

## Manipulating the Cosmic Hierarchy

### *A Practical Act of Conceptual Blending*

*This daughter of the king was an accomplished scholar of the sacred texts,  
so she deployed the astrological treatises to run her calculations.  
She concluded that whether in heaven or on earth,  
whether above ground or below, wherever they were to appear,  
Gāji would be her husband, her svāmī.  
Campā breathlessly spoke, “Get up, my lord, do not cry,  
for you are indeed my husband, my svāmī, the life of my life.  
You are the one who is my husband, and I am always your wife,  
just as Śiv and Pārvvatī could never be separated . . .  
Though I am a virgin brāhmaṇ girl and you are a machalmān,  
I will present you to my father straight away.”*

—SĀYEB MUNSĪ ĀBDUL OHĀB, *GĀJI KĀLU O CĀMPĀVATĪ KANYĀR PUNTHI*

#### 5.1. THE *GĀJI KĀLU O CĀMPĀVATĪ KANYĀR PUTHI* OF ĀBDUR RAHIM

The alternate version of the story of Baḍa Khān Gāji begins with the tale told by Khodā Bakhś, known simply as *Gāji kálu o cāmpāvātī*.<sup>1</sup> As previously noted, the earliest known manuscript dates to ca. 1750 and is a voluminous text of fifty-eight chapters and more than eighteen thousand lines. The oldest extant manuscript of the *Baḍo khā gājir kerāmātī* by Kavi Hālūmīr, who also self-identified as Mīrā

1. Ābul Kālām Mohāmmad Jākāriyā, ed., *Bāṅglā sāhitye gāji kálu o cāmpāvātī upākhyān*, introduction, 77–80; the text is found on 1–307.

Chaiyad Hālu, dates to ca. 1823 but was likely composed earlier.<sup>2</sup> This tale follows closely the narrative of Khodā Bakhś but truncates the story to less than two-thirds of Khodā Bakhś's original. After the advent of printing in Bengal in the mid-nineteenth century, a heavily abridged version of the story was circulated by multiple authors, the most popular version being that of Ābdur Rahim. There is no evidence of a manuscript tradition for Ābdur Rahim's work, the author likely having taken it to print from its inception; the earliest edition I have seen is dated 1282 BS (ca. 1875).<sup>3</sup> An edition that is not dated but appears to have its origins in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century is titled simply *Gājikālucāmpāvati*.<sup>4</sup> This version from the Hāmidīyā Lāibrerī may well be the source, or one of the earliest reprints of the source, of which there have been a multitude of reprints by different publishers over the last century.<sup>5</sup> The primary difference between the earliest edition and the popular reprint is basically paratextual: the author has inserted some information regarding the melodic content (*rāg*) of a particular song, the expansion of the refrains used in performance (usually from one line to two or three), and the very occasional aside embedded in the signature line. The narrative substance, however, is not changed. Ābdur Rahim's text is less than five thousand lines and the other texts, such as that of Ābdul Ohāb, even shorter.<sup>6</sup> The most significant excision of material from these shorter versions is the opening story of Gāji's older brother Julhās, which covers just under a quarter of Khodā Bakhś original story; otherwise the versions are simply abridged, but not significantly modified, though a close textual comparison would undoubtedly reveal subtle differences in cosmological construction and slightly different sets of intertextual invocations and the use of rhetorical devices. In 1326 BS (ca. 1919), Mahāammad Karim Bākhs from Rajshahi adapted the Gāji and Kālu story for the performance genre known as *gītābhinay*, a drama built around songs. It was titled simply *Śāhā gāji kālu gītābhinay*. In the preface he puzzles over the current Islamic prohibition against song, since *ghazals* are so popular, and seems mystified by the criticisms he

2. Ābul Kālām Mohāammad Zākāriyā, introduction, 81; the text is in the same volume, 309–510.

3. Ābdur Rahim, *Gājikālu o cāmpāvati kanyār puthi* (Mayamansimpha: Priṇṭār Śrī Ābdur Rahim at Rahimni Jantra in Mahakumā Kiśor Gañj, 1282 BS [ca. 1875]). There is at least one known immediate reprint to be found in the British Library dated 1283 BS (ca. 1878).

4. Ābdur Rahim, *Gājikālucāmpāvati* (Dhākā: Ābdul Latiph and Ābdul Hāmid at Hāmidīyā Lāibrerī, Cak Bājār, n.d. [ca. 1890s?]); this text also appears in dated editions from 1904 and 1919, but with a slight adjustment of the title to *Gājikālu o cāmpāvati*. This is essentially the same text as the source of the popular reprint just noted.

5. The most popular edition today is Ābdur Rahim, *Gājikālu o cāmpāvati kanyār puthi* (Dhākā: Hāmidīyā Lāibrerī, 1961); see the reprint, Munśi Ābdur Rahim Sāheb, *Gājikālu o cāmpāvati kanyār puthi* (Kalikātā: Gaosiyā Lāibrerī, printed by Nuruddin Āhmmad, 2001). Because it has been frequently reprinted without changes and is still on the market, this 1961 imprint will be cited with any variations from the earliest edition duly noted.

6. Sāyeb Munśi Ābdul Ohāb, *Gāji kālu o cāmpāvati kanyār punthi*.

received for earlier songs he composed about the life of Mahāammad and his family. He goes further to lament that the two *baṭ-tolā* press versions of the story composed by Maulvī Ābdul Jābbār Sāheb, titled *Gāji* and *Gāji boi*, are unsatisfactory and no longer followed by people because of the dated language; so he informs readers that he composed the *gītābhinay* in a modern idiom and has included some mythical anecdotes to keep up the interest of the audience. The overall drift of the narratives again follows Khodā Bakhś.<sup>7</sup>

Because of the late composition of the *Bonbibī jahurā nāmā*, we cannot know which version of the Gāji, Kālu, and Cāmpāvātī story was indexed intertextually. The texts are sufficiently close in their structures, each one a paraphrase of the other, that the overall effect should be more or less the same. There are of course many oral versions of this set of tales that still circulate today,<sup>8</sup> as attested in the volumes of the journal *Lok Sāhitya* and in the popular theatre.<sup>9</sup> Without any further guidance, then, and for considerations of space, we shall look at the most popular printed version, that of Ābdur Rahim, which serves as a distillation of the entire tradition.<sup>10</sup>

7. Mahāammad Karim Bākhs, *Śāhā gāji kālu gītābhinay, pratham khaṇḍa* (Jāiyānpur, Rājśāhi: by the author, printed in Kalikātā by Śrī Bimalcaraṇ Cakrabartī at Nāgendra Śtīm Prinṭing Oyārks, 1326 BS [ca. 1919]). Unfortunately, only the first part is available (if indeed the rest of the text was finished). In his cast of characters he indicates that Gāji was named Dārabuddīn prior to his renunciation as a *jindā pīr*. I have been unable to locate the two texts by Maulvī Ābdul Jābbār Sāheb he mentions.

8. For a rich analysis of the various song cycles of Gāji circulating in the Sunderban, see the recent publication, Jāhāngīr Hosen, *Dakṣiṇbaṅger aitiḥyabāhī loknāṭya* (Dhākā: Mohammad Śāh Ālam Sarkār at Samācār, 2014); see also the compilation, Khondkār Riyājul Hak, ed., *Gājir gān*, Bāmlā ekāḍemī phoklor saṃkalan, no. 66 (Dhākā: Śāmsujjāmān Khān, Parikālak, Gobeṣaṇā Saṃkalan o Phoklor Bibhāg, Bāmlā Ekāḍemī, 1402 BS [1999]).

9. Anonymous, “Cāmpāvātī kainyār pālāgān—Part 1,” *Lok sāhitya* 1 (Āṣāḍh 1370 BS [ca. 1963]): 55–104; “Cāmpāvātī kainyār pālāgān—Part 2,” *Lok sāhitya* 2 (Āṣvīṇ 1370 BS [ca. 1963]): 127–75. This tale has been partially translated: see Anonymous, “*Campavati Kainyar Palagan*: Anonymous Muslim Folk Poem of Bengal,” trans. Edward C. Dimock, Jr., *Learning Resources in Bengali Studies* (New York: Learning Resources in International Studies, 1974 [circulated in mimeograph]). Gāji also has additional tales in his cycle; see “Sonāi kanyā,” in “Caṭṭagrām gītikā—part 4,” *Lok sāhitya* 57 (Āṣāḍh 1399 [1993]): 1–101. For popular theatrical performance today, see Syed Jamil Ahmed, *Acinpakhi Infinity: Indigenous Theatre of Bangladesh*, esp. 181–241, 310–311, 329–32; Syed Jamil Ahmed, *In Praise of Nirāṇjan: Islam, Theatre and Bangladesh*, 68–165; and Saymon Zakaria, *Pronomohi Bongomata: Indigenous Cultural Forms of Bangladesh*, esp. part 4, chap. 5, 57–68.

10. The comic book version of this tale, found in the same volume as the Mānik Pīr and the first half of the Bonbibī story, represents a version of Gāji’s marriage to Cāmpāvātī that only vaguely follows the lines of the other narrations I have found; see “Bada Khan Ghazi” in Saswat Ghosh, comp., *Folk Tales from India: The Sunderbans*, vol. 1, with illustrations by Dipankar Bhattacharya (New Delhi: Vivalok Comics, 2003), 32–41.

## 5.2. GĀJĪ'S LOVE FOR CĀMPĀVATĪ AND THE CONFLICT WITH DAKṢIṆĀ RĀY<sup>11</sup>

As Ābdur Rahim begins his tale, Śāh Sekandar of Bairāt town is as strong as the vaunted Rostam and able to defeat the Sistani rulers Nurimān and his son Śām. Tribute pours in from rulers far and wide, except for the *kṣatriya* king Bali. They clash, and Bali has to hand over his daughter Ājupā to become Sekandar's wife. They soon have a son, Julhās, who one day gets lost in the forest and lands in a magnificent underworld kingdom ruled by Jaṅga Bāhādur. That king has a daughter, Pāctolā, whom he desires to have married. Considering her beauty and the wealth she brings with her, Julhās consents to be her groom, and so there he settles, forgetting all about his family. Meanwhile, Sekandar and Ājupā are heartbroken, but the astrologers realize that Julhās is not only alive but happily married in the citadel of Pātālnagar, which lies beneath the earth's surface. Ājupā's grief prevails unabated until one day at the seashore, a large chest floats up, which she has her servants retrieve. Inside is a six-month-old boy, whom she adopts: she calls him Kālu. It is not long until Kālu has a younger brother, for Ājupā is pregnant again, this time with Gāji.<sup>12</sup>

Gāji and his half-brother Kālu are inseparable as they grow. Sekandar is keen to have Gāji become king, but Gāji refuses. We have already seen Ābdul Ohāb's rendition of this set of ordeals to which Sekandar sets Gāji for his refusal.<sup>13</sup> After enduring unimaginable tests, Gāji resolves to abandon the world of kings and become a mendicant *phakir*, for he is already a *jindā pīr*. It takes little for him to persuade Kālu to join him. Not long after they set out, they face a huge expanse of water that they see no discernible way to cross, so they petition the Stainless Nirañjan, Khodā, who instructs Gāji to throw his staff into the water to transform into a boat. He does and it does. They cross the waters into a new wild land, the Sunderban.<sup>14</sup> When they reach the shore, they erect a *cillākhāna*<sup>15</sup> for prayer, *jikir* recitation, and meditation. Gāji's power (*kerāmat*) is such that in no time all the tigers have become Gāji's disciples. Wherever in that world they decide to go in their boat, the tigers row while a crocodile serves as the helmsman, his tail the tiller. Soon Gaṅgā, Durgā, and Śiv watch over him, for the two goddesses are his

11. It should be noted that in Ābdur Rāhim's text he spells the antagonist's name Dakṣiṇā, whereas Kṛṣṇarām spells it Dakṣiṇ.

12. Ābdur Rahim, *Gājikālu o cāmpāvātī kanyār puthi*, 1–5.

13. See the translation of Sāyeb Munsī Ābdul Ohāb, *Gāji kālu o cāmpāvātī kanyār punthi*, 6–10 in this volume, chap. 3. The episode can be found in Ābdur Rahim, *Gājikālu o cāmpāvātī kanyār puthi*, 6–8.

14. The image from the scroll painting held in the British Museum that serves as the frontispiece of this volume illustrates this scene.

