

*Hybridism, Humour and  
Alternative Possibility:  
Negotiating Identity in  
Sukumar Ray's Literary  
Nonsense*

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Writing about humor and humorists is perforce an awkward business. For after all, the humor is funny; it is aimed at the risibilities, designed to make the reader laugh, not think. So when one sets out to think about it and to subject it to analysis, there is always the lurking suspicion that, in doing so, one is not only responding improperly, but behaving just a trifle ridiculously. (Rubin 1963, iv)

This realization of Luis Rubin while writing the editorial preface to *The Comic Imagination in American Literature* traces back to a perennial problem inherent within the significance of humor in any serious discussion in liter-

ature. Right from the days of Plato and Aristotle there has been a series of theories judging the relevance of humor in contemporary literature but the argument has remained yet unresolved. In spite of the fact that critics across the countries in different ages have come up with various comprehensive explanations of humor, the essence of their discussions has been lost in the whirlpool of terminologies and literary jargons rather than examining the continuum of the true mechanism of humor:

... the most general and neutral notion available to cover a whole variety of behaviour; from apophthegems to spoonerism, practical jokes to puns, farce to foolery. In other words we see humour as any message—transmitted in action, speech, writing, images or music—intended to produce a smile or a laugh. This definition allows us not only to extend our investigations to antiquity, the Middle Ages and the beginning of the early modern period, but also to pose questions of interest to cultural historians: who transmits what humour in which way to whom, where and when? (Bremmer 1997, 1)

The legacy of this negative assessment of laughter has been associated with thoughts as ancient as those of Plato who vehemently opposes the inclusion of any comic thoughts within the purview of his ideal state—“We shall enjoin that such representations be left to slaves or hired aliens, and that they receive no serious consideration whatsoever. No free person, whether woman or man, shall be found taking lessons in them.... No composer of comedy, iambic or lyric verse shall be permitted

to hold any citizen up to laughter, by word or gesture, with passion or otherwise” (Plato 1978, 816-935)—and Aristotle who in his *Nicomachean Ethics* provides a firm warning that—“... a jest is a kind of mockery, and lawgivers forbid some kinds of mockery—perhaps they ought to have forbidden some kinds of jesting.” (Aristotle 1941, 4-8) and finally stretches forth to those of the institutionalized Christian lawmakers who primarily focus on the practice of self-control and therefore scornfully rejects laughter as a sign of pusillanimity.

The definition of laughter and the theories associated with its impact upon the human mind, however, has undergone a major transformation down through the ages. The Greek philosophers’ negative attribution on laughter along with the Christian Europeans vehement opposition against laughter continued in the Medieval Reformatory initiations as well. Although in the medieval ages the concept of humour was not, in any way, connected to the philosophy of laughter - the attitude towards any form of laughter was essentially derogatory and derisive. This attitude was even more strengthened by the philosophical treaties of Hobbes and Descartes whose identification of human beings as naturally individualistic and competitive nurtures our antipathy towards laughter as the essential signs of scornful evil and ridicule:

Sudden glory is the passion which makes those grimaces called laughter; and is caused either by some sudden act of

their own, that pleases them; or by the apprehension of some deformed thing in another, by comparison whereof they suddenly applaud themselves. And it is incident most to them, that are conscious of the fewest abilities in themselves; who are forced to keep themselves in their own favor by observing the imperfections of other men. And therefore much laughter at the defects of others, is a sign of pusillanimity. For of great minds, one of the proper works is, to help and free others from scorn; and to compare themselves only with the most able. (Hobbes 1982,163)

The negative attributes associated with the concept of laughter dominated the Western psyche for more than two millennia before we witnessed the 20th century phenomenon of the emergence of laughter as a superiority cult developed in the hands of Roger Scruton who treated laughter as an ‘attentive demolition’ of a person. This superiority cult, however, did not run its course for long and received a severe blow with the 18th century emergence of two theories associated with the evolution of laughter – the Relief theory and the Incongruity theory. Lord Shaftesbury in his 1709 essay *An Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour* propounds the notion of laughter as a pressure release system of human body and it helps a man to get rid of the excess of animal spirit. This view was later supported by authors like Herbert Spencer in his essay *On the Physiology of Laughter* (1911). This notion was further supported by renowned psychologists like Sigmund Freud and John Dewey and others in their developmental psychoanalytic discours-

es. In a direct opposition to the superiority cult there emerges the philosophy of incongruity in the hands of James Beattie when he links the word incongruous with the essential source of laughter:

[our laughter] always proceeds from a sentiment or emotion, excited in the mind, in consequence of certain objects or ideas being presented to it ... [it] seems to arise from the view of things incongruous united in the same assemblage ... [The cause of humorous laughter is]... two or more inconsistent, unsuitable, or incongruous parts or circumstances, considered as united in one complex object or assemblage, as acquiring a sort of mutual relation from the peculiar manner in which the mind takes notice of them. (Beattie 304-320).

