



Name: Dr. Gargi Gangopadhyay

Qualification: MA (Calcutta University, 1997); M. Phil (Calcutta University, 2000), Ph D (Jadavpur University, 2013)

Designation: Assistant Professor, English.

Date of joining: 06.11.2000

Courses Taught:

Honours:

Anglo-Saxon literature, Elizabethan Sonnets.

History of Fiction, Thomas Hardy (text), Literary Terms (fiction)

History of Romantic Poetry, Keats & Coleridge (text), J. M. Synge (text), James Joyce (text),
Literary Theories, Literary Essay.

General:

Romantic poetry, Victorian fiction, Short stories (Indian writing in English)

Specialization:

Victorian studies, Children's literature and history of childhood, Studies in history of travel and travel writing.

Research:

PhD Title: 'Reading Leisure: A Print Culture for Children in Colonial Bengal', Jadavpur University, 2013.

PhD Abstract:

In many ways, the nineteenth century represents a time that saw the birth of modern Bengal. Through the course of these hundred years, Bengal was the epicenter of the tectonic shifts taking place in the economic, political, cultural and social history of the Indian subcontinent. One of the first provinces to experience a 'renaissance' in the wake of a colonial modernity, it became – almost simultaneously - a stronghold of the British power in India as well as a nurturer of an incipient nationalism. Pushed into a momentum beyond control, heady with the exhilaration of a new life and yet registering an unease over unprecedented changes and

feeling the tensions of a growing empire, it was indeed the best and the worst of times for Bengal.

While the gamut of changes in the political, institutional and cultural spheres are well-documented in critical historiographies that have developed over the years, the parallel shifts in the private spheres have drawn academic attention much more recently. Of these again, the least importance has perhaps been given to study the changes affecting children and the ways in which these stimuli altered Bengali childhood. Along with the momentous reconstructions transforming the public world of schools and formal education, the child in nineteenth century Bengal was also a part of the subtler reformations happening within the private domains of the home, the family and the ideologies of child-rearing.

Through the length of the Bengal renaissance – as the myriad revolutions are collectively termed – children passed from the older practices like *hate khari* at the village *pathshala* [indigenous school] with its oral lessons and writings on plantain or palm leaves to a completely different pedagogy of sequentially graded primers, readers and moralities in the form of printed textbooks. Again, starting from purely utilitarian books of instruction, by the turn of the century, books for children began to be attractively designed and advertised as desirable objects for their young readers. Thus, through the nineteenth century, juvenile reading had developed not only as a means towards an education and an employment but also as a form of leisure and was matched by a vigorous book trade in the niche sector of children's literature. As the century progressed through the diverse and complex manifestations of the Bengal renaissance, the duration of childhood itself was stretched and expanded to include the early and the late adolescent years. With the developments of a graded learning system and a competitive book market, childhood became further differentiated in various stages like infancy, early and middle childhood, adolescence and youth. As a result of these wide-ranging changes in both the public and the private spheres of life, Bengali childhood was metamorphosed during the nineteenth century. The versions of early nineteenth century Bengali childhood as found in the autobiography of Kartikeyachandra Ray or the biography of Ramtanu Lahiri are vastly different from the ones experienced and recorded by Punyalata Chakraborty or Nirad C Chaudhuri towards the beginning of the next century.

A print literature for children in Bengal dates back to the early nineteenth century when new-fangled ideas and novel methods under the British dominion were fast changing the nature and texture of the indigenous society. As one of the offshoots of British colonization, this literature very conveniently became a principal agent of the British imperial machinery and helped the colonizers to institute a socio-economic hegemony and to strengthen political control. But by the latter half of the nineteenth century, the niche print-genre, evolving through complex encounters of the 'old' and the 'new' world orders, of popular culture and elitist reformations, of oral traditions and technologies of print, of indigenous practices and Western ideologies - had gathered a momentum and an agenda for generating children's books beyond the curriculum.

The thesis traces the seeds of a reaction that became manifest towards the end of the century when the genre consistently began to articulate a desire to construct a *swadeshi* "terrain of childhood" and assesses what may be regarded as a reclaimed tradition as well as a subversive political genre. Focusing on the 'leisure-time books' for children that cropped up in Bengal in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in tacit opposition to the utilitarian

text-book literature set up under a foreign rule, the study investigates the idea of a *swadesh* or a homeland in Bengali children's literature. It studies the emerging concepts of a race and of a nation as embodied in the subterfuge of entertaining juvenile books in a colonial era.