15. A special venue set aside for forty days of prayer, *jikir*, and meditation.

aunts, while the queen of the *færies* and her following plus all the *jinn*s together become his disciples.<sup>16</sup>

After some indeterminate time, they grow restless and set out to visit other settlements. As they walk, they encounter a young boy that Gāji, but not Kālu, knows to be Khoyāj Khijir; Kālu rudely dismisses him, much to Gāji's consternation. Eventually they arrive at Cāpāinagar, ruled by one *hinduyāni* king named Rām, and as soon as they begin to chant the qualities of God in *jikir*, they are driven out. Khodā again intervenes to provide them sustenance, while ensuring that the town burns for his devotees' mistreatment; *jinn*s capture Rām's queen, spirit her across the river to a *masjid*, and hold her prisoner. The king is understandably distraught and, under orders, the astrologers soon divine the reason for the kidnapping. Suitably chastised, the king brokers a peace with Gāji and Kālu, recites the *kālemā*, and has his wife restored. In no time, the king sets about building a *masjid* in Cāpāinagar.<sup>17</sup> Then Gāji and Kālu move on.

After some time the two mendicants encounter woodcutters, from whom they beg food. The woodcutters are unfortunately beyond poor, but they are respectful of *pīrs*, so they pawn their tools and soon spread a feast for the two *phakirs*.<sup>18</sup> Deeply gratified, Gāji then detours to visit his aunt Gaṅgā, who supplies him with vast riches to bestow on these loyal woodcutter devotees. Gāji summons the *færies*, who clear-cut the land and build a city they name Sonāpur, the City of Gold. The first construction is a *masjid*, followed by a massive central market, which is soon peopled with hundreds of merchants, while grand houses are built for all the new inhabitants. As if that were not enough, Kālu goes into meditation and, just for that simple act of submission, Khodā rains gold on the inhabitants.<sup>19</sup>

Gāji's charisma attracts everyone, but even more a group of six *færies* from the land of Kukāph who are roaming nearby. They have meandered their way to Sonāpur, which they immediately liken to Rāvaṇ's magnificent citadel in Laṅka. They soon begin to debate who is more beautiful, the *pīr* Gāji lying there asleep on his cot, or the twelve-year-old princess Cāmpāvati, whom they previously espied in the opulent city of Brāhmaṇanagar. They both make the *færies* equally mad with love. They first compare Cāmpāvati's beauty to that of a *devatā*, goddess, or at least a celestial *kinnara*, but eventually claim it rivals that of Jolāykhā.<sup>20</sup>

16. Ābdur Rahim, *Gājikālu o cāmpāvati kanyār puthi*, 8–11.

17. Ābdur Rahim, 11–15.

18. The comic book version of this has Mānik Pīr and Gāji Pīr together arriving at the village, but the trajectory of the narrative is more or less the same; see "Murad Kangal," in Ghosh, comp., *Folk Tales from India: The Sunderbans*, 16–19.

19. Ābdur Rahim, *Gājikālu o cāmpāvati kanyār puthi*, 15–17.

20. Jolāykhā is one of several spellings of Zulaykhā of the famous romance with Yūsuf. For the popular Bangla version, see Śāh Muhammad Sagīr, *Iusuph jolekhā*, ed. Muhammad Enāmūl Hak (Dhākā: Māolā Brādārs, 1408 BS [2001]). For an analysis of the text, see Max Stille, "Metrik und Poetik der Josephsgeschichte Muhammad Sagirs" (Master's thesis, Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg,

The city of Brāhmaṇanagar, ruled by Cāmpāvati's father, is opulent with gold, and its only residents are *brāhmaṇs*. The king's security guarantor, his *gōsāi*, is one Dakṣiṇā Rāy, whose physical stature is astounding, his strength as prodigious as his appetite for good food. Apart from the protection afforded by Dakṣiṇā Rāy, Cāmpāvati herself is sequestered in ornate chambers surrounded by three hundred guards. Because of the safety provided by Dakṣiṇā Rāy, the king prospers with his extended family of brothers and wives. Feeling somewhat impish and thirsting to quench their curiosity, the *færies* decide to fly the sleeping Gāji on his cot to the bedroom of the sleeping Cāmpāvati. When they are placed together they match perfectly—they have two bodies, but together make one person. The fickle *færies*, distracted by the abundance of flowers and food they glimpsed in the gardens, slip out to sup, leaving the couple alone. Cāmpā is lying naked, and when Gāji rolls over, his hand touches her breast. Her body is suddenly aflame. Flustered and confused by her inexperience, she quickly dresses, but as she gazes at the young man's beauty, she knows him to be the thief of her young love. Cāmpāvati knows deep down that she has found her mate, but they are both soon dismayed because their different social standing (*jāti*) dims any hope of a future together. In Brāhmaṇanagar, Dakṣiṇā Rāy is famous for eating *jabans*, so though they are betrothed, tragedy looms.<sup>21</sup> As they puzzle over their doom, Gāji confesses:

"Your youthful beauty makes me indifferent to all else. Listen my dear, my beloved, I am unable to remain still. . . . my life is in your hands, what more can I say? Because you are the daughter of the king, you know fully all the scriptures (*śāstras*). Look in your astrology (*jyotiṣa*) books to forecast our fortunes." Then Śāhā Gāji wept, the tears from his eyes washing over his face. So the ever-pure *satī* Cāmpāvati fixed the chalk in her hand. She wrote their names together and began to run her calculations. When she had finished the astrological reckoning, the young lady stared hard at what the God of Fate, Bidhātā, had written. A single thread bound and knotted Cāmpā to Gāji. Sāheb Gāji would ever be ruler of her heart. Apart from Gāji, she would have no other husband in this world. Her heart began to ache as she registered the implications: 'I am a *brāhmaṇ* by birth, he is a *jaban*. How will it be possible for me to be married to him?'<sup>22</sup>

But realizing that what is written cannot be done in vain, she takes heart; they are strung together on a single garland, just as Gaurī was to Hara. So she resolves to take the chance. She offers herself to Gāji, but he refuses to consummate their betrothal until they are properly married. "Whenever you feel your heart leading

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2011). See also Ayesha A. Irani, "Love's New Pavilions: Śāhā Mohāmmad Chagīr's Retelling of *Yūsuf va Zulaykhā* in Premodern Bengal," in *Jāmi in Regional Context: The Reception of 'Abd al-Rahmān Jāmi's Works in the Islamicate World, ca. 9th/15th–14th/20th Century*, ed. Thibaut d'Hubert and Alexandre Papas (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 692–751.

21. Ābdur Rahim, *Gājikālu o cāmpāvati kanyār puthi*, 18–26.

22. Ābdur Rahim, 26.

you to immoral action, meditate hard on my form and you will develop love for Nirañjan. Then your act will generate two results at once: you will gain me and you will also gain Khodā.”<sup>23</sup> He then teaches her how to perform *jikir*, the recitation of the attributes of God. She symbolically washes his feet with her floor-length hair and then they sit, she on the left, their bodies emanating a splendid effulgence. They exchange rings, exchange their chewed betel as lovers do, and eventually fall asleep. The færies suddenly realize it is nearly dawn and rush back to the princess’s bedroom, only to find the couple exhausted and fast asleep—so they pick up Gāji, who is still lying on Cāmpāvati’s cot, and fly him back to the *masjid*.<sup>24</sup>

The next morning, each awakes mystified. Cāmpā goes nearly mad in her despair, and only after long days of probing does her mother Līlāvati pry out her story: Cāmpāvati confides that she is “dying while still living” (*jiyante marichi*).<sup>25</sup> It is a foreign (*bideśi*) thief who has stolen her heart, and now she is burning with love. Her mother counsels that only the Creator determines one’s fate, so she must persevere. As instructed, Cāmpā remains lost in meditation on Gāji’s beautiful form. Gāji, meanwhile, is likewise afflicted, waking up to discover his Cāmpāvati gone, but he has confirmation that they were indeed together: her ring and her bed. He is inconsolable. He decides to abandon Sonāpur to everyone’s objection, but he instructs his followers simply to meditate on him and he will make himself present. As he leaves in the company of Kālu, he encounters a multitude of good omens, and along the road he finally reveals to his half-brother Kālu that he has met Cāmpāvati. Kālu chides him for his emotional behavior:

“You are the *phakir* of Āllā, and *hindus* and *musalmāns* alike honor a *pīr*. When I hear this kind of blather slip from your mouth, what fault would you have accrued by assuming the kingship? How can you embrace renunciation (*phakiri*) under this false pretense, in name only, when you have failed to renounce lust, anger, greed, and the allure of creation?”<sup>26</sup>

And so they argue: Kālu points out the existential danger of being attracted to a woman, while Gāji counters how, by losing himself in her, he will gain Khodā, much as he has advised Cāmpāvati that when she thinks of him, she will find God, too. Finally Kālu realizes the futility of arguing, and they set off in search of Cāmpāvati. After traveling for three years and three months, they eventually reach the city of Brāhmaṇānagar; but before entering, they stop in a nearby village named Kāntapur. Overwhelmed by the city’s opulence and hearing that Dakṣiṇā

23. Ābdur Rahim, 27.

24. Ābdur Rahim, 29.

25. Ābdur Rahim, 31. This phrase is a common trope among ascetics, *jogīs*, *tantriks*, and modern figures such as the *bāuls* of Bengal.

26. Ābdur Rahim, 39.

Rāy is its protector, Kālu argues that they should not be bothered, that Cāmpāvati must have already forgotten Gāji—but Gāji will have nothing of it.

As Cāmpāvati languishes in her palatial quarters, mad from being separated from Gāji, her sleep is uneasy.

At the command of the Lord (*prabhu*), an angel (*phereṣṭā*) came and appeared to her in her dreams. The angel settled above her head and spoke to Cāmpā. “The agony that plagues you is about to be relieved. Listen, listen carefully. Cāmpāvati, your brother-in-law and your husband have arrived at the banks across the river. They have settled by the river at the northern *ghāṭ* and they have vowed in their heart of hearts that come tomorrow, if they gain sight of you, they will enter the city. If they do not, then they will leave, and Śāhā Gāji has himself declared that he will never take your name again.”<sup>27</sup>

So, she arranges to go to the river to bathe.

She enters the waters and, as she searches the opposite bank, she catches and fixes Gāji’s gaze. When her auntie tries to hasten her to return, she gradually confesses all that has transpired. The girls in her retinue then do what potential in-laws and friends always do: they flirt and joke and do everything silly to get Gāji’s attention. Cāmpāvati separates herself and, in deliberate gestures, washes her hands, her feet, her face, then sensuously her breasts, before undoing the knot in her hair and letting it spread on the water. As she immerses herself up to her neck, Gāji signals that he will soon come to get her. As she returns home, Cāmpā visits the temple of Caṇḍī, whom she summons for a boon: Caṇḍī identifies Gāji as her sister’s son and promises that Cāmpā will soon have him as her husband, though a *jaban*. As she leaves, Caṇḍī stops to chat with her nephew Gāji and reminds him that fate cannot be averted—he will have Cāmpā—but he must watch out for the rest of the women who will cling to him like leeches lest he get lost in their feminine attentions.<sup>28</sup>

Gāji grows impatient and finally dispatches Kālu to act as matchmaker. Kālu bargains with the ferrymen, Chirā and Ḍorā, who warn him he must have a death wish as a *jaban* to try to enter Brāhmaṇānagar. Finally, they will agree only if Kālu gives them a hefty sum of gold, which he immediately produces through the power of *kerāmat* after meditating on *Āllā*. When he reaches the palace, he finds Mukuṭ Rājā holding court with his seven sons and nine sons-in-law, listening to recitations of the *Bhāgavata purāṇa* and *Mahābhārata*. Suddenly they are interrupted by Kālu reciting “*lā-ilāhā . . .*” Mukuṭ Rājā is furious and summons a guard to dispose of the *phakir*, but Kālu manages to make known his request: that Gāji wishes to marry Cāmpā and that the goddess Caṇḍī has promised it will be so. The king seethes and turns to his ministers, who confirm that Cāmpā has been mad for love

27. Ābdur Rahim, 42.

28. Ābdur Rahim, 43–46.

of him. In high dudgeon, the king dispatches him to prison in shackles while Kālu objects that he is only the messenger. Then the king takes an axe to Kālu's bed in Cāmpā's quarters, but Cāmpā manages to hide behind the skirts of her sisters-in-law and escapes her sure death.<sup>29</sup>

Gāji senses that the plan has gone terribly awry, so he flies to the Sunderban forests and summons the tigers—some ninety-three hundred altogether—and returns to Kāntapur. Embarrassed that the townspeople are calling him a magician for his ability to control the tigers (not to mention their fear), he whispers *bismillā* and blows it across the tigers and transforms them into rams and ewes. The townsfolk want to buy them, but he refuses and heads for the ferry landing. He tries to bargain with Chirā and Ḍorā to cross, but they refuse until he offers a couple of rams, and naturally they choose the largest: the tigers Khāndeoyārā and Bedābhāṅgā in disguise. The ferrymen tie up the rams and take Gāji and the rest of the still-disguised sheep across to Brāhmaṇānagar. Meanwhile, one of the færies reports to their queen how Kālu is incarcerated in Brāhmaṇānagar, and so they fly to the *masjid* to retrieve Cāmpā's cot that Gāji has inherited from their fateful nocturnal machinations and wing it to him in Brāhmaṇānagar to serve as an impromptu throne; then they join his forces.<sup>30</sup>

Back in Kāntapur, Khāndeoyārā and Bedābhāṅgā pretend to be rams by eating grass and water, but when they are sized up for a meal and tied to a stake for slaughter, they butt and knock the ferrymen's old mother and everyone else silly. The two rams regain their tiger forms and terrorize everyone. Battered, but very much alive, the ferrymen realize that this is the work of the *phakirs* they insulted, and they vow always to transport any *phakir* for free in the future. The two tigers bound across the river in a single leap and then lope easily till they find Gāji and the others, where they share their tale to the amusement of all. But Gāji has waited long enough.<sup>31</sup>

Amidst a tumult of roars, the tigers leaped here and there as if they were the monkey hordes bounding about Laṅkā.

