weak. Abanindranath seems to feature the Indian philosophical dictum of parts joining the whole to render a unity of formative reality. Masked in the subtlety of a humourous denotation, the episode of *Tung-Snnata-Ghum*, in *Buro Angla*, does enumerate the idea of the Indivisible, the Upanishadic 'Aveda' in the realm of human experience. Hence we find the lama of *Buro Angla* interpreting a philosophy through a connotative lyricism- "*Abhed hoilo bedh e boro birodh/ Ki jani kahare aji kar hoy krodh Bhrantajeeb onto na bujhiye koro dwando,/ Karo kichhu thik nai kebal kaho mando;/ Uhoyer mon tore mantrana ami koi,/ Tarke nahi mele kichhu gondogol boi;/ Shuno bakya gurubakya korechhe pramanya;/ Eke pancha panche ek, nai kichhu anyo!*" (Tagore BA 205) (*Divisible and Indivisible is in a conflict today/ without knowing who is angry on whom / the misguided one wrangles without knowing a resolution / each tries to find more evil in the other one / I advise both the souls / quarrel can only lead to distress / some wise men had this proven / the five elements of the body are found in all men*).

A meditative faculty of the author, over the wholesomeness of existence, drives the thematic unity of *Buro Angla*. For atheist Abanindranath, an ideation on worshipping lay in his belief in the individual capability of exploring the earthly unadulterated beauties. Abanindranath talks of the presence of a new 'third eye' in a creative individual that enables him to see into the internal beauty of things (Tagore BSP 36). Ridoy is as such endowed with the ability of beholding the scenario of a painterly landscape. Each figuration of the pictorial revelation has therefore a sensation of mirth to provide to the readers. Abanindranath apprehends dream as a connector between a lived reality and a desired order of achievement. It is not without reason, therefore, that Ridoy sees himself as a hero in the journey to his world of his discovery. In his dreams he constructs a world that is in absolute synchrony with his fantasies. His dream vision thus lets him visualise an identity that is constructed with his own imagined notion of perfection, a perfection that betrays a generalised notion of size and might (he, being the thumb-nailed). The

theme of curse that permeates through the text in fact unfolds itself as a blessing for Ridoy and thereby for us too. Abanindranath's aesthetics undermines the role of divinity in individual free play of an emotional excess. The emotional realm has a functional role to play in man's understanding of the animated spirit of nature and universe. This is far more superior to the divine intervention in human affairs. Such theorisation finds its place of veneration when in chapter the chapter *Assami Burunji*, (Tagore BA 222) Ridoy encounters Ganesha. He is astounded by the hilarious stature this so-called god has. Abanindranath exhausts his emotional abundance to deconstruct the notion of power with its associative meaning of the divine hierarchy imposed by the superficialities of a human religious discourse. Humour becomes the medium for such social evaluation. For critics, who attack Abanindranath for upholding a religious signification in his painting '*Bharatmata*' (1905), this politics of representation in *Buro Angla* might aid in the interrogation on the role of religion in the psyche of the modern Bengali intelligentsia.

The indebtedness to indigenous tradition was of no meager value to 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century creative Bengali writers/artists. *Buro Angla* receives its essence from a European text and yet in no way adhere to the falsities of colonial acculturation. It becomes very emblematic of an Indian-ness receptive of the literary riches of the other. *The Wonderful Adventures of Nils* supplies the primary thematic ingredients to Abanindranath. He fixes it in his own cultural/social/literary idiom. The genre of a dream-allegory had been an already tilted field in Bengali literary history. Abanindranath takes it to a further height by throwing open the possibilities of doing away with the gap that exists in between our fanciful dreaming and severities of our small lives. This he does by guaranteeing an extensive space to which our real small selves can belong to amidst a big universe. The Indian *Upanishadic* philosophy of the eternal connection between man and nature codifies the journey of the human soul towards the centrality of the universe. The 'small' thus merges with the 'big' and provide meaning to all strata of existence. The Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant's (1724-1804) questioning premise of 'time' and 'space' in the construct of experience thus gets answered. Kant considered time and space as *a priori* categories within our knowledge that become indispensable in the possibility of experience. To Kant the working principles of time and space cannot be derived from experience because he contends, "...because experience could not impart to them absolute universality nor apodictic certainty. We should only be able to say that common experience teaches us that it is so, but not