The dissertation views this flood of 'homely books' for children and the idea of 'leisure reading' that they unanimously promoted as a strategic departure from the public and formal reading areas (related to schools, education and examinations) that were wholly subsumed as part of a foreign government. These books, situated within the private and sovereign area of one's home and inextricably linked with all homely traditions, essentially lay beyond the precincts of institutional control. The thesis regards this emerging area of leisure reading for children in colonial Bengal (1880-1920) as a consciously crafted space that was tactically used by a body of authors to free childhood from its colonial fetters. Using evidences from contemporary socio-political, personal and literary history it argues that in the ambience of a rising nationalism, what was ostensibly a *juvenile* and an *entertaining* genre constituted an *unthreatened* area and became an elastic medium for developing and disseminating notions of nationhood. In conclusion, the study also critiques the new social roles laid down for the readers who then came to be hailed as the nation's 'future citizens'.

UGC Minor Research Project: "East of the Sun and West of the Moon: A Cross Cultural Study of Traditional Nursery Rhymes", 2005-7.

MRP Abstract:

The research project is a cross-cultural study of traditional English and Bengali nursery rhymes. It aims to investigate the folk origins of the rhymes, their subsequent transition to print, early print history, the ideas of childhood and censorship that affected and altered them in print and the role of illustrations in the genre. The primary material for the study constitutes of chapbooks, 18th and 19th C nursery rhyme editions, early folklore anthologies and classic anthologies for children.

By collating relevant documentations from diverse sources like social history, popular culture and existing critical studies dealing with the history of folklore, the first section traces the remote origins of the traditional nursery rhymes. The next part concentrates on the time when the rhymes began to appear in print in books for children (mid 18th C in England and late 19th C in Bengal). In this context, the study engages with the emerging ideas of childhood, education and the new industry of children's print culture in the contexts of both 18th C England and 19th C Bengal. It takes into account the progressive refinement of the rhymes and tries to locate the social censorships working in both the cultural contexts. As part of the print history of the rhymes, the study also engages with the illustrations that often accompanied these rhymes and played an important part in defining them as children's literature. Finally, to determine the uniqueness of the genre, the research project compares the nursery rhyme with literary poems written for children and concludes with a brief survey of the status and significance of the nursery rhyme in the twenty-first century.

Current Research:

Travel cultures in 19th C Darjeeling

Children's Books and Childhood in colonial Bengal

Papers presented

i) "We laugh because we want to laugh and that's the reason why': A Child's Delight in Nursery Rhymes and Nonsense", Reading Children, International Conference on Children's Literature, Jadavpur University, 2003.

ii) "Make-belief and Dis-belief: Operations of Fantasy in Fairy Tale and Nonsense", Dream, Imagination and Reality organized by the University of South Bohemia, Ceske Budejovice, Czech Republic, 30th June to 2nd July, 2006.

iii) "For Master Tommy and Miss Polly': Education, Entertainment and a Market for Children's Books", Reading AdVentures: Perspectives on Reading and Culture of the Book, Jerusalem, Israel, 19th -21st February 2007.

iv) "Finding Wonderlands: Defining Fantasy for Children", 1st International Conference of The Children's Literature Association of India, Thrissur, Kerala, March 2007.

v) "Useful Instructions and Harmless Amusements': Ideas of Censorship in Children's Literature during the Romantic Period", Annual Conference of Centre for Studies in Romantic Literature, Jadavpur University, 7th & 8th February, 2008.

vi) "An Entirely New Turn to the Native Mind': A Reading of Children's Books in 19th C Bengal", Evidence of Reading, Reading the Evidence conference, organized by Reading Experience Database, at the Institute of English Studies, University of London, 21st to 23rd July 2008. (Paper read out by a member of the organizing committee)

vii) "19th C Primers for Children: A Post Colonial Critique", the Fourth Biennial International Conference of Indian Association for Asian & Pacific Studies, Viswabharati University, Santiniketan, 22nd-24th August, 2008.

viii) "Enemies and Usurpers' as 'Friends and Patrons': Children's Print Culture in 19th C Bengal", International Symposium on Global Perspectives in Multicultural Children's Literature, at Sister Nirmala College for Women, Coimbatore, 8th -10th September, 2008.

ix) "Nils' Flight across Cultures: A Bengali Adaptation of Selma Lagerlof's Text", 19th Biennial Conference of the International Research Society of Children's Literature at J. W. University, Frankfurt, 8th -12th August 2009.

x) "A Battleground of Cultures: Children's Periodicals in Nineteenth Century Bengal", The Material Culture of Periodicals, 42nd Annual Conference of the Research Society for Victorian Periodicals held at Yale University, Connecticut, New Haven, 10 & 11th September 2010.

xi) "'Rule Britannia'?: Reading War and Childhood in a Colonial Climate", Leverhulme International Network Project Conference, Approaching War: Europe, Newcastle University, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK, 16th-17th March, 2013.

xii) "A Museum in the Himalayan Foothills: Early Representations of Darjeeling in 19th C Scholarly Writings", Learned Societies and Academies: Travel and Travellers, Exploration and Explorers, 1600-1900, Clermont-Ferrand, France, 15th-17th November, 2013.