With menacing grunts and growls the tigers moved quickly. Gnashing their canine fangs, they moved with alarming fervor. There were a great many houses in Brāhmaṇānagar, and they surrounded each and every one without exception. In fanned ranks, some systematically scouted every lane and ghat, while others patrolled back and forth, growling menacingly. The tigers had surrounded the town in its entirety without the residents even registering their presence. At sunrise, water pot in hand and emerging into the lanes with their usual deliberation, the townspeople made for the thicket. But as soon as they came out they saw the lines of tigers. Flushed with fear, they screamed madly and beat back to their houses. All

29. Ābdur Rahim, 46–49.

30. Ābdur Rahim, 49–53.

31. Ābdur Rahim, 53–55.

the *brāhmaṇs* headed to the river to fill the golden water pots they toted, but when they encountered the tigers they screamed “O Mother! O Mā!” and, filled with terror, they fled, flinging away in every direction those precious gold vessels. Everyone was rattled, quaking with fear. The cowherds kept their cows in the sheds. None of the townsfolk who had slipped out of their homes made it as far as the bushes; they all had to return. So they shat and pissed into whatever cooking pots—large or small—they had, and once those began to overflow, they tossed them outside. The very ground split open from the tigers’ roars. All the many *brāhmaṇs* and *brāhmaṇīs* shuddered and shook. One cried out “Stay away, stay!” and another shrieked, “It got me!” Another howled, “Oh Bābā, I’m about to die!”

Someone managed to slip away and inform the king. “Brāhmaṇanāgar has become godforsaken because you have incarcerated that *phakir*. His brother, the Gāji, a *jindāpīr*, has come. He controls untold hundreds of tigers and he has dispatched them; they are eating all the cows and water buffaloes wherever they catch them. That Śāhā Gāji is sitting on a jewel-studded lion’s throne, with golden pennants waving on the standards in all four corners. A ruby-studded canopy is draped above his head and the færies attending languidly wave their yaktail fans. Go quickly and meet that Gāji, you erstwhile king, otherwise those tigers will eat all of our heads!”

The king responded, “Say no more about the matter. With Dakṣiṇā Rāy present, what is to fear? As soon as Dakṣiṇā Rāy hears this he will slay that *phakir* along with all his tigers.”<sup>32</sup>

But once he sees, the king, too, is terrified. To placate Dakṣiṇā Rāy, he sends many mountains of the best of foods, and only then does he approach, weeping and grasping his champion’s feet. In a gush of words the Rājā conveys that his social standing (*jāti*), indeed his very life, is on the verge of destruction. Then he relates the circumstances: the arrival of Kālu with the marriage proposal, Kālu’s incarceration, and the arrival of Gāji with his thousands of tigers. Hearing him out, Dakṣiṇā Rāy chuckles and promises to slay the *phakir* and his tigers. Donning his armor, he picks up his massive club and strides out to engage in battle.

As he stepped forward he heard someone sneeze to his left. Flies buzzed around and one landed directly on his eye, and as he moved on some insect bit him on his little finger. He also encountered a woodcutter hauling a pile of wood, and three times he heard someone behind him call out, “Don’t go, stay!” Next he happened upon a corpse; he watched it materialize right in front of him as if by magic. As he considered all these omens, each one ill, he realized he should not sally forth, but he could not turn back for the shame of it. So he plunged ahead, his mind gripped with worry. As he passed by different houses, women ululated auspiciously, some sounded conches, blew horns, and clapped small hand cymbals, while some made hollow *bom bom* sounds by thumping their cheeks. . . .<sup>33</sup> It was at that moment that Dakṣiṇā Rāy saw for himself hundreds of thousands of tigers leaping and bounding here and

32. Abdur Rahim, 56–57.

33. This gesture is deemed a prophylaxis against the evil eye.

there. For every one tiger the warrior encountered, seven more seemed to appear. His throat constricted, choking off his voice. Terrified, Dakṣiṇā Rāy began to shake violently. The great warrior worried: 'All alone, what can I do? If I raise my club to slay one tiger, ten or twenty more will come one-by-one to lay hold of me.' Worrying along these lines, the great warrior withdrew from battle and then in shame retreated to the river bank.

Taking a seat at the edge of the river, the valiant warrior cried out plaintively, calling to Mother Gaṅgā. As a result of his call, Gaṅgā floated to the surface and, as soon as he saw her, Dakṣiṇā Rāy made respectful obeisance. Blessing him, the goddess Devī then asked, "Tell me, great warrior, why have you summoned me?"

Dakṣiṇā Rāy whined pitifully as he spoke. "Listen, my dear Mother, how shall I put it? Mukuṭ Rājā . . . today will witness the loss of his social standing (*jāti*) as king: a *phakir* has come who wants to marry his daughter. I did not realize the *phakir* commanded so many tigers and they have completely surrounded and held hostage Brāhmaṇanagar city. If you are compassionate, supply me with crocodiles, and then I will be able to find out just how much of a *phakir* he really is."

Gaṅgā queried, "Tell me now, great warrior, speak! What is the name of this *phakir* and in what region is his family home?"

Dakṣiṇā Rāy replied, "Listen my good woman, his name is Sāheb Gājī. I have heard that his family home lies in the western regions in the city of Bairāt. His father's name is Śāhā Sekāndar, and Bali's daughter, Ajupā, is his mother. This is what some have said, but I do not know for sure."

Gaṅgā returned, "Then there can be no doubt about it—that *brāhmaṇ* has already lost his social standing (*jāti*). Listen up, Dakṣiṇā Rāy, you clearly are not aware, but I know for certain that Gājī is my sister's son. He is my own flesh and blood and no stranger to me. My affection for him is even greater than for my own son. Both Āllā and Durgādevī watch over him. Who has the power to thwart his marriage to Cāmpā? Were all the people in the world to come together as one, they would not be able to defeat Gājī in battle. You must make Mukuṭ Rājā understand: 'You must join your daughter and Gājī in marriage!'"

Dakṣiṇā Rāy listened and then spoke, "Why did I even bother to call on you, Mother? If I flee out of the fear in my heart, people will laugh, and the tigers will ambush me from all sides and devour me. It is not my desire to ensure either victory or defeat. Please be merciful and give me the crocodiles so I might simply fight with honor."

Gaṅgā said, "I will not provide you with crocodiles, for Gājī would become annoyed and would rebuke me."

Whining, Dakṣiṇā Rāy then replied, "What good will come from protecting a Turk (*turuk*)? Will a Turk ever offer *pūjā* to you? You are without compassion, Mother, and that is my misfortune. If you do not gift me the crocodiles, then right here and now, in your presence, I will kill myself." And declaring that, he picked up his club and raised it to beat himself senseless.<sup>34</sup>

34. Ābdur Rahim, *Gājikālū o cāmpāvati kanyār puthi*, 57–59.

Gaṅgā capitulates at the threat of his suicide and summons the crocodiles from the underworld of Pātāl.

The crocodiles floated up from Pātāl until ten thousand crocodiles broke the surface. Utterly thrilled, Dakṣiṇā Rāy led them away. The crocodiles knocked down the trees, clearing the forest canopy as they plodded forward; their stomachs abraded numerous channels through the swamps. So the great warrior headed to the battlefield with his crocodiles in tow while the Rājā sat in his rooftop gazebo to watch it all unfold. “Look at that, the Gōsāi has brought me crocodiles. Now the *phakir* will round up his tigers and flee.”

But as soon as they spotted the crocodiles, the færies went to Gāji and informed him, “Look, your aunt, Gaṅgā Māsī, has armed him with crocodiles.”

“My good aunt only mouths her blessings—she cuts the root of the tree while pouring water on its leaves.” As Gāji squatted on the ground letting the news sink in, Dakṣiṇā Rāy sallied forth, brutishly aggressive. He set the crocodiles on the tigers, which proceeded to chomp their way through them. Right then Gāji shouted at the top of his voice, “All of you tigers join ranks, and rip the heads off those crocodiles!” Just as the Gāji ordered, the tigers immediately charged and the pitched battle with the crocodiles began. At the roaring of the tigers the town of Brāhmaṇānagar quaked in fear, all the *brāhmaṇ* women there convulsed with terror. Dakṣiṇā Rāy, too, was unsettled and shaking in fear, while tears leaked steadily from the eyes of the hapless Mukuṭ Rājā. Amidst the steadily increasing roars, the tigers crouched, dropping their tails, then pounced on the backs of the crocodiles. With loud shrieks born of battle they bit down hard with their long carnassial fangs, but neither fangs nor claws could pierce through their leathery hides, the dermal armor of those crocodiles. The bodies of the crocodiles were as tough as ironwood, so the tigers’ normally effective gnashing bites and lacerating swipes of their razor claws went for naught. They were shocked when their teeth cracked and their claws broke off; they were rendered powerless, completely enervated. The bellowing of the bull gators and guttural hissing of their mates rolled across land. They snagged the tigers by paw and limb, clamping down hard their jaws. Some suffered bones broken, others had their skulls crushed. Rattled, the tigers retreated best they could. Dakṣiṇā Rāy gave chase screaming, “Kill them, kill them all! Today you must break their bones and eviscerate these tigers.”<sup>35</sup>

The tigers are terrified and flee, pleading with Gāji Sāhā to intervene. Gāji assesses the predicament and meditates hard on the sun to heat the battleground like a furnace, scorching the crocodiles and drying up the mud in which they coolly wallow. It is too much, and the crocodiles break ranks.

[They] fled helter-skelter back to the underworld city of Pātāl while all Dakṣiṇā Rāy could do was lament in shame. His doom was falling about him as the tigers circled. The valiant hero began to wail. In a quandary he fretted, “What recourse do I have? This danger follows me wherever I go; who can help me escape? I now understand that this fate was written on my forehead. My death is to come at the hands of the

35. Ābdur Rahim, 59–60.

*phakir's* tigers. If I flee to save my life, everyone will laugh at me, and King Mukuṭ, the ruler of the earth, will have to eat ashes in shame."

*Devastated by worry, what did the valiant warrior then do? Through meditation, he brought his earnest grieving to the attention of the goddess Caṇḍī.*

With sincere devotion the warrior called out, "Where are you, Mother Bhavānī? O Mother of Ganeś, please rescue this devoted subordinate. O Durgā, the destroyer of all afflictions, where are you? Please Mother, grant me protection in the shade of your feet."<sup>36</sup>

Durgā is moved by her devotee's stentorian call and comes careening down from the heavens in her chariot. He petitions her for hungry ghosts, ghouls, and assorted demonic creatures to defeat Gāji.

Caṇḍī replied, "Listen, my dear child, bring the war to a close. It is indelibly written that Gāji will have Cāmpā. You must tell this to Mukuṭ Rājā and make him understand—"You must make over your daughter in marriage to Gāji!" Gāji is my nephew, my sister's son, and I am his aunt, his Māsī. If your king does not arrange this wedding, then I will flood all of Brāhmaṇānagar and there will be no one left alive to light the lamps for the ancestors of their lineages. Gāji is my son just the same as Kārttik and Ganeś; he is my kin, descended from my sister; he belongs to no one else. . . . Now go and tell Mukuṭ Rājā that if he desires a propitious outcome, then he must give his daughter to Gāji. He is a puffed-up king with enormous hubris and vanity, but he is not even qualified to be the servant of a king. The daughter of Bali Rājā is Gāji's mother and Bali is the crest jewel of all kings, so there can be no fault at all for making that marriage alliance. One could not buy with hard cash such a quality son-in-law."<sup>37</sup>

Just as he did with Mā Gaṅgā, Dakṣiṇā Rāy whines and then threatens suicide at Caṇḍī's feet, coercing her reluctantly to relent, so she conjures the legions: demons, hungry ghosts, ghouls, and witches without number. Invisible to the tigers, they rain down boulders on the confused tigers, who are soon maimed and weakened, so they plead with Gāji.