that it must be so. These principles are valid as rules under which alone experience is possible; they teach us before experience, not by means of experience” (Wood 50). Abanindranath defines experience by employing altered notions of time and space within the realm of imagination and the creative zeal. One finds, in Abanindranath’s contemplation, the opposite of a Kantian universal order. Throughout the whole of *Bageesswaree Shilpa Prabandhabali* (1941) Abanindranath’s notion on art and aesthetics derives its strength from the idea of a cautious withdrawal of oneself from the pre-given to arrive at what he calls ‘*swatantrata*’ (individuality). He contends that the success of art begins at the expense of discarding rules, ‘moral laws’ to put it in a Kantian term: “*niyamer modhye dhora manusher chesta, notun barne, notun notun chhande boye chollo niyamer seemana chhariye thik thikanar baire. Prithibite manush ja kichhu dite perechhe se tar ei nirmiti- jeta parimitir modhye dhara chhilo take aparimiti diye chhere dilo aparimita raser dike*” (Tagore BSP 18) (The endeavours of men, seized within the confinement of regulations, transgressed all limits to travel beyond any certainty with new hues and rhythms. That was the foundation of his contribution to the world - he let go of all restricted thoughts boundlessly, to gain something incalculable). Beauty defines creativity and the latter derives vitality from the intransient association with the creative powers of the universe. His ideation on it emerges as the following: “*Bahiranga ja tar sange antoronger abichhedyo milan ghotiye sundar bartaman holo*” (Tagore BSP 163) (A beautiful present was crafted through the inseparable unison of the internal and external world). Beauty, in being thus conceived, becomes a mystery (*rup o rahasya*), a celebratory realm of magic and charm. In accrediting the particularity of a magical facet to art, Abanindranath goes on to claim that art transcends the constrictions of ‘laws’ in its experimentations with beauty-“*Rachanate sthan kaal patrer seema otikrom korar jonyo notun notun upayer srishti hoyei chollo...*”(Tagore BSP 159) (New creations were constantly emerging to go beyond the measures of time, place and character stereotypes in literature). Beauty caters to an individual realisation that stands irrespective of the any specific chronotopic order. It thus becomes a thing in itself, the ‘ich’ that the German Romantics set to begin with- “*Rup se nijete nije protisthito.*” (Tagore BSP 193) (Beauty is self-established). It realises itself in an aesthetic refinement of that the sublime, ‘*madhuri*’ in Abanindranath’s words. The resultant of such sublime vivacity is experienced in joy, the order of being which pertains to an enchantment of the soul. “*Jnara sotyi rupdakhha*’, Abanindranath says, ‘*tnader anander sesh nei, chohk mon sob diye ekti rupke tnara bichitrabhabe dekhe jachhen notun notun-chrokhal*

*dhore notun*" (Tagore BSP 184) (The ones who are expert in perceiving beauty, Abanindranath says, "they have no dearth of joy, they can discover the same beauty uniquely every time through their senses"). An unexhausted renewal of beauty thus awakens, in its seeker, a variety of its expressive manifestation. With each of its renewal, beauty greets its connoisseur with a version of truth never achieved before. It is this very way of experiencing truth and beauty that Abanindranath uses to define morality (distinct from moral regulations) in the context of Ridoy's 'becoming'.

Abanindranath's romantic consciousness on the vividness of a re-defined metaphysical mobility of the soul gets metaphorically harnessed in the depiction of Ridoy's journey towards the vast universal expanses of time and space. The blank state of mind of Ridoy in *Buro Angla* serves as the acquirer of experiences, experiences that emerge out of individual vision, experiences that also add on to the power to create, in Abanindranath's formulation. Ridoy swerves from being the Johnsonian archetype of *Every Man*, the '*kee kora jaay*' (what to do) the almost empty mental state lets him decide his course of gaining experiences in a way that suits his individual purpose. His effort to undertake the journey to Manassorobar thereafter leaves him with things or events never seen or heard before. The activation of the sense of vision thus asserts a mobilization of the other sensory organs too in the protagonist. Experiencing becomes a summation of individual perception of senses. As soon as Ridoy begins seeing the world on his own terms, he learns to sometimes bear the natural orders of the extremities of heat or cold: "*Bechara samasta din khete payni. Tar kebal kanna aste laglo*" (Tagore BA 160) (The poor one could not eat the whole day. He felt like crying). With developing a refinement of senses, thus, Ridoy succeeds in discovering the meticulous beauty of the world, adorned in its own hues. He has then his vision renewed. Abanindranath here makes the creative artist as one whose reciprocity to the creation of earthly landscape gets attuned to his visionary powers. Ridoy is thus made a poet who learns to visualise and hence comprehend an outwardly unseen and undiscovered world of universal communion of the natural order. The author-artist's unaccountability of deism gets the spiritual supplementation of an age-old Indian philosophical understanding. Taking his cue from the Sanskrit literary tradition, Abanindranath also executes the motif of curse in *Buro Angla*. Also, the text begins and ends with the curse as an idea suited to the supernatural setting of the medieval cult of storytelling.

