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Blanka Knotkova-Capkova

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ⁱ**Symbols of Water and Woman on Selected Examples of Modern Bengali Literature in the Context of Mythological Tradition.***

Blanka Knotková-Čapková

As in many archaic mythological concepts, the four basic elements are represented in the Indian mythology as either male or female: air (wind) and fire are male principles, later personified as male deities – *Agni* and *Vāyu*; earth and water (river) are female. The metaphorization of woman as Water and Earthⁱⁱ has a strong essentialist aspect; it points to the symbol of the womb, the mysterious feminine source of life, the “cradle and grave”ⁱⁱⁱ or “womb and tomb”, “the Great Mother symbolizing circularity of life and death” (cf. Kalnická, in Wilkoszewska 2001, 107), who also disposes with the ultimate power over life and death. As such, she personifies the female creative and dynamic cosmic energy, *śakti*. Together with her male counterpart (personified as male God *Śiva*), she represents the dual image of cosmical unity and harmony. In heterodox *śaktism*, she is worshipped as the ultimate spiritual principle, not dependent on the male principle; in *śivaism*^{iv}, she is described as the left part of *Śiva*’s body. Śaktism also worships *śakti* in the metonymical image of *yonī*, the female genitals, the location of the sensual pleasure and the beginning of life (the way to / from the womb).^v Some of the mythological personifications of *śakti* have been partially patriarchalized and “married” to the male Gods; a possible pre-Indo-European concept of an independent motherly deity (whose image was connected with the vegetation cycle, eternal recreation and rebirth). *Śakti*, however, found its representation in the image of female Goddesses, namely *Devī*, *Jaganmātā*, *Durgā* or *Kālī*.

Devī also means Goddess in general. She represents the ultimate power over life and death, she is the ruler of the universe. *Jaganmātā* means the Great Mother who also expresses herself in other images, namely those of *Durgā* and *Kālī*. *Durgā* is a fighting female deity, redeeming the universe with her victory over demons. She is also the divine mother of four other deities. The worship of *Durgā* and *Kālī* has been especially developed in Eastern India (namely Bengal) where the Indo-Aryan element was not so strong in the beginning of our era. In the folk altars in Bengal, the statue of *Durgā* often

appears without her divine husband Śiva, only with her children; the father-husband remains unexpressed. Kālī, as well as Śiva, represents creation, preservation and destruction – i.e. rebirth.^{vi} She also has a terrifying image (depicted with a wreath of skulls on her neck) which refers to the destructive side of the all-mighty female power.^{vii}

In the European literary context which stems from the Biblical tradition refusing any form of nature religiosity which would be gendered as feminine, the patriarchally conditioned symbol of the womb may also represent a negative and threatening image of chaos as disorder, which should be controlled and domesticated (cf. Braidotti 1991, 213). These metaphorizations refer to the image of the witch, a rebelling female who deserves punishment. Although Indian mythology has not excluded the feminine element from the image of the supreme spiritual principle, a remarkable gap between the independence of the Divine Mothers, and the gendered dependence of their mundane daughters has occurred. The mundane Indian woman has been subordinated to the masculine of domination^{viii} and, in this way, the image of the witch as a disobedient, marginalized, non-conforming being can be applied on them as well. However, an important aspect of the Indian literary witches remains to be a fairy-tale motif of the surreal, magical destructive power: „... tiger-women stories ... also indicate the means adopted by society to persecute women who do not conform to social ‘norms’. ... It appears to be another variation of the witch-hunting theme in Western culture.“ (Mishra, in Moitra 1996)^{ix}

During the period of national revival (the so called Bengali renaissance), the literary archetype of the powerful Devī was transformed into the personified Mother country or a female fighter (*virānganā*)^x, where we can trace strong mythological connotations. This metaphorized woman represents not only biological motherhood but its attributed characteristics as well – protection, never ending love, consolation, safe recourse, the beginning and the end of life. In Bengali modern poetry, this metaphorization can be found from Rabīndranāth Ṭhākur’s^{xi} poems to the present. The following verses, excerpts from the Indian and Bengladeshi national anthems are examples of this metaphorization: “Āmār sonār Bāmlā“ (My golden Bengal): “Oh

mother, the smell of your mango forests in spring makes me mad, Oh mother, on your full summer fields I can see a honey smile, Oh mother, the voice of your mouth is for my ears like a nectar. Mother, if your face is sad, oh mother, I am sunk in tears“ (Ṭhākur, 1961, 189).^{xii}