Hearing them out, Sāheb Gāji began to search with his mind's eye, and in this meditation the *pīr* fathomed the truth deep within his heart: Durgā had provided spirits, demons, hungry ghosts, and ghouls. So Sāheb Gāji immediately began to recite the *kālemā*, which he blew in four steady streams in each of the four directions he gazed. Instantly the bodies of the ghosts began to burn, and wherever he looked, the ghosts became visible. Flames shot out in their direction and the naked demons ran roughshod over one another to escape the burning fires. They spotted a way out through the northeast quadrant of the sky, and they set in motion their chariots. Many of the

36. Ābdur Rahim, 60.

37. Ābdur Rahim, 60–61.

demons managed barely to escape with their lives, leaving a flummoxed Dakṣiṇā Rāy sick with worry.<sup>38</sup>

Sensing his imminent death, Dakṣiṇā belts out a blood-curdling scream. Primæval in its terror, the sound concusses the tigers, who slump down insensate, sends the færies scurrying, causes the earth to quake, and makes pregnant women abort. Through it all Gāji sits, alone, silent, unperturbed in his meditation.

Dakṣiṇā Rāy immediately advanced toward him. With a roar the great warrior ran forward to slay Gāji, which prompted Śāhā Gāji to pick up his ascetic's staff in slow and deliberate movement. The *pīr* addressed the staff, "For him whose face you now see, go and conquer Dakṣiṇā Rāy!" Reciting the *bismilla*, he flung the staff. The staff growled as it advanced and feinted this way and that, before it lunged directly at Dakṣiṇā Rāy's chest. The flurry of blows from the staff sent blood spurting from his face. The staff leaped up, cracking his hard head again and again—one second a blow to his nose and mouth, the next second a thrashing of his neck and shoulders. It attacked him so swiftly and relentlessly from so many different angles, it was as if a snake had coiled around him. The valiant warrior succumbed to the rain of blows and slumped hard to the ground. No matter what he did, he could not fend off the staff's blows. Eventually, through sheer determination of will, he managed to pick up his massive club. He raised the club and struck hard at the staff, and the staff splintered, snapping in two. Picking up one piece in each hand, he carried them to the river where he flung them into the depths. . . .

Meanwhile, Dakṣiṇā Rāy took his club in hand and, seething with a newfound strength of anger, moved forward to slay Gāji. Sāheb Gāji had just gotten up, but when he looked all around, he saw no one at all who could help. As he puzzled over whom he might deploy as proxy, he happened to look down, and his eyes fixed on the wooden sandals on his feet. Then Śāhā Gāji coolly commanded his sandals, "Go forth and engage Dakṣiṇā Rāy in battle!" The sandals let out a battle cry, flew up, and promptly hammered Rāy's head. They thumped his noggin—*dhum dhum, dhum dhum*—this way and that, they smacked him silly on his nose and across his mouth. One second they would soar high into the air and the next second they would plummet, pummeling his body. The valiant warrior soon fell, writhing on the ground in agony. Time and again the wooden sandals flew up and down in the same mechanical rhythm as womenfolk pounding fried paddy. Exhausted and war-weary, Rāy slumped to the ground. At that critical moment of weakness, Śāhā Gāji approached, scimitar in hand. He sat on Rāy's chest and lopped off both of his ears. Crying "Rām, Rām," the valiant warrior covered his bleeding ear holes with his hands. After that Gāji was set to slit his throat with his sword, but Rāy cried out, begging over and over, "Have the mercy of God, Khodā! Don't slit my throat or chop me up! You have cut off my ears and that is humiliation enough. Grant me your sovereign protection and do not execute me. I will attach myself to you as your personal servant. I will go right now and tell Mukuṭ Rājā that he must give Cāmpā to you in marriage."<sup>39</sup>

38. Ābdur Rahim, 61–62.

39. Ābdur Rahim, 62–63.

Sāheb Gāji does not harm him further, but binds his wrists, drags him by his magnificent topknot, and ties it to the palanquin. Slowly the færies return, ingratiating themselves with Gāji for the shame of having fled. Gāji is mollified. The tigers gradually recover their wits and gather, praising Gāji for their good fortune in his vanquishing the valiant Dakṣiṇ Rāy. Then, licking his chops, one says,

“Now we will divvy up his body into parts. We will all eat until our bellies are full to bursting!” The tiger Beḍābhāṅgā quickly claimed, “For my share, I want his liver.” Khāndeoyārā chimed, “The heart and lungs are all mine.”

Dakṣiṇā Rāy could not but overhear and he quaked in mortal fear. He tried to raise his hands and beg Gāji directly, “Please do not butcher me and feed me to the tigers. I will go right this minute to arrange Cāmpā’s wedding.” When he heard this proposal, Sāheb Gāji smiled knowingly and the færies averted their faces as they giggled. Smiling, Gāji told all the tigers, “I’m not going to give you Dakṣiṇā Rāy to eat because he has given his word that he is going to arrange my wedding with Cāmpā.” And hearing this promise, the tigers broke into gales of laughter. Gāji remained with those tigers and færies sharing their feelings of joy.

*What did Mukuṭ Rājā do when Dakṣiṇā Rāy was defeated and bound? Listen carefully everyone: Mukuṭ Rājā cried, “Alas I am dead, aargh, aargh! What has happened? How could it come to this?” Indeed, just how could such a valiant warrior be defeated?*<sup>40</sup>

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### 5.3. GĀJĪ’S MARRIAGE TO CĀMPĀVATĪ AND THE ASCETIC TREK

The hubris of the *brāhmaṇ* king Mukuṭ Rājā, coupled with the unwise counsel of his ministers—none of whom register the magnitude of Baḍa Khān’s power in defeating Dakṣiṇā Rāy—lead him to assemble his own army to oppose Baḍa Khān Gāji. They assure him that the batteries of cannons and the regiments armed with European rifles will prevail. Desperate to defend his rank (*jāti*) and clan (*kul*), the king succumbs to the bad advice of his courtiers:

“There is no need to worry, great souled one, what can a single *phakir* do by himself? You have so many regular soldiers—thirty million, seven hundred in number, and one million, two hundred thousand fusiliers and archers. You have three hundred thousand warriors mounted on elephants and cavalry on horseback. What strength does the *jaban* have that will enable him to wage war on you? Volleys of musket shot and arrows will lay waste all the tigers. We can organize this in the blink of an eye.” The king’s nerves are calmed, and he soon orders everyone, “Let’s not delay this task a moment longer. When the *phakir* is captured, I will haul him to the Caṇḍī temple and sacrifice him like a goat.”<sup>41</sup>

40. Ābdur Rahim, 63–64.

41. Ābdur Rahim, 64.

As soon as he gives the command, the mahouts muster their elephants, musketeers and archers mount, drums resound, cymbals clang, women trill their ululations, and the earth quakes at the tumult. Watching it all, Kālu, still in chains in his cell, advises the passing king to relent and give his daughter in marriage to Gāji, but of course his advice is met with a fusillade of deprecations, to which he adds the pledge to double the promised sacrifice to Kālī by offering both brothers. He assembles his army and surrounds Gāji and his tigers.

Gāji simply sat still with his tigers and færies huddled around him. The fusiliers and archers completely surrounded them from all directions. Then the Rājā commanded everyone, "Fire each and every weapon at once!" and they discharged all their arrows and shot, the echo of which rattled the earth. The leaves on the trees and whatever else had the misfortune of being in that open field were incinerated by the unparalleled force of those projectiles. They discharged whatever amount of shot and arrows they had and the smoke that ensued shrouded the earth in darkness. The obscuring haze lingered about an hour. Mukuṭ Rājā triumphantly called out to everyone, "All the *phakir*'s tigers have been slain and the danger averted." The name of Lord Hari rang forth in jubilation, and he said, "Now let us go home." Within moments of the enemy's unguarded fallback, tigers materialized en masse, standing smartly in neatly organized ranks. Not a single tiger had been killed. The færies, too, gathered around Śāhā Gāji, foremost among the living.

When Mukuṭ Rājā took in this sight, he hands flew to his cheeks, stunned with disbelief. Completely unhinged, he wailed and whined, "Now I understand that this *phakir* truly knows some magic spells (*mantra*). Twelve lakhs of gunshot and arrows were discharged needlessly, without effect. I brought along thirty million soldiers to engage him, yet not even a single one of the *phakir*'s tigers was slain. I cannot engage this *phakir* in battle any further. I have come here with false and misguided hopes only to lose my life." And uttering these words the Rājā turned tail and fled, gripped in mortal fear. Gāji calmly summoned his tigers and said, "The Rājā and all the soldiers with him are slipping away. Hem in all the soldiers and kill them now!"

And so the tigers fell onto the backs of the soldiers and began to massacre them fang and claw. As their own brutish anger welled, they erupted like a conflagration embodied, and they chased down and slew thousands upon thousands of soldiers. Everyone feared for their lives and scattered. The tigers toyed with them, dancing around them. Anyone who heard a tiger's deep-throated growl of "*hāu hāu*" expired of his own accord, falling dead in his tracks without even being touched. The thundering roars of Khāndeoyārā, Beḍābhāṅgā, and Kālkuṭ even made the *nāgs* of the underworld city of Pātāl shiver. Amidst the grunting sounds of close engagement, the tigers savagely and efficiently killed—they butchered all the elephants and horses there were, and slaughtered so many hundreds of thousands of soldiers that they soon lost count. Routed, the soldiers scattered, running helter-skelter wherever they could. As Mukuṭ Rājā scrambled to slip away, he flung off his turban and the *cādar* cloth that wrapped his upper body. He rushed into his house and made fast the doors and shutters. The tigers searched for more humans but could find no more. When those tigers had vanquished the entire army of enemy soldiers, they returned to Gāji elated.

*Listen carefully to the report of what Mukuṭ Rājā did next.  
He possessed a well that revived the dead.*<sup>42</sup>

That night after the battle, Mukuṭ Rājā fetches water from that magic well and sprinkles his dead soldiers and their mounts, who immediately spring back to life ready to engage. This same scenario plays out every day for eighteen days, which takes a mounting toll on the increasingly weary tigers. Faces maimed, fangs and claws broken off, they are utterly exhausted, so they turn to Gāji for guidance. Gāji takes himself into meditation and sees in that vision the magic well, so he dispatches the tiger Beḍābhāṅgā to slay a cow and bring its flesh. The færies fly over the well and drop the bloody meat into it, polluting it so that its life-giving magic is negated.

The next day's battle is as gruesome as those that have preceded it, the tigers ripping apart the armies while the færies rain down destruction from the skies. Of Mukuṭ Rājā's thirty million men and twelve lakhs of elephants and horses, not a single living thing survives. When the dead bodies fail to revive, it hits him and he cries out:

"That *jaban* has thrown the flesh of a cow into the well. Ah, aargh, where can I go? What else can I do? No one can protect me when the tigers come to eat me."

*Chattering away in his fear, what did he do? He ran as quickly as his legs would carry him to the cool confines of the palace. Once inside he fixed the iron doors fast so that the tigers could not break in.*<sup>43</sup>

But of course the tigers are not to be denied. They kill all the sentries, break open the prison, and free Kālu, who rides the tiger Khāndeoyārā back to an emotional reunion with Gāji. When they have calmed down, Gāji sends Khāndeoyārā and Beḍābhāṅgā to fetch the king. The tigers then bound through the palace, amazed at its opulence. They break into a barricaded room and find all of Cāmpā's aunts there and decide to have some fun, for, as Khāndeoyārā observes, "They are the soon-to-be in-laws of Sāheb, so we should joke with them."<sup>44</sup> But his joking literally frightens the piss out of them, their clothes flying as they scramble to escape. The tigers then move to another room where they find Cāmpā and her mother Līlāvati, to whom they bow out of familial respect, then go off to find the king. One of the tigers places him on his back and takes him to Gāji. Speaking through Kālu, Mukuṭ Rājā submits without reservation to Gāji, promises to recite the *kālemā*, and hands over his daughter in marriage. Gāji releases Dakṣiṇā Rāy to Mukuṭ Rājā and then dismisses all the tigers and the færies.

The wedding is duly registered with a qualified legal official (*ukil*) and celebrated in a manner befitting royalty. At the moment that Gāji and Cāmpāvati

42. Ābdur Rahim, 65–66.

43. Ābdur Rahim, 67.

44. Ābdur Rahim, 68.

retreat to consummate their marriage, the sisters-in-law play jokes which utterly break the romantic mood: they mix bitter foods with sweet, they substitute cow dung for tobacco in the water-pipe, and so forth. Gāji firmly calls their hand and lectures them that their pranks make clear they do not understand the subtleties of the techniques of making love as found in the *rati śāstras*. They flee in embarrassment. Then Cāmpā and Gāji dive into a sea of love-making bliss.