An immediate deliberation that follows such estimation of Abanindranath is the question of why the author had chosen a text of the 'other' to vitalise his own tradition. The possible answer can be that the functioning of History and Geography both, in India, owes its origin to a colonial mode of representation. Owing to Macaulay's *Minute* (1835), the coloniser's construct of Indian History corresponded to factual delineations from a third person narrative viewpoint. This was unlike the codification of real experiences transmitted orally by minstrels and bards- an important facet of the Indian traditional knowledge system. Abanindranath perhaps politically chooses the representational strategy of *The Adventures of Nils* (a school textbook meant to teach Geography) because somehow this is a deviation from the established technique of the coloniser's handling of an educational discourse. The author uses the different from the dominant's storehouse to conclude that a differently narrated form can be authentically placed within the big periphery of an ordained knowledge. It is Ridoy's eye, a major sensory individual power, henceforth, that functions as the agency of documentation.

*Buro Angla* then actually becomes a jugglery of knowledge or may be disciplines. It does away with the water-tight foundational principles of disciplinary compartmentalisation. Abanindranath presents an alternate version of discourse to show that no representational form becomes invalid unless power intervenes in its actualisation. His text therefore has history, geography, politics, philosophy and psychology as well presented with a deliberate simplicity- a criterion much dear to Abanindranath. It betrays the definitional monopoly of a didactic genre; apparently appears to be a literary piece meant for small children. Noteworthy here is that the protagonist's name has been spelt as 'Ridoy' instead of the Bangla discursive spelling 'Hridoy'(the heart) And yet the explications on the ideals of freedom or bonding at the closure leaves the readers bewildered with the essences of independence and nation which Abanindranath strives to instill in his countrymen. Resembling *Nalak* (1916) and *Aalor Phulki* (1919), *Buro Angla* too ends with the protagonist's self-realisation that the power of liberty is best experienced when one values the worth of attachment. The feeling of comfort and attachment, which the idea of home evokes, augments the sentiment of coming back to it every time one sets off from it in the course of journeying to the world. This is evident in Ridoy's nostalgia for Amtali that once seemed insignificant to the boy is induced only after he has travelled the world around. The long journey that Ridoy is made to undertake ultimately end up in germinating in him a love for his small habitat, an affection for his mother- a figure essentially

related to the nurturer of home One's primary awareness of belonging/bonding acts as a big force in the temporal process of becoming/experiencing. Freedom and bond therefore carry significance when these have the same relational values as that of the kinship of the home and the world, the 'big' and the 'small'.

Such hued featuring of a philosophical purview would not have perhaps been possible had not Abanindranath been a painter (the founder of the Bengal School of Art too). *Buro Angla* being a merger of values and meanings also tabulates the merged identities of the author and the painter in Abanindranath. The pictorial qualities of the text verify the aesthetic worth of one who claims to 'write pictures' (*chhobi lekhe*) (Tagore BA 155). Abanindranath undertakes to ascertain the identity of his own multifunctional self by heightening the very issue that individual evaluation of one's own worth should follow no rigid and uniform direction of the normative order. In a similar vein the barriers between art and literature should be turned down to arrive at a synchronisation of the romantic ideals of Beauty and Truth. This ramification is also with keeping in mind that aesthetic faculty transforms the phenomenal world into a locale of cerebral manifestation. Ridoy's experiencing the real world through the medium of paints and pictures enables him (us) to transcend to another medium of imaginative perception. The latter has the lushness of green Bengal- contextualising the romantic orientation towards pastoral vigour and a symbolic versification of the future prosperity of the country that an optimist like Abanindranath foresees. Hence his Ridoy perceives his homeland in such a light and ends up in considering it as superior to others. He is thus seen to define Bengal as the best nation - the 'golden nation', the 'green nation', the nation of 'gleaming orchards and colourful flowers' (Tagore BA 154).

Abanindranath begins and ends his tale with depicting the course of Ridoy's 'romantic journey'. The inherent trope of this journey is that it is not pre-destined and is entrenched in grasping the unknown. It is for this that Ridoy is shown neither to have reached 'Manassarobar' nor to have met the big God Ganesh. The journey is a never-ending one resembling Abanindranath's own journey as a creative artist-a traveler, as he calls himself, who has embarked on a journey while discovering the way himself (Tagore 24). In its virtuosity of endowing upon the individual unending experiences, it becomes like what Rabindranath Tagore (Abanindranath's uncle) calls '*Niruddesh Jatra*', the journey towards the unknown (Tagore S

199). It is an odyssey of the self's encountering afresh, within the vicious cycle of understanding and 'experience', the dichotomies of the known and the unknown of the 'big' and the 'small'.

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