From post-Tagore^{xiii} poetry we can choose as an eloquent example Sunīl Gangopādhyāy’s poem „Āmār sab āpanjan“ (All my relatives, Gangopādhyāy, 1997, 63) where Indian rivers *Gangā* and *Padmā* are personified as the author’s sister-in-law and a young lover,^{xiv} the Mother-country (Bengal) is personified as mother who is asked to give blessing:

„The green waves of the paddyfields are my mother
 Mother, I am sitting down close to you
 Please put your hand on my head, mother, and give me a blessing.“
 (Gangopādhyāy 1997, 63)

Hindu Goddesses strightly connected with water are the personified Indian rivers, *Gangā* and *Sarasvatī*. *Gangā* is also attached to Śiva, as his second wife. The water of *Gangā* is sacred, it is often brought in a small pot to the rituals and *pūjās* (annual celebrations of the deities). It is believed to be the cure for all diseases, bringing immortality and also purifying from sins. These explain why people wash in it during the celebrations. Also, the effigy of any deity, is sunk into water at the end of the *pūjā* ritual, preferably in the river *Gangā* (in a ceremony called *biśvarjan*, the sacrifice). This ceremony symbolizes the return of the essence of the deity onto its material representation. *Gangā* as Goddess is depicted as a white young woman usually sitting on a fish, holding in her hands a lotus and a small water pot.

Sarasvatī is the Goddess of wisdom, learning and art. She is the mythological wife of Brahma, the God-Creator. *Sarasvatī* is a mythical river of the North-West India. She is also usually depicted as a white young beautiful woman, sitting on a lotus or a swan (or goose), holding in her hands a string instrument (*vīnā*), a book and corals. These river goddesses also symbolize female charm, and the image of “celestial beauty“ – namely *Sarasvatī*, who is worshipped by poets and musicians. In this way, the river Goddesses

become part of a broader (i.e. not only „waterly“) iconization of woman as erotic symbol, a real / surreal lover.

Modern Bengali poetry has been reflecting the poetics of these mythological archetypes, even those drawing from basically secular contexts. In modern Bengali poems, river not only metaphorizes, personifies woman, it is also metonymically connected with her. The most frequent practice seems to be a combination of a metonymical connection and a metaphoric union of river and woman, where woman is as if a bodily part of the river; where poetic figurations point to the „natural“ female qualities: mysteriousness, elusiveness, fragility, and, of course, beauty.

River represents the surroundings where woman inevitably belongs, a place where woman is usually to be found – a bond that is one of belonging, not of a mere similarity. There may be a real woman (most often a beautiful young girl or a lover), or an image of celestial woman, symbolizing desire, or perhaps nostalgia of a lost love:

“A woman is sitting by the river, for more than seven minutes
I could not see the river

The moment the woman stood up, the river disappeared ...” (Gangopādhyāy 1997, 17)

Another example of the image of woman as half real, half symbolic, is found in the work of a Bengali symbolist poet Jībanānanda Dāś. In his poem „Banalatā Sen“ (Dāś 1981, 51-52; the name of the poem is the name of the heroine). On the first plane, the heroine is a real lover; on the second plane, she represents a refuge for a man as eternal wanderer, tired with the world. She symbolizes the „eternal feminine“ as home and refuge. This symbolism is transferred back to the physical level and it is attributed to the heroine metaphorically and metonymically – her eyes, i.e. a part of her body, are the „eyes of a bird's nest.“ She is directly connected with water as river, and earth as India, the mother country (*deś*): her dark hair symbolizes the nights of Bidiśā, her face symbolizes the architecture of Śrābaṣṭi (both famous historical places). On a more abstract level, she is a symbol of darkness (eternal womb?) which represents not only her immanent surroundings – both the river and the heroine symbolize eternal peace. The

motive of peace and recourse then passes a development from temporary and immanent to eternal and transcendental:

„Birds return to their nests – all rivers flow home – the ledger of life is closed;
Only darkness remains, the time to return to Banalata Sen of Natore.“^{xv}

Water, however, may not represent refuge only for the male writer's perspective, where the woman is often static, an icon of silent attractiveness. Water also personifies not just a mysterious depth (the eternal womb), but a horizon without boundaries. This has been impressively pictured in the film *Fire* by a Canadian director of Indian origin, Deepa Mehta (1996).