Meanwhile, outside, Kālu frets to himself:

“My brother has been bound by the magical lure of this world. I have no power sufficient to cut through this web. It is false to say he became a *phakir* in the name of Āllā. If he was secretly harboring all this desire, why did he give up his kingship and become a *phakir* in the first place?”<sup>45</sup>

Gāji catches Kālu weeping for him, and queries him. Kālu replies:

“I cry on account of you, brother. You have been ensnared in the net of the bewitching allure of this world. This magical illusion is a man-eating ogress (*rākṣasini*): know her to be woman. Whoever plays at love with her, engrossed in the affairs of this world, loses everything. This man-eating monster, woman, consumes all his wealth down to his moral capital. You land neither on this side or that side, but remain firmly stuck in the middle. Let me illustrate, so listen with all your body and mind: If a woman has two husbands, tell me in all seriousness, to whom will she be committed? Your heart has the capacity for only a single love (*prem*). Will you give it to a woman or will you give it to Khodā. If now you produce a son, the enchantment of the created world (*māyā*) will soon engulf you altogether. Gazing at that child’s face, your love for Khodā will be disrupted, troubled, lost. When your ship is berthed secure in the dock, would you scuttle your goods, your capital, by throwing everything overboard? Listen to this story from the words of the Korān: The virtuous woman Maryam was the beloved mother of Īsā. Her heart brimmed with her love for Khodā. So singular was her focus that she completely forgot herself in her constant attachment to the Lord. He sent down færies (*hur*) from heaven (*behešet*) bearing divine fruits and other delightful comestibles, which the færies fed her. As a result, Īsā was later born. She was consumed with affection when she held Īsā in her lap, especially when she would lift him up and place her breast in his mouth. Then the Lord’s words echoed down from heaven: ‘It has been many days since you called out to me in your singular love, but now that you have a son, you have quite forgotten me. My dear, your love is split; you cannot abide both. . . .’ Listen brother Gāji, what else can I say? Who has the power to make someone understand what is already well known?”<sup>46</sup>

45. Ābdur Rahim, 72.

46. Ābdur Rahim, 72–73. The story of Maryam as conveyed here is not found in the Qur’ān. In Qur’ān 3:37, there is a reference to provisions or food being made available to Maryam by God’s intervention, and again in 19:25–26 when Maryam is standing giving birth, she holds onto a palm tree and is instructed to shake it in order to receive ripe dates to refresh her in her pains.

Gāji demurs but decides to prove to Kālu that he has not lost sight of what is important and tells him to prepare to leave first thing in the morning. And they do. But Cāmpāvātī in her wisdom senses something wrong and realizes Gāji is about to leave, so she remonstrates that she, too, should go, lest her father sacrifice her to Caṇḍī after they have all given up their *jāti* and recited the *kālemā*. She dresses as a *joginī*. Finally Kālu convinces Gāji to relent, and she is allowed to join them.

It is not long before Gāji complains to Kālu that having Cāmpāvātī is a burden, for people look and wonder just what kind of a *phakir* he could possibly be when he keeps a woman. So for the next three years as they wander through the countryside, Gāji blows on Cāmpāvātī and transmutes her into a flower which he stuffs in his bag, or he turns her into a ring that he wears on his finger. Then at night, when it is time to cook, he blows on her three times and transforms her back into the woman she is so that she can do the needful, then he repeats the process again the next day. The routine wears thin. So one morning Gāji blows on Cāmpā and turns her into a tree, a night-blooming jasmine.<sup>47</sup> To say she is distraught would be an understatement:

“Alas, my cruel and pitiless lord, where are you going? I am a weak and defenseless woman. I made love to you, I donned the garb of a *vaiṣṇavī*, a female renunciant, and I abandoned my mother and father, everyone, when I came with you. Now you abandon me in a foreign land, and are heading off where? Will you please explain how this can be called the *dharma* of love (*prem*)?”<sup>48</sup>

Now stranded, Cāmpāvātī continues to bemoan her fate and chastise Gāji for his indifference, until he stifles her and accuses her and all women of being conniving, perfidious, and self-serving by entrapping men to do their bidding. He reminds her that he promised Khodā that he would never abandon her and so he promises to return. He and Kālu then leave and travel all over Khodā’s creation.

The adventures pile up. One day they cure a man with elephantiasis; on another they conjure the presence of Gaṅgā for a group of *jogīs*, who are amazed that she appears at the call of a *jaban*. They are so grateful for the sight of the goddess that they construct a bejeweled *masjid* in her honor.<sup>49</sup> Then the pair decide to go to Pātālnagar, guided by Basumati, Mother Earth herself. There Gāji and Kālu are united with their elder brother Julhās and his wife Pāctolā, as they enjoy the

47. *Śeuti* > *śeuli*, also known as *śephālī*, a member of the *olea* (olive) family: *Nycanthese arbor tristis*, coincidentally the name in Latin, means “sad night-blooming tree,” making it strangely apropos of Cāmpāvātī’s predicament. The alternate name is Coral jasmine, which can grow to a height of ten meters, with a gray or gray-green flaky bark. The flowers are fragrant with a five- to eight-lobed corolla of snowy white petals, and a brilliant orange-red pistil, clusters of which can be as few as two and as many as seven. Very aromatic, it is often used in garlands and medicinally as well.

48. Ābdur Rahim, *Gājikālu o cāmpāvātī kanyār puthi*, 75–76.

49. Ābdur Rahim, 76–78. This is a reprise of Badar Pir’s encounter with the *jogīs* (chap. 2, this volume).

opulent hospitality of Pāctolā's father, Jaṅga Rājā. For the first time, the brothers are united. They soon decide to return to their parents' home in Bairātnagar. Their journey backtracks through every place Gāji and Kālu traversed en route, including a special pause to release Cāmpāvati, who is still trapped in her tree.<sup>50</sup> Finally they arrive amidst fanfare befitting the return of the three prodigal sons. The daughters-in-law meet their mother-in-law Ājupā Rāni, and Śāh Sekandar is overjoyed. The whole adventure is recounted once more in abbreviated form, and they all settle in to enjoy their new life.<sup>51</sup>

. . .

#### 5.4. REVISIONS TO THE HISTORY OF BAḌA KHĀN GĀJI AND DAKṢIṆ RĀY

We have already commented on the intertextual positioning of all three of the *Rāy maṅgals*, which are largely *purāṇik* in their connections, both overt and covert. Like the *Rāy maṅgals*, the Gāji and Kālu narrative links itself intertextually to any number of prior texts, some classical Indic epics, especially *Rāmāyaṇa*, including the allusion to Ahalyā, but also *purāṇik* figures such as the tales of Gaurī and Hara. A description of Śāhā Sekandar opens the narrative of the *Gāji kālu o cāmpāvati kanyār puthi*, where he is reputed to be as strong as the legendary Persian warrior Rostam, and easily able to defeat the prior Sistani rulers, Nurimān and his extraordinary son, the warrior Šām, all of whom are central to the epic Persian narrative of the *Shāh nāmeḥ* of Firdausī.<sup>52</sup> These pre-Islamic paladins and kings, Rostam in particular, signaled just rule and impeccable defense of kingship that was itself held as a standard throughout the Mughal world. They were champions of an often irrepressible *bazm* and *razm*, feasting and fighting, as the two poles around which ancient Persian royal culture was articulated,<sup>53</sup> echoes of which percolate through the Gāji narrative.

During the wedding sequence, when Gāji invokes the traditional *rati śāstras*, or manuals that address the business of the physical and emotional dimensions of love and romance, it explicitly recalls sources for the earlier *premākhyāns* or love

50. The allusion is clearly to Rām freeing Ahalyā, Cāmpāvati's sin being to share Ahalyā's gender which, as Gāji rather acerbically noted, made women the origin of the torments of men and the distraction of ascetics.

51. Ābdur Rahim, *Gājikālu o cāmpāvati kanyār puthi*, 78–83.

52. Abolqasem Ferdowsi, *Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings*, trans. Dick Davis, with a foreword by Azar Nafisi (New York: Penguin Books, 2016).

53. Dick Davis, *Epic and Sedition: The Case of Ferdowsi's Shahnameh* (Washington, DC: Mage Publishers, 1992). In describing the Urdu *dastān*, a storytelling genre akin to the *pir kathā*, Frances W. Pritchett, quoting 'Abdul Ḥalīm Sharar, notes that "the *dastan* consists of four arts: *razm* (war), *bazm* (elegant gatherings), *ḥusn o 'ishq* (beauty and love), and *'ayyārī* (trickery)"; 'Abdullāh Ḥusain Bilgrāmī, *Romance Tradition in Urdu*, 15 (translator's introduction).

narratives (*prem kathā* or *prem kahānī*) in Persian, Hindavī, and Avadhī. After the invocation of the Qamar al-Zamān episode from the *Arabian Nights*, Cāmpāvati's beauty is compared first to a goddess, a *devatā*,<sup>54</sup> then to a celestial nymph, a *kinnara*, but ultimately is seen to rival even that of Jolāykhā, the heroine of the original Korānic adaptation of the Biblical narrative, the expanded Arabic and Persian romance, Yūsuf and Zulaykhā, one of the most popular and most often retold romances across the Islamic world. The sequence of comparisons is telling, for Jolāykhā's beauty is not only matchless but the peak of perfection, standing above that of Indic goddesses and celestial nymphs. The narrative structure of the *premākhyān* lends itself to esoteric (*batin*) allegorical interpretation in the hands of skilled *sūphī* teachers, and Ābdur Rahim seems to have been conversant with those strategies, for the narrative trajectory of his Gāji tale is similar to the tales of *Madhumālātī* and *Mirigāvatī* and could in the most general terms be subject to a similar allegorical reading:<sup>55</sup> the hero Gāji receives a glimpse of his future reward when he is carried by the færies to Cāmpāvati's bedroom (lover/God), then they are separated; he then explores the far reaches of the earth in search of her, overcoming one obstacle after another (the stages of *sūphī* practice, *mokāms*) before marrying her, then prompted by his half-brother Kālu, an ascetic, he struggles to find an even higher truth that transcends worldly love. The parallels pretty much end there without much subtlety. Overall, the allegorical esoteric reading is sufficiently weak compared to its Hindavī counterparts that one would be hard-pressed to argue for the analogy. More likely, the vague similarity of form should be considered a parody. This is to say that, in spite of its surface similarities, the concerns of this and the related texts of the fictional *pīrs* in our study are different from those of the extended narratives of the Hindavī *premākhyāns* and Persian *masnavīs*, and it is a mistake to equate them.<sup>56</sup> But Kālu's comparison of Gāji's love for Cāmpāvati in his critique of Maryam's love for Īsā hints at the pragmatic positioning of the text in moving to establish the position of a proper *sūphī* path vis-à-vis a generic Christianity, a move that will resonate later with Bonbibī's tale. Similarly, the perfidy of both of Gāji's aunts—the Indic goddesses Gaṅgā and Caṇḍī—sends a mixed message about the strength of their kinship to Gāji as opposed to their inability to refuse their devotees, in spite of their protest that fate has decreed the outcome. Interestingly, the brothers together personify the three viable paths to salvation: Gāji represents the explorative nature of the *pīr* who lives in the world, the step-brother Kālu represents the more constrained version of *sūphī* asceticism who is in the world but not of it, and Gāji's older brother,

54. There is an allusion in the name of the heroine to the Śākta goddess Cāmpāvati, but it is difficult to determine if this was a deliberate choice.

55. For comparisons, see Mīr Sayyid Manjhan Shattārī Rājgīrī, *Madhumālātī*, and *The Magic Doe: Quṭban Suhravardī's Mirigāvatī*, trans. Aditya Behl (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

56. See chap. 1, n. 46.

Julhās, the married prince, represents the more straightforward commitment to mainstream *śāriat*.

In appropriating the precursor of Gāji, Kālu, and Cāmpāvati, Mohāammad Khater's Bonbibī narrative inherits a vast web of intertextual connections that create a literary and cultural context for Bonbibī's own story, validating that tale in ways that the narrative alone could never accomplish—and the tilt in the Bonbibī narrative is increasingly toward an Islamic cultural heritage. Khater's invocation of the *Rāy maṅgal* and the *Gāji kālu o cāmpāvati kanyār puthi* gives the *Bonbibī jahurā nāmā* instant credibility through its multiple intertextual references, which create a kind of literary pedigree and indirect imprimatur. Khater's text appropriates the power of the precursors (for our purposes Ābdur Rahim's Gāji Kālu tale synecdochically represents multiple versions of the saga dating back two centuries); he effectively conflates the *Rāy maṅgal* precursor with the Gāji narrative precursor by deployment of select features from both texts in a way that leaves the reader imagining a unified narrative, much as I had imagined when I began this study. Details are glossed and every reader of the Bonbibī story already knows the outcome of the conflict of Baḍa Khān and Rāy. As Linda Hutcheon has argued, the parodic text mimics the prior text and in so doing preserves it, but she does not comment on the way that appropriative mimicry can alter the memory of the prior texts or even conflate them, which is what has happened here.