This notion of laughter has got an immense critical back up from the philosophers like Kant, Schopenhauer and Kierkegaard who have popularized it to be the dominant theory in the history of the philosophy of humour. Thus categorizing humour as existing in the gaps our sense perception and the material reality we arrive at the identification of laughter as a subversion of the dominant discourse. It is here that laughter becomes a parallel system existing immediate underneath the overriding practices of power dynamics and simultaneously undercutting the metanarrative with its pungent sharpness.

Now when it comes to the role of laughter in the post-colonial discourse the matter is all the more problematized. Since the postcolonial discourse deals with the

larger dynamics of cultural exchanges among the several groups and subgroups contributing an ephemeral synergy to that particular moment of laughter, it would be utterly frustrating if there is no sense of shared reception of meaning between the text and its subtext. This, in a way, brings us closer to the idea that laughter, with all its various subgenres, always resides under the skin of an accepted metanarrative as some kind of an incompatibility or incongruity which is tightly controlled by the dictums of social normativity and which desperately looks for the fissures to come out and seek for an eternal relief:

...laughter has always been seen as arising out of some kind of incompatibility or some incongruity... The concrete manifestations of laughter arising from such a constellation range from subversive laughter, carnivalesque exhilarations, wry smiles, self-deprecation, gallows humour, or black humour to more conciliatory and healing humour, or to the wild and eerie laughter of the otherwise silenced “madwoman in the attic.” All these reflect a struggle for agency, an imbalance of power, and a need, a desire, for release.” (Reichl 2005, 9)

Thus it is the well patterned distribution of a self-contained subtext that provides it a cohesive function propelling the humour inherent within it. The moment we talk about the agency and power dynamics associated with the generation of humour, we cannot simply deny the contribution of Sigmund Freud in analyzing the system of suppressed desire in human mind and its

outburst in the form of subversive laughter. In this article, however, I am not taking the Freudian notion of laughter in its restricted and complicated specification (joking, wit and comic), rather I would try to locate the implication how laughter has been utilized as one of the major weapons of resistance to dismantle the overriding identity politics in the postcolonial context and how it seeks for a third space of negotiated identity within this problematic zone. Our discussions of laughter as having a cathartic impact upon the human mind immediately refer back to the stressful situations under the dominant orders of colonialism. Going by a very simple and generalized notion of Postcolonialism we can locate quite an interesting interdependence of the hierarchic social order and that of the function of laughter:

Postcolonial discourse analyses how the historical fact of European colonialism continues to shape the relationship between the West and the non-West after former colonies have won their independence. Postcolonialism describes the continuing process of resistance and reconstruction by the non-West. Post-colonial theory explores the experiences of suppression, resistance, race, gender, representation, difference, displacement and migration in relation to the master Western discourses of History, Philosophy, Science and Linguistics. (Sardar 2004, 15)

Thus laughter functions as a marker of ethnic culture with an organization of shared views and beliefs, practices and standards and provides a common perception and interpretation of the world around.

The association of humour with the process of identity formation and resistance building is performed in two ways – subversion and transformation. The inherent paradox of the colonizer/colonized interface essentially depends upon the deep rooted prejudices of racism and the all-pervasive filters which scrutinizes all non-western cultural practices in their own terms. This paradoxical misrepresentation in the cultural hegemony grudgingly works through a process of stereotyping and stigmatization. It is at this point that humour is used to critically analyze the given construct of colonial cultural superiority and skilfully undercuts the falsified attitudes of an illusory power. As for example we can refer to the whole genre of comic strips and slapstick comedy which exists in the very womb of mainstream power politics but subverts and dismantles the same with an extreme subtlety.