xiii) "From the Dandy to the Darjeeling Himalayan Railways: Engineering a Hill Station in Colonial India", Victorian Transport, organized by the Australasian Victorian Studies Association at the University of Hong Kong, 10th-12th July, 2014.

xiv) "School Texts and Homely Tales: Imperialism and Nationhood in Colonial Bengal", Die Welt der Kinder, Institut für Sozialanthropologie und Empirische Kulturwissenschaft (ISEK), Universität Zürich, 4th -6th February, 2016.

xv) 'Once Upon a Time: A Brief Introduction to Fairy Tales', Finding Neverland: A Tête-à-tête on Fairy Tales, Mrinalini Dutta Mahavidyapith, 17th March 2016.

Sessions Chaired:

Chaired the session titled "Mobilizing Change and Changing Mobilities: The Indian Empire", Victorian Transport, conference organized by the Australasian Victorian Studies Association at the University of Hong Kong, 10th-12th July, 2014.

Publications:

i) "Children, Nursery Rhymes and Nonsense", The Journal of Children's Literature Studies. Volume 1, issue 3, November 2004. ISSN 1743-0526.

ii) "Make-belief and Dis-belief: Operations of Fantasy in Fairy Tale and Nonsense", Dream, Imagination and Reality in Literature, South Bohemian Anglo-American Studies No.1, 2007. ISBN 978-80-7394-006-5.

iii) "Moral versus Magic: The Great Debate in Children's Literature", Reading Children: Proceedings of International Conference on Children's Literature, Jadavpur University, Orient Longman, 2009. ISBN: 978 81 250 3700 2.

iv) "A Strange Cross-cultural Infancy: Children's Books in 19th C Bengal", Art Connect, 2009. ISSN 0975 – 5810.

v) "Children's Books from Bengal: A Documentation", an online illustrated catalogue of early Bengali Children's books. <http://www.bengalichildrensbooks.in/> (2011).

vi) "Our Motherland: Mapping an Identity in Bengali Children's Literature", book chapter in *The Nation in Children's Literature: Nations of Childhood*, ed. Christopher (Kit) Kelen and Bojrn Sundmark (Routledge, 2013). ISBN 13: 978 -0-415-62479-4 (hbk), ISBN13: 978-0-203-10427-9 (ebk)

vii) "*Folk-Tales of Hindustan: The Text and its Times*", in *Folk-Tales of Hindustan* by [Shaikh Chillij], ed. by Gargi Gangopadhyay and Deeptanil Ray (Kolkata: Charchapada, 2014). ISBN 978-93-80489-35-3.

College posts (last three years):

NAAC Steering Committee (2014 onwards)

HoD (2013 onwards)

TCS (2012-13)

College committees/sub-committees (last three years):

2015 & 16:

Member, Academic Sub-committee

Member, Library Sub-committee

Member, Prize Sub-committee

Member, UGC Sub-committee

2014:

Member, Academic Sub-committee

Member, Library Sub-committee

Member, Prize Sub-committee

Convener, UGC Sub-committee

2013:

Convener, Prize Sub-committee

Member, Magazine Sub-committee

Other engagements:

PG Teaching

Guest Lecturer, Children's Literature, PG II, English, Presidency College (2009-12).

Guest Lecturer, Victorian Thought (Paper IV, Module 4.2), PG I, English, Lady Brabourne College (2013-15).

Guest Lecturer, Translation Studies Course, run by the School of Language Studies, Rabindra Bharati University (2015).

Conference coordinator

Joint coordinator for “Contested Spaces: A Trans-disciplinary Approach to the Critical Interface between Humans and Environment”, a UGC sponsored State level Seminar, organized and hosted by Ramakrishna Sarada Mission Vivekananda Vidyabhavan, 14th March 2015.

Awards/Fellowships/Grants:

Minor Research Project from U.G.C for researching on the social history of nursery rhymes (2005).

Research Fellowship for two months awarded by the Internationale Jugendbibliothek, Munich, to study at the library as a research scholar in the field of children’s literature (June- August, 2006). Received a Cultural Exchange travel grant from UGC for the same (2006).

Partially funded research grant from the Charles Wallace India Trust for accessing archival materials for doctoral research at the British Library, U.K (2006).

Teachers’ Fellowship for pursuing doctoral research under UGC’s Faculty Improvement Programme (2008-2011).

An Arts Research and Documentation grant by the India Foundation for the Arts, for compiling a public domain encyclopedic web archive of Bengali children’s books from it’s incunabulum to the early decades of the 20th century (2008).

Minor research grant from the Bibliographical Society of London (2009).

Honorary Posts held

Guest reviewer for *Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature* (ISSN 0006 7377), a refereed journal published quarterly by IBBY.

Contact: Email/phone/FB/Twitter

gargigangopadhyay@yahoo.co.in