In this film, some scenes and traditional gender stereotypes of the story of one of the great classical epics, *Rāmāyaṇa*, found one of the most subversive interpretative paraphrase. A story of deserted, unfulfilled marital relations which gives birth to a non-hierarchical, mutual lesbian love of the two unhappy wives (and sister-in-laws), is framed within the classical myth which overlaps with the modern plot in several scenes. The name of the film, *Fire*, points to the role of fire in *Rāmāyaṇa* – there, fire is to prove the chastity of the female heroine, *Sītā*, who is accused of infidelity to her royal husband *Rāma*, after having been kidnapped by a male demon, the *rākṣasa Rāvana*. Her purity was challenged in two respects – as purity of the aristocratic social status, because she stayed, no though involuntarily, in the house of a low creature („untouchable“), and, especially, her chastity as a wife, a royal wife. Although she is fully innocent, nothing is enough to prove her chastity – even the proof given by fire which does not harm her is eventually not sufficient. The key issue here appears to be the starting point of the judgment: she is not as much important as an individual, but as an element de/constructing the social order.^{xvi}

Sītā's possible impurity would threaten the performance of the social role of her royal husband who must be respected by his subjects to be able to rule (and protect) them. There can obviously hardly be a consensus between the starting points, if we put it in the way of „binary opposition“ – the conservative concept, where the individual is subordinated to the normative (even perhaps oppressive) social order, and the liberal

concept, where the individual has the right to choose, even against the social norms, in the search for his/her happiness – at the cost of undermining the normative social order.

In Mehta's film, the image of fire appears twice – first as a part of a theatre (the protagonists watch the performance of *Rāmāyaṇa*), secondly as a very real threat of destruction of one of the heroines. The scene takes place in the kitchen and it clearly connotes the medially disputed suicides/murders of Indian wives (because of dowry or other reasons). Fire (the male element), in the film, is not a symbol of purity, but first of unreal theatre the protagonists are spectators of, then of physical destruction. A purifying symbol of refuge, a motherly consoling embrace, is represented here by water (the female element): the main heroine longs to get to the ocean, which is repeatedly given as a refrain picture; she passes a glass of water to her sister-in-law (later her lover) after the thirst fast (they are fasting the whole day) for their husbands' long lives which the fast of the wives should bring – that seems to be their first physical contact in the film. At that moment they are just speaking about the longing to see the ocean once in life. In the end, after their love was revealed and they both had no choice but to follow their heart, and to leave the joint family, which they decide to do when they meet in a rainy darkness. Rain water is what washes away the ashes of fire that nearly killed one of them, water symbolically brings them relief.

The naming of the two protagonists as *Sītā* and *Rādhā* (Lord Kriṣṇa's mythological lover) generated a sharp criticism from the Hindu nationalists. Fire has thus become a quite controversial picture in India.^{xvii}

The ambivalence of water and fire, both as creative-and-destructive principles, sometimes complementary, sometimes antagonist, be it in their nature element symbolism or in the male-female symbolism, can be also traced in modern Bengali poetry. In a poem by Sunil Gangopādhyāy, „Jal jena lelihān agun“ (Water like a flaming Fire), water – in the form of river – is going to flood all the living around; the destructive power of water is simlized here to that of fire. The fear of this power makes people feel like children before the face of the almighty, the only protection being a refrain of a prayer, a „childhood verse pronounced through teeth trembling with fear“

(Gangopādhyāy 1991, 27), sounding both like a magic formula and a nursery rhyme: „River, do remain only in the river, do not burst into the house!“^{xviii} The River (Water) is unpredictable, one day charming, the other day terrifying („One day I saw the water’s beauty, the other day the same water dreadfully jumped out“). A man, confronted with the power of Water, is reduced to a child, he/she can only beg or worship, practices directed to the supernatural. The image of Water personified as an alive, dynamic river (also simlized to a python^{xix}) oversteps here the nature symbolism and enters the sphere of the supernatural. Still, the whole poem may also be read as fantasy, a nightmare, not real, but even in the daylight of a Kolkata street, evoking the archetypal images of the night’s darkness.

Flood has been a frequent theme of Bengali poems, but not always (at least not in the first plane) filled with the given archetypal connotations; the feeling of fear may draw a profane image of destruction, with no (or hidden) reference to the female destructive power, as in the following poem of Ānanda Ghoṣ Hāzrā, „The Wortex“ (Jalkṣaya):^{xx}

„Disease from a secret injure skulls to capture the land

the invisible waterstream is sucking the roots

the house is crumbling, the house has crumbled down.“ (Hāzrā 1989, 39)

In the second plane, however, the poem may be read as a symbol of desolating loss of the traditional certainties – the expression for house (*bāri*) may also mean home; even a possible reference to water as superhuman archetypal power may be traced in the expression *gūṛha* (here translated as „invisible“) which may also mean „secret, hidden, profound, mysterious, occult or esoteric“. In this interpretation, the roots of the certainties have been undermined from below, the source of the destruction is a perversion, an illness, and home – the symbol of safe refuge, has been torn down.