In this regard let us have a quick analysis of how nonsense writing, generation of humorous laughter and fun and the negotiability of individual and ethnic identity – all these are integrally intertwined within a common thread of postcolonial power structure. The emergence of nonsense writing as a popular literary genre can be traced back to the 19th century Victorian England in the hands of Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear with the primary intention of providing entertainment and amusement to the target group of the child readers. The primary problem of children's literature, in my opinion, lies in the confused construction of 'childhood' as a binary

opposition to ‘adulthood’. The basic mystery of this problem lies in the eternal conundrum of some simple conjectures – whether it is the question of mapping the true imprints of a child’s individual imaginative process or it is merely a straightforward codification of an adult simplified. At the very outset the notion of the child is both synchronically and diachronically defined by a cultural matrix where the very identity of the child is skilfully situated. In most of the situations the focus rests on the adult writing a children’s narrative either through his own retrospective vision or through a purely imaginative glass of smoky vision that depends on some premeditated assumptions. Children’s literature, however, undergoes an extensive process of evolution with a constantly shifting focal area down through the pages of history. These ironic representations or misrepresentations of the child categorically lead to an even more paradoxical end. The identification originates from a wrong notion of a limited and fixed schema and lack of accessibility of the child. This underestimation of the child potential calls for a rigid child/adult segregation and the adult world takes it to be their tedious responsibility to explain each and every complex issues in more simplistic terms. But this mode of over simplification leads to a dangerous illusory status based on the adult perception.

Although this genre of nonsense writing has taken the children as its primary target, there is not a single bit of opportunity to relegate it to the problem zone of a dan-

generously oversimplified status of trivial literature. The very word ‘nonsense’ incorporates an enigma of signification with an elusive attribute of meaning. On a superficial glance the word refers to something without any sense or meaning; a negation of all sense perception; a non-word or non-entity. A deeper probing would take us through a mazy motion of order and meaning almost in the pattern of Saussure’s sliding signification. This game of sense/nonsense dialectic leads us to another similar game show of power relations and it is here that the idea of nonsense finds its close relations to the problematics of identity formation. It reiterates the fact that human identity does not reside in a fixed space of ordered signification rather it has an inherent fluidity that ultimately releases itself, both epistemologically and politically, into a central alterity of an ‘other’. This interplay between the self and the other elaborates upon an interconnection of cross-cultural experiences which consistently try to break down the inert, monolithic pattern of our structured hierarchy: “... a kind of superior cultural intelligence owing to the advantage of in-betweenness, the straddling of two cultures and the consequent ability to negotiate the difference.” (Hoogvelt 1997, 158) The emergence of this ‘third space’ through the negotiation of two or more cultural specification “... constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity, that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, re-historicized and read anew” (Bhabha 1994,

37). As Habermas suggests, "... reacting to the homogenizing pressure of a material world culture, new constellations often emerge which do not so much level out existing cultural differences as create new multiplicities of hybridized forms" (Habermas 2002, 75). Hybridity also operates upon a nonlinear reality of historical specificity.

The aesthetics of humor, therefore, resides in this collaborative anticipation of a trans-active cultural overlap, an incongruity leading to a subsequent ambivalence – "It reveals the ambivalence at the source of traditional discourses on authority and enables a form of subversion founded on that uncertainty, that turns the discursive conditions of dominance into the grounds of intervention" (Bhabha 1994, 173). This displacement of domains and the differences of collective ethnic experiences gives birth to the bouts of laughter and provides the essential space for the working of nonsense. The moment of laughter arising from the cultural overlap is rather evoked as a matter of relationality as Paul Gilroy highlights in his discussion of a multicultural unification: "We do not have to be content with the half-way house provided by the idea of plural cultures. A theory of relational cultures and culture as relation represents a more worthwhile resting place" (Gilroy 2000, 275). The gradual evolution of new cultural forms and identities anticipates some kind of a 'syncretism' and therefore the laughter arising out of this bears the burden of an artificial enforcement almost verging on tears.