Bonbibī's narrative appropriation generates several noteworthy effects. It arrogates to itself the continuation of the story of Dakṣiṇā Rāy<sup>57</sup> and Baḍa Khān Gāji, who are in the end divested of their overbearing, notably patriarchal, power in the Sunderban mangrove swamps, a leadership they are forced to concede to Bonbibī. Mohāammad Khater self-consciously situated the Bonbibī narrative temporally in the wake of the earlier conflict—how far back this was imagined to have occurred we cannot determine, but both protagonists are still active in his narrative of Bonbibī. Khater exercised his power as a later author to reshape the prior narrative by highlighting only those parts he wished to emphasize. *This "continuation" was, in fact, a completely new and independent story in its own right, but by virtue of the intertextual references, left the impression of a continuing story.* Since Bonbibī emerges as the ultimate controller of all the inhabitants of the Āṭhārobāṭi—human and animal—she naturally controls whatever they control. The receiver of the tale is left to understand implicitly that she can control the tigers, which variously constitute the followers and army of Baḍa Khān in both prior tales, and of Dakṣiṇ Rāy in the *Rāy maṅgal* (he does not command tigers in the Gāji and Kālu cycle). Today virtually everyone who has heard of Bonbibī is acutely aware of her power over tigers, her ritual *pūjās* reflect the tiger's omnipresence, she is sometimes depicted in images straddling a tiger mount, and her command of them is invoked to ensure

57. Mohāammad Khater's Bonbibī tale also writes Dakṣiṇā rather than Dakṣiṇ, which is used by Kṛṣṇarām.

safe ventures for honey collectors, wax makers, salt manufacturers, woodcutters, and so forth—anyone, really, who dares to venture into the mangrove swamps of the Sunderban. Yet, so complete is her appropriation of the prior narratives, it is ironic that nowhere in the text of the *Bonbibī jahurā nāmā* does she actually command tigers. Everyone simply imagines she does by virtue of her command of Baḍa Khān Gāji and Dakṣiṇā Rāy, over whom she has authority.

In the *Bonbibī jahurā nāmā*, Mohāmmad Khater clearly invokes the outcome of the battle between Dakṣiṇā Rāy and Baḍa Khān Gāji from the oldest Gāji text, Kṛṣṇarām's *Rāy maṅgal*, where they end up as power-sharing brothers, one in a fixed abode, the other itinerant throughout the entire Āthārōbhāṭi lands, an outcome confirmed by Rudradev's incomplete *Rāy maṅgal*. Nor does that image conflict with the presentation in Haridev's *Rāy maṅgal* that revels in the brotherly affection of the two. That choice, though, forced Mohāmmad Khater to finesse, that is, to *ignore* the outright victory of Baḍa Khān in the Gāji, Kālu, and Cāmpāvati cycle, for that outcome could never be construed as closely consanguine, even symbolically. In that version, Dakṣiṇā is humiliated in defeat; he is unceremoniously bound head, hand, and foot, and suffers the final indignity of Baḍa Khān cutting off his ears before sparing his life. No brothers there. But curiously, in the Dukhe episode—the second of the two Bonbibī stories—Dakṣiṇā Rāy is forced to seek the protection of Baḍa Khān to avoid being slain by Śājaṅgali, this time affirming Baḍa Khān's superior position over Dakṣiṇā Rāy (no modifying term, such as “elder” brother, is needed). This authorial move invokes the victory of Baḍa Khān in the *Gāji kālu o cāmpāvati kanyār punthi*; then, just as conveniently, a few couplets later, Bonbibī summons all the male protagonists and—after the plea by Baḍa Khān which invokes Bonbibī's symbolic and very real position of matriarchal authority over the entire region of the Sunderban—she declares Dukhe, Dakṣiṇā Rāy, and Baḍa Khān all to be mutually supporting brothers. This choice is all the more striking because the fixing of kinship relations to resolve conflict in the *Gāji kālu o cāmpāvati kanyār puthi* is far more extensive than in the earlier *Rāy maṅgal*. As I can personally attest in my initial reading of these tales, a careful but casual reading would not initially reveal the ambiguities of Mohāmmad Khater's convenient selection of intertextual references, for in both precursor tales, Baḍa Khān and Dakṣiṇā Rāy fight, both somehow survive, both subsequently somehow share in the rule of the region, and that final outcome seems to gloss over any equivocation. But significantly, using kinship to adjudicate the relative ranking of *musalmāni* and *hinduyāni* figures, or the *musalmāni* saint with the *hinduyāni* king, displaces the traditional Indic notions of *varṇa* or caste markers of identity. It is the rhetoric of Islamic brotherhood, or more specifically *sūphī* fraternity, that prevails, and with the addition of Dukhe, the socially oppressed emerge as coequal.

Comparing the logical presuppositions regarding the construction of divinity, once again we find Mohāmmad Khater choosing between the two precursors. He clearly avoided any reference to, or even vague acknowledgement of, the form of

divinity described in the *Rāy maṅgal*, the combined form of God, Īśvar or Dev Bhagavān, that served those who followed the Korān as well as those who followed the *Bhāgavata purāṇa*. Notably, but without being explicitly named, the manifestation of that unusual iconic form in the *Rāy maṅgal* appears to be a version of Satya Pīr, that is, Satya Nārāyaṇ fused with Āllā, both characterized as the stainless one, *nirañjan*. Khater unambiguously favored the divinity articulated in Ābdur Rahim's Gāji and Kālu tale. There was no notion of graded forms of divinity, so it would be wrong to speak of the highest divinity; rather, Khodā or Āllā were the names given to the sole divinity, and there was no second and certainly no compromised or combined form. In this cosmological system, the author posited a universe that was ruled by one God, whose revelation, the Korān, could be used as a source of all knowledge past and future; no other beings, earthly, celestial, or otherwise were considered divine—including the full range of *nabīs*, *olis*, *pīrs*, *bibīs*, *jinns*, *paris*, *vidyādhārīs*, *kinnaras*, *phereštās*, and demonic figures of *jogīs*, *bhūts*, *prets*, *rākṣasas*, *ḍākiñīs*, and so forth. The familiar gods and goddesses, *devs* and *devīs*, such as Hara, Gaurī, Caṇḍī, and Gaṅgā, were made to function in a lower register that in effect reduced their seeming divinity to a kind of limited supernatural power, greater than ordinary humans, but certainly not as great as that of the *pīrs* or *gājis* who were their superiors. That marks an aggressively rehierarchicalized cosmos with respect to celestial figures and heroic religious functionaries, a downward displacement for indigenous Indic divinities.

The universe's cosmography is roughly equivalent in all three sets of tales. After Āllā sends Bonbibī and Śajāṅgali to earth to carry out their missions, physical access to heaven (*bhest*) itself is denied in the Bonbibī narrative. Access is available only through the proxy intercessions of Mohāmmad and Phātemā via their *dargās*, which are presented as homologues of the court of heaven and therefore create a conduit, but which at the same time insulate the protagonists from direct contact. The same holds for Berāhim when he seeks aid for offspring at the *dargā* of Mohāmmad. In the Gāji and Kālu tale, too, *bhest* is the abode of God, but is not accessible to any of the characters. So while we see that the Bonbibī tale acknowledges a similarly basic structure of the universe as its two explicit precursor texts—a heaven, earth, and underworld—the way the characters navigate that cosmos offers three slightly different perspectives and, in the Bonbibī tale, only Mohāmmad can fly to heaven, much as he did in the fabled *miṭrāj*.<sup>58</sup>

58. There are several moments in the narratives that invoke the *miṭrāj*, an event that has served any number of important social and theological functions for different groups of Muslims historically. Among the many possible citations, see the especially provocative and wide-ranging set of narratives in Christine Gruber and Frederick Colby, eds., *The Prophet's Ascension: Cross-Cultural Encounters with the Islamic Miṭrāj Tales* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010); for immediate relevance, see especially Ayesha A. Irani, "Mystical Love, Prophetic Compassion, and Ethics: An Ascension Narrative in the Medieval Bengali *Nabivaṃśa* of Saiyad Sultān" in *The Prophet's*

All three sets of texts presuppose the interventions of Āllā, who manifests supernatural power to shape affairs in the world; the mechanism to elicit such help is prayer or meditation, sometimes aided by recitation of the qualities of God in *jikir* to assist in one's ability to concentrate. As we would expect from fiction, the passages that portray these pleas for help can only be characterized as generic, for there is no finely tuned doctrinal or theological prescription, only the simulacrum of a ritual injunction. Still, it is notable that once Bonbibī and Śājaṅgali are given the imprimatur of Āllā as a result of their training, and become properly qualified *muršids*—signaled by their special hats and their ability to traverse great distances by the utterance of a simple *mantra*—they tend to tap directly the source of power, Āllā; they do not work through some mediator such as Phātemā or Mohāmmad. Later, in the story of Dukhe, Bonbibī herself becomes just such a meditator for all the inhabitants of the Āṭhārobāṭi, the result—as she famously lectures Śājaṅgali—of the responsibility and obligation that accompanies the gift of Āllā's *barakat*, which he has dispatched to her in her moment of crisis battling Nārāyaṇī. She has ascended to a higher power that allows her to shape-shift, to materialize whenever and wherever she is needed as she discharges her moral responsibilities to her devotees. Power, then, is portrayed as proceeding from heaven to earth, from Āllā or the Prophet, directly to Baḍa Khān Gāji and Kālu, and later Bonbibī and Śājaṅgali, and then being dispersed accordingly. But in the *Rāy maṅgal*, Dakṣiṇ Rāy, who participates in divinity directly through his birth, receives no such support, save an ultimately ineffective trident from his Lord Śiv. Worse yet for him, in the *Gāji kālū o cāmpāvati kanyār puthi*, he has to take himself physically to the portal of Pātālnagar on the banks of the river to solicit the help of the goddess Gaṅgā, who reluctantly extends her aid in the form of crocodiles, coerced by his threat to commit suicide to expose her as unwilling to help her devotee. Similarly, he is made to travel to the portal of Mount Kailās to solicit the aid of Caṇḍī, who in a reprise of the previous interaction between goddess and devotee likewise only reluctantly provides him with the sinister army of ghouls, ghosts, witches, and so forth.

Readers would be hard-pressed not to notice the difference: couched in devotional terms, this Dakṣiṇ Rāy's sources of power require wheedling and threats and a potentially antagonistic relationship with the goddess based on an implied exchange economy (devotion/worship or threat for help/power in the world), and in the end produce results of limited value; while the relationships based on kinship prevail. It may well be that Dakṣiṇ Rāy's efforts amount to a veiled critique of the practice of pilgrimage (*tīrtha*), which produces merit, but of limited utility in the real world compared to the power of the *gāji*. The further reconfiguration of the nature of Dakṣiṇ Rāy into a *rākṣas* in the Bonbibī narrative highlights his impotence. He becomes a shape-shifter who transforms into a tiger to accept

offerings of human sacrifice, implying that he requires the blood of humans to maintain his position, an ominous and very low life-form that is irredeemable and beneath human status, a deliberately inverted reading of the numerous episodes in Kṛṣṇarām's *Rāy maṅgal* where Dakṣiṇ Rāy slays men and boys when he is not properly worshiped, but always restores their lives when appropriate propitiations are made.<sup>59</sup> He undergoes a similar transformation in the Ratā episode in Rudradev's later *Rāy maṅgal*, which signals rather ambivalently a shift in Rāy's status, since the *maṅgal kāvyas* were as a rule celebratory of the triumph of their subjects. In the greater cosmic hierarchy, this demotion from godling to bloodthirsty *rākṣas* demon renders him increasingly pathetic while transforming him into a personification of malevolence, considerably beneath the exalted status he enjoyed in the earliest texts and his appreciable, but diminished, status in the Gāji and Kālu cycle. Ultimately Bonbibī consigns and confines him to the small Kēdōkhālī region of the Āthārōbāṭi, in effect curbing his influence altogether and keeping him locked into an area where he can do little harm, but where he is allowed to save face. The slippage of Dakṣiṇā Rāy's place in the world of cosmic power is significant, and we will argue that it was a move that resonated with the emerging polarization of communities into Muslims and Hindus that was crystallizing in the later decades of the nineteenth century, when the deployment of the Bonbibī text in its extramural application to real-life situations was a pressing pragmatic attempt to change the world of the reader, to effect social change.<sup>60</sup> Following Hutcheon again, the treatment of Dakṣiṇā Rāy in the Bonbibī narrative signals a slip from the parodic connection of one text to another, or simply discourse to discourse, to the more overtly pragmatic, sometimes satiric, politics of the text deployed to effect social change, connecting its discourse directly to the world of ordinary things.