Another example of water (river) as the ambivalent symbol of life and death, creation-and-destruction, and the ambivalent attitude of the feminine and the masculine towards it, is the following Gangopādhyāy’s poem, „In a rainy night“ (Bṛṣṭir rāte, Gangopādhyāy 1997, 63). The opening scene, told in the I-form, draws a parallel between water and creation (birth): a boy, born in a rainy night, hears a heavy rain even in his

mother's womb. Although „the river jumped from her banks into the house“ – that may be a metaphor of giving birth, connected with pain; for mother and aunts, it is a „sad, painful memory“ (*duhkha smṛti*), but still, remembering it, they laugh. The development of the metaphor of the womb thus shows that for the women the event of *jumping out* is joyful, even if temporarily painful or maybe even destructive.

In the following verses, childhood has gone („that home is not there any more, even that river has disappeared“). Water, a companion of the life, changes its form – it is no more the water of a river coming from the womb, but the water of a rain coming from the heavens (see the masculine mythological *Dyāus*, the personification of Heavens). The rain water continues to fall, to beat, to jingle (*jhamjham*). The boy (now a man) looks up to the sky, he addresses the masculine Heavens where (in the sky) he can see an actor-like cloud in a shape of a handsome or well-built super-man (*supuruṣ*); this image calls him, which can be interpreted as the call of the masculine world. The call comes at the adult age when the world of the womb is behind, both in its metaphorizing connotations of protection-creation, and devouring-destruction. Through a window, wet of rain (the motif of window may be interpreted as self-projecting mirror, or the world of the womb which has gone – this gone world can be seen through the window, although it is separated from the man by the window's glass). The man can eventually see an unknown figure stumbling on a muddy road who reminds him of his father. The identification with the male world has been accomplished. It is a world where the powerful Water does not bring mainly relief as it does in the female world, it brings obstacles, hard to overcome but necessary.

Another (poetic, but quite traditional) comparison of the water in connection with male and female perception of it is given in Subhāṣ Mukhopādhyāy's poem „A day more“ (*Āro ekṭa din*, Mukhopādhyāy 1989, 57).^{xxi} The male poet's own association of the rain, though poetic in form, is rational – „there will be good paddy in the wet soil“. In the end of the poem, he brings an image of a woman (his wife) who, unlike him who is just speaking and speaking, unites herself with the water „bathing her body in the pond“; she „makes the darkness of the courtyard dance, light in her hand“. The archetypal connection of woman and water makes just a part of the picture – the woman's union

with water is bodily and physical, not only that of an observer. As she enters the darkness, it does not seem to represent the archetypal chaos, on the contrary, she is bringing both real and symbolic light in it (woman as protector). In one other Mukhopādhyāy's poem „Why that“ (*Kena ye*, *ibid.* 189), however, woman is associated with destruction: the relation (or maybe only the poet's affection for her) is described as stormy; suggested by the pictures of ominous wind bringing the sound as if from an abyss (possibly a metaphor of the womb). The woman in the poem is called „moon-faced“, *bidhumukhi*, which may mean either just having a face beautiful like moon, or perhaps also a beauty beyond reach. The affection is further metaphorized as ever flowing river that goes on in spite of the storm. In the end, a rhetoric question „what for is all that?“ addresses the woman – „you who are mysterious, you know, you who bring destruction“.

Water as a part of a broader symbol of the harmony of nature, overlapping with the harmonious union of two lovers in affection and sensual pleasure, also appears in women's poetry. In Mallikā Sengupta's^{xxii} poem „Ten days“ (*Daśdin*, Sengupta 1988, 44), the woman telling the poem similes the moments of being together with her lover to the mythologically connoted union of Heavens and Earth, the human lovers being not *like* them, but being *with* them: „We will *be* with the earth and the sky“. The image reappears in the end of the poem again, together with the picture of taking bath; the bath, the sinking in water, explicitly expresses a feeling of a sensual joy after making love. In the second plane, it may also be interpreted as a union of the female lover with water as the feminine element. Such way of reading would be supported by the name of the whole collection of poems – „I am a daughter of the ocean“ (*Āmi sindhur meye*).