The nonsense then, is a genre of narrative literature

which balances a multiplicity of meaning with a simultaneous absence of meaning. This balance is effected by playing with the rules of language, logic, prosody and representation, or a combination of these. In order to be successful, nonsense must at the same time invite the reader to interpretation and avoid the suggestion that there is a deeper meaning which can be obtained by considering connotations of associations, because they lead to nothing. (Tigges 1988, 27)

In his synchronic or rather anachronic explanation of ‘nonsense’ Wim Tigges legitimately takes it to be a versatile literary device to substantiate a dialectic between the ‘over-structuring and de-structuring, subversion and support’ (Lecerclé 1954, 3). In reality, therefore, it is essentially anti-institutional, not only because it upsets the hermeneutic codes of reader-writer structure but also because it ruptures the normative social contract. Although in the common parlance ‘nonsense’ refers to “words or actions that convey an absurd meaning or no meaning at all” (*The Webster’s New World Dictionary*, 924) but here nonsense is a purposeful, contextual game that synthesizes all the categories of parody, surrealism, absurdity and satire into a common non-entity or non-word to destabilize the structural authority – “nonsense leads us down a path of sense, only to turn aside from the expected destination at the last moment; ...” (Heyman, 2007 xxv) In this paper I would endeavor to showcase how Sukumar Ray, one of the major exponents of

second generation Bengal Renaissance, skilfully employs nonsense poetry to trace the meticulous dialectics of order/disorder locating a 'third space' of identity formation.

The 19th century colonial Bengal has witnessed a violent confrontation of two opposing forces of orthodox Hinduism, dipped in the intoxicating quagmire of age old superstitions on the one hand and the progressive transnational horizons of intellectualism on the other. The newly emergent Bengali intellectual life has, by now, reframed itself within a versatile multipolarity of thoughts and culture. The contemporary Calcutta with all its intellectual and emotional attributes ushers in a new era of artistic modernism both in the context of political and intergenerational crisis. Inspired by the waves of Renaissance and fostered by the family environment of Upen-drakishor Roy Chowdhury, Sukumar Ray establishes an unparalleled genius in fusing the genre of children's literature and ideological pattern within a singular thread of nonsense versification. In this practice, Sukumar Ray establishes a mark of authenticity not only by introducing a completely virgin area of studies into the tradition of Bengali literature but also due to the fact that he transforms the nonsense literary tradition in a way that suits the Bengali intellect in the most effective manner possible. Even though Trailokyanath Mukherjee has introduced the genre of a funny and absurd literature prior to Ray but it is in the hands of Sukumar Ray that the genre

of nonsense writing found its best exposure. I would take four poems [*The Missing Whiskers, Stew Much, Sons of Ramgaroo and Baburam – The Snake-Charmer*] from his collection *Abol-Tabol* to comprehend how the individual identity has been negotiated within the vortex of centrifugal and centripetal forces of postcolonial discourses.

It is significant to note in this context how Bhabha magnificently combines the structuralist/post-structuralist and psycho-analytic studies to build up his theory of identity formation in the postcolonial context. Bhabha's theory of 'hybridism' is a curious combination of both Lacan's and Fanon's theory of the 'other', highlighting the inherent ambivalence of White/Black binaries. This construction of stereotypes in colonial discourse anticipates a subversion of the master-narratives through a counter discourse that topples the self/other binaries of the whiteness or blackness. As Bhabha opens the ambivalent hybrid space for the subsequent subversion of a colonial master narrative we arrive at a positive response to this discourse as Benita Parry sums up "For Bhabha, the subaltern has spoken, and his readings of the colonialist text recovers a native voice." (Perry 2004, 40) When the English administrators tried to convert the 18th century Bengal into a chunk of colonial subjects, what they really aimed at was the creation of a completely new set of mimic men who would be like the Englishmen in spirit but not quite so in their essence.

This process of stereotyping is characteristically a visual metonymy which apparently mocks and undermines the prejudiced pretensions of colonial empire: “Colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed recognizable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excesses, its difference.” (Bhabha 1994, 86) This paves the way for a shadowy laughter through a forced assimilation of cultural mimicry and transcendence. This mimicry, in turn, marks the gap between civility and a deliberate distortion of it as Leela Gandhi substantiates:

But mimicry is also the sly weapon of anti-colonial civility, an ambivalent mixture of deference and disobedience. The native subject often appears to observe the political and semantic imperatives of colonial discourse. But at the same time, she systematically misrepresents the foundational assumptions of this discourse by articulating it. In effect, mimicry inheres in the necessary and multiple acts of translation which oversee the passage from colonial vocabulary to its anti-colonial usage. In other words, ‘mimicry’ inaugurates the process of anti-colonial self-differentiation through the logic of inappropriate appropriation. (Gandhi 1999, 149-50)