Kālu, who is a protégé of Dakṣiṇ Rāy with his own small domain in the Āthārōbāṭi according to the *Rāy Maṅgal*, seems to have switched, for he becomes the adopted elder half-brother of Gāji in the *Gāji kālu o cāmpāvati kanyār puthi*, where he plays a truly pivotal role as an accomplished *pīr*. His luster seems to have come from his affiliation with Gāji, though he exhibits an independence of thought and action that makes him a significant figure, more conservative and ascetic in nature. Since these tales are fictions, can we even assume any connection based on the similarity of name from one text to another? Given the paucity of named characters, and the obvious way characters are invoked in later texts, the choice does not seem to be an accident, yet there is precious little to draw from

59. Kṛṣṇarām Dās, *Rāy maṅgal*, e.g., 167–68, vv. 31–32; 168, vv. 33–38; 169–72, vv. 53–79; 227–28, vv. 725–45.

60. For understanding the pragmatics of the text, I tend to follow Wolfgang Iser, whose many works on reception theory have shaped my thinking, but perhaps most succinctly in his early essay outlining in brief the underpinnings of his functionalist approach; see Iser, "The Reality of Fiction: A Functionalist Approach to Literature," *New Literary History* 7, no. 1 (Autumn 1975): 7–38.

the two roles, since he disappears altogether in the Bonbibī story. It does suggest, however, that Kālu has switched allegiance, and his later function as half-brother is perhaps code to indicate a change that he is now Gāji's *sūphī* confrère, a shift that subtly signals the new order in the Gāji Kālu tale; but Kālu's absence in the Bonbibī narrative remains enigmatic unless it serves as a critique of the futility of the ascetic's path, which was certainly under fire in Bengal at the time of the text's composition.

Just as noticeable as the absence of Kālu is the nearly total lack of humor in the *Bonbibī jahurā nāmā*, a significant structural feature of the first two tales of the cycle (which is, of course, among the pragmatic presuppositions related to genre). That marks a significant departure in style. In the first two tales, the tigers provide a raucous interlude of comic relief at several points midway through each episode involving the conflict of Dakṣiṇā Rāy and Baḍa Khān Gāji. In performance terms, one can easily imagine the utility of the comic relief as the tigers complain bitterly about how tough life has become there in the low-lying lands of the eighteen tides, now that humans have encroached into the territories they once ruled without interference. So too the battering of the crone when the two tigers are disguised as ewes in the Gāji and Kālu story and their later kidding of Dakṣiṇā Rāy whom they threaten to eat. The tiger humor clearly functioned to expose and stereotype prototypical human behavior—compassionless greed, exploitation of natural resources, and so forth. When the half-white half-black Īśvar descends to broker the peace between Baḍa Khān and Dakṣiṇ Rāy, he warns the tigers in an aside that in ten years' time they might not find enough food to feed their cubs (which may have been the first environmental risk assessment in Bangla literature, composed in 1684), the tigers providing a contrast in style to reckless patterns of human consumption. But why did humor disappear from the *Bonbibī jahurā nāmā*, which had frequently and explicitly declared intertextual connections and whose cosmology operated according to shared presuppositions found in prior texts? While we can only speculate—who can ever know how any author has made decisions about his or her narrative?—we have already seen evidence that the Bonbibī text was riding on the margins, crossing the line where fiction serves religious ideology, where the narrative begins to yield some of its fictional qualities and starts to become, in Macherey's terms, a vehicle for religious propaganda. *This raises the possibility that humor itself in these early modern Bangla texts may be indexical of the subjunctive*, especially when the stories were parodies and then used satirically,<sup>61</sup>

61. David L. Curley has convincingly explored the important role of humor and satire in his study of Kavikaṅkan's *Caṇḍī maṅgal*; importantly, he deploys the literary critical perspectives of Kenneth Burke and Wayne Booth to analyze specific episodes, especially the treatment of gender. See Curley, *Poetry and History: Bengali Maṅgal-kābya and Social Change in Precolonial Bengal* (New Delhi: Chronicle Books, 2008), esp. chaps. 1–3.

for humor seldom seems to be part of the prescriptive monologic of theology, history, and law. While the text of the *Bonbibī jahurā nāmā* articulates a general *sūphī* image of the world, it is a very conservative one in spite of the protagonist being female and Phatemā in *bhest* functioning as the arbiter of fate as translated through the divination of the Korān. In comparison to the *Gāji kālū o cāmpāvātī kanyār puthi*, which is an obvious parody of the *Rāy maṅgal*, the Bonbibī text is all seriousness about establishing hierarchies of power that coerce and impose a *shariʿa* form of conduct on all human and animal inhabitants of the Āṭhārobāṭi. The new manifestations of power in the Bonbibī narrative eliminate all ambiguity regarding the hierarchical nature of divinity entertained in the earlier texts. The *Bonbibī jahurā nāmā* seems to have been bent on changing the order of things in the social world.

### 5.5. CONCEPTUAL BLENDING TO FASHION A NEW COSMO-MORAL ORDER

In an article nearly two decades ago, I proposed that as Islamic practices gradually took hold in Bengal, the use of local Bangla terminology was not a naïve form of syncretism, but rather represented an attempt, mainly by *sūphī pīrs*, to translate concepts from Arabic and Persian into the local vernacular in a simple effort to convey an alien religious system to a new audience.<sup>62</sup> In that article I argued that one effective way of conceptualizing this process was to use formal literary translation theory as a hermeneutic strategy to tease out the instances of conceptual crossover. This strategy has the advantage of highlighting historical shifts that in nearly all studies of what is generally called the Islamization of Bengal simply collapse or blur. Following the writings of *musalmāni* practitioners, we can see an initial phase wherein the local vernacular is used almost exclusively, with only a few key terms introduced from Persian and Arabic. But we can document how, as the centuries wore on, authors created a new Bangla vocabulary of technical terms imported from Arabic and Persian to increase the precision of their formulations, especially noticeable in technical manuals for yogic-style instruction, practical manuals of *śāriʿat*-based ritual, and theological and metaphysical pronouncements. At some point—and no scholar writing on the subject today seems to agree when this happened—a new register of the language, which we now term *musalmāni bāṅglā*, with its heavy reliance on Persian and Urdu terms, came to dominate *musalmāni* writing in the vernacular.

I proposed several lower-order forms of translational moments, using various formal literary equivalences as a guide. Literal or formal translation was common enough, but was of limited utility for higher-level concepts and abstractions.

62. Stewart, "In Search of Equivalence."

More often documented were refraction theory and mirroring, argued perhaps most concisely by André Lefevre,<sup>63</sup> and by many others adopting similar metaphors which recognize the exclusion of some meanings and the intrusion of other meanings—sometimes disjunctive—to produce an imperfect, slightly fractured, or distorted transformation from source to target language. Many of the attempts to translate Islamic concepts into Bangla follow this technique, which results in the equivalences we have repeatedly noticed in our examples in the literature of the fictional *pīrs*, where Indic gods and goddesses find their equivalent among the *pīrs* and *bibīs*, where the *masjid* is counterpoised to the *mandir*, where the recitation of the names and attributes of Āllā in *jikir* is equated with the *vaiṣṇav* practice of *jap* or *kīrtan*, in which the practitioner recites the names of Kṛṣṇa, and so on.<sup>64</sup> Dynamic equivalence, for the likes of those who imagine some kind of divine inspiration in the process, as Eugene Nida popularized in his translations of the Bible,<sup>65</sup> provided a perspective that took into account equivalences that might dramatically shift the tenor of the translation, thereby potentially introducing profoundly new meanings into the formulations, but which still convey the “message,” a technique that would only work with a religious tradition that deemed its “message” inspired, universal, and thereby exportable to any language.

On the highest level, the complexity of translation moves from key terms and concepts to *shared metaphoric worlds*, which lie in the *domain of the intersemiotic*. Let me quote the relevant passage from that article.<sup>66</sup>

Linguistic activity which embraces more than equivalent concepts to include larger structures for negotiating the exigencies of the world moves us into more complex acts of appropriation and assimilation that are required to transcend the purely interlingual. Roman Jakobson refers to this as the highest level of complexity, the category of the intersemiotic.<sup>67</sup> On the intersemiotic level of translation we find an interchange and interpolation of ideas among mythologies, between rituals that are (to a certain extent) mutually observed, and even in the fixing of translational equivalents among the parts of extended theological systems. At this stage, which is the

63. André Lefevre, *Translating Poetry: Seven Strategies and a Blueprint* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1975); he subsequently expanded his strategies through a series of articles, references to which can be found in my original analysis.

64. These equivalences also yield to Ludwig Wittgenstein's analysis of family resemblance; see Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, German text with English translation by G.E.M. Anscombe, P.M. S. Hacker, and Joachim Schulte, rev. 4th ed. (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2009).

65. Eugene Nida, *Towards a Science of Translating* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1964); see also Eugene Albert Nida and Charles Russell Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969).

66. Stewart, “In Search of Equivalence,” 282–84. Footnotes in this passage are in the original article.

67. Roman Jakobson argues that translation is “intralingual” within different parts or dialects of the same language, “interlingual” or between different languages, and finally “intersemiotic” between different cultural signification systems; see Roman Jakobson, “On Linguistic Aspects of Translation,” in *On Translation*, ed. Reuben A. Brower (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), 232–39.

most vexing type of translation—a cultural translation—an entire conceptual world is understood in terms of another, not just in its single terms or phrases. Because these worlds are not identical, yet admit to being understood in terms of direct or implied comparison, they are extended, complex metaphorical constructs, which can be conceived as “shared” or “emergent” metaphorical worlds (and we might even argue that to call it translation is itself a metaphoric leap). Linguistically, the impulse behind this analysis is what Gideon Toury has called “polysystem theory,” which attempts to extend the processes of translation to the cultural, intersemiotic level, wherein different features of culture participate in increasingly complicated, often disjunctive, systems of discourse.<sup>68</sup> Polysystem assumes that no single mode of discourse or cultural construct can account for the varieties of lived experiences or types of exchanges within which people routinely operate, and that people comfortably shift from system to system, often without reflection, depending on the situation. The system in operation is context-dependent, the domains of meaning are not limited to exclusively verbal significations, and the application of them necessarily imprecise, if not inconsistent. Translation, then, will shift from purely linguistic to symbolic and other forms of cultural expression in ways that are not naively arithmetic; different modes of translation will embody greater and lesser degrees of conformity in the same complex act, so that depending on what is being emphasized, the various dimensions of cultural expression will be more or less translated into their equivalents. If in our examples each expression of religiosity attempted by these precolonial authors is understood to participate in a range of semiotic systems, then its translation will likewise reflect these multiple referents as well. A theological term could conceivably imply then certain ritual actions, cosmological expectations, political allegiances, and so forth, in an ever-spiraling complication as one attempts to account for the encounter of one religious culture with another through a shared language, and its metaphoric and symbolic systems.

It must be remembered, however, that what is sought is not the precise equation of the parts of one symbolic or semiotic system with another in clear one-to-one matches. Rather, this overt use of an apparently alien terminology and conceptual system is an attempt to establish the basis for a common conceptual underpinning so that the matching systems and their parts are demonstrated to be coherently conceived, or at least rectifiable—hence the possibility of equivalence—while almost certain to remain inconsistent in their particulars.<sup>69</sup>

68. Gideon Toury, *In Search of a Theory of Translation* (Tel Aviv: The Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics, 1980); see also Edwin Gentzler's critique of polysystem theory in *Contemporary Translation Theories* (London: Routledge, 1993), 105–43. A slightly different approach that seeks to quantify discretely the complex levels of translation that account for the rich cultural context can be found in the “variational” model as described by Lance Hewson and Jacky Martin in *Redefining Translation: The Variational Approach* (London: Routledge, 1991). In this model, the highest level of intersemiotic translation involves the isolation of multifaceted “homologs” that lead to more tightly controlled paraphrastic constructions. This seems to be a promising model for translators to conceptualize what they do, but less useful descriptively in conceptualizing the problem as I have described the encounter of religious traditions.