At this point of “... an annihilation of relations ... to enjoy it as a delectable and infinite anarchy knowing no rules, liberating the mind from any form of order of system” (Sewell 1952, 4) we find the growing relevance of Sukumar Ray’s *‘aye re Bhola, kbeyal kbola/ Matto*

*madol bajije aye.*' The reference to 'Bhola' can be a double-edged allusion either to 'a forgetful and casual man living a carefree life of innocent joy' or to the simplified version of Maheswara Shiva (Bholanath) with his gesture of frenzied wisdom. Thus at the very onset with the introduction of the figure of Bhola, Ray takes us beyond the jurisdiction of all sense perception; to the realm of a nonsense worldview which finally leads us to the opening of an alternative possibility. And this immediately catches the thread of humorous presentation with which Ray would go on weaving the rest of his poems.

As Bhabha's 'hybridity' proposes an answer to Spivak's "Can the Subalterns Speak?" in an affirmative direction so Sukumar Ray projects how the subalterns have already spoken through a space of liminal in-betweenness of negotiated identity. In the poem *The Missing Whiskers* we are introduced with the stereotypical 'Boss-Babu', comfortable in his assumed security: "*Dibyi chhilen khosmejaje chair kbani chepe*" until the consciousness of his identity arises: "With muffled cries he rolled his eyes/ And threw his arms about, / 'Alas I'm sick. Come save me quick'/ Was what he sputtered out." (Ray 1984, 3) He is even reduced to a confused, dehumanized status: "But careful he might bite yet". When his 'amanuensis' 'held a mirror to his face' we see how the 'self' meets the 'other' in a metaphoric reference to the Lacanian concept of the mirror stage – that inevitable phase of transition where

the individual is caught between the turbulent waves of 'symbolic' and the 'imaginary'. This 'otherization' is terribly shocking to the stereotypical *Babu* (the prototype of the emergent *babu* class of 19th century Bengal) who can no longer identify himself with his own native people, a clan that he originally belongs to (*Shyambabu der goyla*) and meticulously 'otherizes' them. He deliberately wears the mask of a mistaken identity, a grand-narrative of the master class and his face gradually grows to it: "Man is slave, Moustache is master/ Losing which Man meets disaster!" (Ray 1984, 3). This fear of the losing of moustache, in a very subtle way, alludes to an ingrained fear of these *babu* people to lose their place in the hierarchic socio-political order of the colonial era; it is an extreme state of paranoia which compels them to cling to their posts and relevance in the eyes of the white rulers. In this feat of an extreme outrageousness the *babu* takes some drastic decisions which again refer to the arbitrariness of the colonial rulership which does not bother about anything but their flimsy whims:

Know this – in the near future  
 I ought to – no, I must reduce your wages.  
 This he did. And then at random  
 He composed a memorandum  
 Herewith quoted (minus appendages).  
 If you think your employees  
 Deserve your love - correction please:  
 They don't. They're fools. No commonsense.  
 They're full or crass incompetence.  
 The ones in my establishment

Deserve the highest punishment. (Ray 1984, 3)

The poem *Stew Much* explains the “creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zones produced by colonization” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1998, 20). With a robust refutation of the established norms: “*Byakoron mani na*” (Ray 1984, 4) it moves on to the dynamic ‘third space’, the kernel hybrid position which examines the “new signs of identity and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation.” (Bhabha 1994, 1). The series of new species—*Porcuduck*, *Stortle* and *Whalelephant*—refers to the emergence of a whole new class of Anglicized Bengali *Babu*. This ‘beastly configuration’, however, reveals “... the ambivalence at the source of traditional discourses on authority and enables a form of subversion founded on that uncertainty, that turns the discursive conditions of dominance into the grounds of intervention” (Bhabha 1994, 173). So the enormous figure of the Giraffe is decorated with the puny ‘grasshopper’s limbs’ but, surprisingly, he is delighted with this new gift of an apparent freedom of flying. This inherent incongruity makes space for a genial laughter which, on the other hand, identifies a helpless surrender of the native culture at the altar of an alien culture. The cow (the traditional emblem of Bengali Hindu culture), gets a “frightful shock/ On finding that his lower limbs belong to a fighting cock.” (Ray 1984, 4) This figure can also be taken as suggestive of a communal sentiment aroused by the then policies of the British government (Divide and

Rule) – since the cow is a sacred emblem of Hinduism which worships it as *gomata* and the chicken and beef, the forbidden foods in Hindu culture, being the staple foods for the Muslim. Again “It’s obvious the Whalelephant is not a happy notion:/ The head goes for the jungle, while the tail turns to/ The Ocean.” (Ray 1984, 4)– one part of his identity clings to the typical orientalism as represented through the symbol of the forest and the other part instigates to follow the rules of the ocean like that of the Englishmen who are characteristically identified with their naval power. The combination of the Lion and the Deer precisely highlights an essential dichotomy of the predator-prey relationship intensifying the psychic tension that gradually negotiates the identity in a somewhat uncomfortable zone of mutuality: “The lions lack of horns distressed him greatly, so/ He teamed up with a deer - now watch his antlers/ grow!” (Ray 1984, 4)

Now we move on to the castle of the Ramgaroo—a new species born out of the literary genius of Sukumar Ray—

They live in constant fear

. . . . .

We believe in only grieving;  
Happiness is fleeting.

. . . . .

The Ramgaroosian lair  
Bereft of sun and air  
Is doomed to be a monastery

Of permanent despair. (Ray 1984, 6)

We are reminded of Fanon's traumatizing identity crisis: "For Fanon... psychic trauma results when the colonial subject realizes that he can never attain the whiteness he has been taught to desire, to shed the blackness that he has learnt to devalue. Bhabha amplifies this to suggest that colonial identities are always a matter of flux and agony." (Loomba 1998, 148) Here we come face to face with a paradoxical situation where the prohibition of laughter to a species arouses laughter among the readers. The humor originates from the fissure line of an inherent discrepancy where the terrible helplessness of one leads to the amusement of other:

To the sons of Ramgaroo  
Laughter is taboo  
A funny tale will make them wail:  
We're not amused, boo - hoo! (Ray 1984, 6)

The laughter aroused in these lines is far from being a light hearted comedy and almost verges on a black humor where the vulnerability of the identity of the colonized people is once again reiterated.

I would conclude my discussion with a focus on how this agony leads to a strategic resistance and contestation threatening the roots of colonial foundation and necessitating even more vigorous assertion of the rituals of power.

However, since India's mimicry of the English blurred

the boundary between the rulers and ruled, the dream of anglicizing Indians threatened to Indianise Englishness- a reversal the colonists found intolerable. Mimicry is therefore a state of ambivalence and undermines the claims of imperial discourse and makes it impossible to isolate the racialized essence of either the colonized or the colonizer (Bhabha 1994, 506).

Thus Baburam is implored to supply snakes “*Je saap er chokh nei, / Singh nei nokh nei, / Chbote na ki haante na, / Kauke je kaate na.*” It can be identified with the de jure empire Farrukhsiyar, a snake devoid of its fang as demanded by the imperialists. In fact this has been the traditional strategy of the British Empires to install a puppet king in the fruitless throne of Indian history and through them to administer the government in their favour. Any sort of inert existence devoid of the minimum possibility of resistance is the ideal thing that they required. On the other hand it was an immediate necessity on the part of the subject class (Baburam or Farrukhsiyar) to adapt themselves according to their demands so that they can find their only way of survival. This interlocking pattern of the adversity/adaptability paved the way for a hybrid area – a comfort zone of existential crisis like that of a no man’s land where all laws are reverted and all identities lost.

As Lecercle explains, “Nonsense, therefore, is a constant effort towards mastery, towards blocking the emergence of the radically unmeant, the true or radical non-

sense of possession or delirium” (Lecerclre 1994, 134). It is this death-bed frenzy of Sukumar Ray that merges all the fine lines of sense/nonsense, order/disorder dichotomy and upholds a significant subversion of the British Empire: “Aaj k dada jabar agey/ Bolbo ja mor chitte laghey.” (Ray 1984, 10) - envisioning life-long desire for a free India, free from the claustrophobia of *Ekushey Ayin* or the tricky allurements of *Khuror Kol*, a utopian dream which can only be ensured by his final journey to the after world through the drowsy quasi-hypnotic period experienced just before one falls asleep, when images and apparently random notions may emerge and float freely.

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