69. I am here following the lead of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, who argue in their work on

At the time of that writing, I could envision such a sharing of metaphoric worlds, but had not found a good example until reading the Bonbibī narrative when I realized that many of the processes Pramod Talgeri had described in his introductory essay to the volume *Literature in Translation*—as a movement “from cultural transference to metonymic displacement”—do by analogy describe precisely the activity undertaken by author Muhāmmad Khater.<sup>70</sup> His shift of intertextual references from a commonly recognized set of traditional Indic sources, such as the epics and *purāṇas* and *maṅgal kāvyas*, to the Korān, the *Shāh nāmeh*, and other *musalmāni* sources signaled a departure from the previously shared contours of the *imaginaire*, that is, the discursive arena, we saw constructed by earlier texts. His move was neither vague nor arbitrary when he appropriated all prior cosmologies and enfolded them within the world of Bonbibī and her brother Śajāṅgali. What the author of the *Bonbibī jahurā nāmā* did was to perform an act of *conceptual blending* wherein two preexisting cosmologies were brought together with a profoundly different end result from that found in any other text—and to interpret that process, I suggest following the basic strategy outlined by Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner in *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and Mind's Hidden Complexities*.<sup>71</sup>

There is a very significant displacement that occurs in the translational exchange economy of these fictional *pīr kathās*. In the *Rāy maṅgal* of Kṛṣṇarām, a traditional Indic world of gods and goddesses acknowledges and admits into its realm the figure of the *pīr*, in the person of Baḍa Khān Gāji. Dakṣiṇ Rāy, the hero of the tale, has previously tolerated Baḍa Khān Gāji, who is clearly depicted as an outsider (by speech and act), then is forced to recognize his power and claim to the land when they fight to a standoff—each killing the other and each revived. This rapprochement and elevation of Baḍa Khān Gāji occurs when their battle is interrupted and peace forced upon them by the appearance of an *avatār* of Īśvar in the conjoined form of Satya Nārāyaṇ and Satya Pīr, a joint image of divinity that reflects both *hinduyāni* and *musalmāni* interests. They are made to break off enmities and share

metaphor in everyday speech that the mechanics of this process can be envisioned as seeking the “coherence” of conceptions without worrying about the consistency of the details of the expression, image, or symbol being manipulated; see Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

70. Pramod Talgeri, “The Perspectives of Literary Translation: From Cultural Transference to Metonymic Displacement,” in *Literature in Translation: From Cultural Transference to Metonymic Displacement*, ed. Pramod Talgeri and S.B. Verma (London: Sangam, 1988), 1–11; a number of other essays in that volume are germane here.

71. Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities* (New York: Basic Books, 2002). For more on the workings of this model, see Fauconnier, *Mappings in Thought and Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Fauconnier and Turner, “Metonymy and Conceptual Integration,” in *Metonymy in Language and Thought*, ed. Klaus-Uwe Panther and Günter Radden (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1999), 77–90; and Todd Oakley, “Conceptual Blending, Narrative Discourse, and Rhetoric,” *Cognitive Linguistics* 9 (1998): 321–60.

rule as brothers, reinterpreting a *hinduyāni* hierarchical relationship of social superior (Dakṣiṇ Rāy over Baḍa Khān) to a consanguineous relationship of shared parentage, that is, as brothers, a resolution that reorders traditional Indic hierarchies. As a result, a traditional Indic cosmology has stretched to embrace and accommodate in part a *musalmāni* cosmology by equating Āllā with Nārāyaṇ, with Muhāmmad and the *pīrs* and *bibīs* variously equated with the *devs* and *devīs* of the pantheon, sometimes symmetrically and at other times less so. The move is not an isolated event; for instance, in a related text we have not previously discussed, and which was likely written slightly later than Kṛṣṇarām's *Rāy maṅgal*, Rāmāi Paṇḍit's *Śūnya purāṇ* spells out this move from a hierarchical *hinduyāni* perspective when he equates the Indic god Dharma with Satya Pīr. Dharma takes the form of a *jaban* wearing a black hat, while Brahmā becomes Muhāmmad, Viṣṇu becomes a messenger or *pekāmbar*, Śūlapāṇi [= Śiva] becomes Adam (*adamph*), Gaṇeś becomes the warrior-*pīr* (*gājī*), Kārtik becomes the magistrate (*kāḍī*), and all the sages (*muni*) become mendicants (*phakīr*); Nārada becomes a religious leader (*śek*), Purandar becomes a scholar (*malanā*), Caṇḍikā Devī becomes Hāyā Bībī [= Eve], and Padmāvati becomes Bībīnur [lit. Lady of Light = Phātemā].<sup>72</sup> The traditional Indic divinities are prior but are identified, that is, "translated" into their new forms as *musalmāni* figures, while the supreme Lord Dharma appears to be equated with Āllā. The *hinduyāni* cosmos stretches to embrace the *musalmāni*.

In the *Gāji kālū o cāmpāvati kanyār puthi* of Ābdur Rahim, that accommodative Indic cosmology is shifted slightly: Dakṣiṇā Rāy, a godling, is made subservient to Gāji, who, by virtue of that victory, triumphantly marries the daughter of the *brāhmaṇ* king Mukuṭ Rājā. Gāji is also declared to be the nephew of both the goddesses Gaṅgā and Caṇḍī, incorporating Gāji through family relation directly into the pantheon. In this emerging cosmology, Āllā is the supreme divinity. We have noted a similar move in the prolegomena to the *Mānik pīrer jahurā nāmā* of Jaidi, in the actions of Pīr Badar, who manifests the forms of Viṣṇu and Kṛṣṇa, who tames Gaṅgā and imprisons her in his shoulder bag, and so forth. The *hinduyāni* pantheon shifts downward in relation to its *musalmāni* counterpart. By the time of the *Bonbibī jahurā nāmā* of Muhāmmad Khater, we witness a significantly further downward displacement in the register of traditional Indic forms of divinity: preexisting celestial figures there are only recognized in the realm of ghouls, demons, vampires, and the like, all negative forms. In this new configuration, which appropriates the cosmologies of the *Rāy maṅgals* and similar texts, and the Gāji and Kālū tales, Āllā and Āllā alone is divine. Bonbibī displaces the goddesses

72. Rāmāi Paṇḍit, *Śūnyapurāṇ*, ed. Cārucandra Bandyopādhyāy, 233–36. For an earlier transcription of the same text based on fewer manuscripts, see Rāmāi Paṇḍit, *Dharmapūjā bidhān*, ed. Nanigopāl Bandyopādhyāy, completed by Yogīndranāth Rāy Bahādur, Sāhitya Pariṣad Granthāvalī no. 56 (Kalikātā: Rāmakāmal Siṃha from Baṅgīya Sāhitya Pariṣat Mandir, 1323 BS), 263–65. For more on this process, see Stewart, "Religion in the Subjunctive," 29. Other equivalences can be found in Saiyad Sultān's *Nabivamśa*, but more for purposes of criticism.

that populate the *maṅgal kāvyā* literatures and emerges to rule the land, including Dakṣiṇā Rāy, his mother Nārāyaṇī, and Baḍa Khān Gāji, who is chastised for being friends with Dakṣiṇā Rāy. As a result, the traditional Indic cosmology of the *Rāy maṅgal* and the equivalence-seeking cosmology of *Gāji kālu o cāmpāvātī kanyār puthi* are both completely appropriated by, subsumed within, and reordered in an emerging *musalmāni* cosmology that grants only the lowest recognition and status to traditional Indic celestials.

In all three texts, we see three distinct conceptual blends under construction. When Baḍa Khān Gāji enters the domain of Dakṣiṇ Rāy's Sunderbans, he is grudgingly accepted, the cosmo-moral order he represents accommodated within the Indic world of the *maṅgal kāvyā*—extolled divinities. A short while later, in the cycle of Gāji, Kālu, and Cāmpāvātī, the direction of appropriation, the new conceptual blending of orders, reflects the *musalmāni* appropriation of Dakṣiṇ Rāy's world and its *brāhmaṇ* king. Though Gāji prevails, and Āllā is declared the highest God, there are other divinities who populate the cosmic order as powerful beings in their own right. Divinity for Gāji, who is superior to these gods and goddesses, is even hinted, not only by his subjugation of Dakṣiṇ, now written Dakṣiṇā, but through the lineage of his mother Ājupā, who is sister to Gaṅgā and Caṇḍī (whether they are literally Gāji's aunts, or assumed, that relationship is immaterial, for kinship is established). Both Kṛṣṇarām's text and Ābdur Rahim's text incorporate all figures still a part of Āllā's creation into a new configuration, seeming to move toward what we might rightly style a popular version (that is, a simulacrum) of the well-attested *sūphī* concept of *waḥdat al-wujūd*, the Unity of Being.<sup>73</sup> But in the third conceptual blending, which produces a new cosmology articulated by Muhāmmad Khater, we read hints of the rejection of *waḥdat al-wujūd* that had allowed a place for traditional Indic gods and goddesses—they are nowhere to be found in the *Bonbibī jahurā nāmā*. With this shift away from *waḥdat al-wujūd*, we find evidence of a hardening of sectarian identities which seems to anticipate, if not signal, the emergence of exclusive categories of Hindu and Muslim that have come to mark the identity politics that started in earnest in the mid-nineteenth century, just prior to and during the wide circulation of Bonbibī's tale. Though not overtly sectarian or doctrinal, the stories still point to a gradual shift in perspective—and it is hard to imagine that that shift was not registered by the stories' audiences. In Fouconnier's and Turner's terms, each text represents a conceptual blend, so that in their schema, the *Rāy maṅgal*'s blend functions as Input One and *Gāji kālu o cāmpāvātī kanyār puthi*'s blend functions as Input Two; combined, they contribute to the new, more complex conceptual blend depicted in the *Bonbibī jahurā nāmā*.<sup>74</sup>

73. For a quick survey of the concept and its origins, including relevant bibliography, see Alexander Knysh, "Waḥdat al-Wujūd," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 510–11.

74. See Fouconnier and Turner, *Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Complexities*, esp. pt. 1, 1–168. Each conceptual blend represented by all three texts is actually a complex blend that involves

The new conceptual blend signaled that the *Bonbibī jahurā nāmā* parodied, indeed satirized, the *maṅgal kāvyā* and its *hinduyāni* world—as noted in the previous chapter, even its name, *jahurā nāmā*, functioned as a translation of the name of the genre, *maṅgal kāvyā*. But that parody turned the traditional Indic world completely on its head, which could hardly have been clearer than in the outcome of the second story in the Bonbibī cycle, the tale of the innocent and hapless child Dukhe. A number of the central stories of the *maṅgal kāvyā* celebrate the exploits of oceangoing traders, and notably, the early modern Bangla term for trader in these texts is *sādhu*, which means “virtuous,” “honorable,” and “respectable,” the exact same name used for holy ascetics and mendicants. In many of the *maṅgal kāvyas*, it is these *sādhu* merchants who are instrumental in establishing the worship of the glorified goddess or god, which in Kṛṣṇarām’s text is the semi-divine Dakṣiṇ Rāy, Lord of the Southern Regions. In the Bonbibī narrative of the child Dukhe story, we may well finally see the significance of the slight name change wherein Dakṣiṇ becomes Dakṣiṇā—spelled throughout the Bonbibī narrative with a feminine ending. Like *dakṣiṇ*, *dakṣiṇā* also means south or southerly, but its primary meaning is the *gift* or *donation*, especially that made to an officiating priest; it can also occasionally mean *reward*. In this text, Rāy is no longer the refined figure depicted in Kṛṣṇarām’s *Rāy maṅgal*, rather he is transformed into a bloodthirsty *rākṣas* demon who demands human sacrifice; he can be bought for the appropriate fee. Enter the greedy *sādhu* merchant, whose name Dhonāi is a homophone of the word for *wealth* or *riches*. When he offers the child Dukhe, Dhonāi colludes in this sacrificial economy by paying the transactional *dakṣiṇā* fee to Dakṣiṇā Rāy; in return, Rāy promises to allow Dhonāi to plunder the land, which will result in the accumulation of vast cargoes of honey, wax, and lumber, the Sunderban commodities that were famous for generating obscene wealth. The indictment was anything but subtle: with its gods and goddesses suspect, the old brahmānical order was immoral, corrupt to its core and could no longer be tolerated in a world that turned its face toward the one true God as Bonbibī proposed.

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interactions with two prior generic structures which represent *hinduyāni* cosmology and *musalmāni* cosmology, whose elements are manipulated to generate a new conceptual blend; see esp. 59–67 and the visual plotting of figure 4.1 on 62, which partially captures this complex movement of ideas. It should be further noted that individual moments in these texts can yield multiple complex blends involving such issues as analogy, space, time, cause-effect, category, and so forth (all of the issues suggested in our consideration of presuppositions and intertextualities at work in the *imaginaire*)—but that is an inquiry that would constitute a full-length monograph of its own. My initial efforts in this regard suggest that it would, however, produce a much more finely grained analyses of the creative, subjunctive explorations embodied in these works. That model of conceptual blending, in turn, has promising implications for tracing historical changes, as this example makes clear. In addition to its relevance to both Toury’s and Talgeri’s positions, this approach would be useful in modeling some of the mechanisms of Koselleck’s arguments about conceptual history.