Water as a quite straightforward symbol of harmony and life plays also a role in some poems of Subodh Sarkār,^{xxiii} e. g. in a poem without name in the collection of sonnets, „A sonnet kangaroo on a remote star“ (*Krittikāy sanet kyānāru*, 2003, 62). The sonnet creates a picture of nostalgia of a lost love, symbolized as a house lost in the past („a house that was“ – and is not any more) and other lost images – garden in starlight, lighted home, water and water waves (symbol of lost affection) in a sailor's tune. A variation of the theme where water plays the role of the key motif, is represented by

another of Sarkār's poems, „Water“ (*Jal*, unpublished, quoted with the permission of the author). Water is depicted as the source of life without which nothing can exist, a symbol of the presence of the beloved person: without his lover the teller would be like the sky without rain, like a river without water (river without water is pictured as „hands of a dead young girl“, a metaphor of loosing waves), or like a hot afternoon without rain. ^{xxiv}

Water as a symbol of transience, elusiveness and mysteriousness may not always represent, even in male writings, traditional images of a desired female lover. A very special poem of Sunīl Gangopādhyāy, „Woman“ (Nārī, in Gangopādhyāy 1989, 122-123) does not stem from any „natural“ qualities of woman. Unlike these traditional images of beauty, elusiveness, destructive mysteriousness etc., it questions all these stereotypes, and the social roles traditionally ascribed to woman, which reduce her to an instrumental being. Woman is called „invisible“, for many people even her real name is not known, and is unheard. For society, woman is known only in particular (traditional) roles – as mother, sister, daughter, lover, dancer, singer, hard worker, farmer, housewife, beggar with a child in her hands. But where is woman? Who is she? Woman, „about whom a band of decadent poets has lied for four thousand years“? Her unheard name is associated with a „water-colored light that mingles with water“ (*yeman jaler madhye miše thāke jal-raṅ ālo*), the name is elusive. Is woman elusive? The answer remains open. The water-symbol of mysteriousness and elusiveness appears, but in this context it is not an objectified image of a lover or any other particular role. What is elusive here is the very concept of female identity which is disappearing in the womb of water, connoting a return to (or unification with) the female divine principle.

Gangopādhyāy's demystifying criticism^{xxv} of making woman invisible and unheard corresponds with some feminist literary theoretical concepts, namely that of Gaytri Chakravarty Spivak. In her essay *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (Spivak 1988), she criticizes the essentialist concept of female identity as silence, interpreted as „agency“. She refuses the nostalgia for the traditional image of the „oriental“ woman, who has not been silent, but silenced and subjected. However, as Spivak puts it, it is neither possible nor right to try to give women back their voice which they have never had; it is only

possible to make space for them to find their voice in their own way. Not to give the subaltern voice, but to clear the space to allow it to speak.

To summarize: the woman-water homology appears in modern Bengali literature (namely poetry) in various aspects: as the archetypal symbol of creation and destruction, symbol of the womb as the beginning and end of life and rebirth (connoting both physical womb and eternal womb), and also of the womb as dark mystery; a symbol of the continuation, preservation of life, symbol of transience and elusiveness, traditional male poetic symbol of charm and beauty. All these images may be permeated with the picture of Mother which unites different symbolical figurations; it may point to the archetypal, almighty deity, to the picture of the Mother-country, and/or to the picture of a human mother who represents consolation, harmony and unconditional love (mostly for sons); the image of a loving mother and a loving beauty may, often in male poetry, overlap. In the demystifying, subversive (mostly female) poetic imagination, it may also construct the symbol of eternal unity with the female principle and articulate a specific concept of female identity, a hidden – and heterodox – matrilineal link.

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* For technical reasons it was not possible to keep all diacritical marks in the published version, which I marked off in my original text

ⁱⁱ On Woman and Earth, and Woman and Water & respective metaphorizations, see, Jakubczak, Marzenna, „Earth“, namely p. 34, and Kalnická, Zdeňka, „Woman and Water“, pp. 127-144, both in Wilkoszewska (ed.), 2001.

ⁱⁱⁱ We refer here to one of the most crucial poems of the 19th century Czech Romanism, „Máj“ (May) by Karel Hynek Mácha, where the poet calls the Earth-Mother Country as his mother, his „cradle and grave“.

^{iv} *Śivaism* is a stream of Hinduism worshipping the God *Śiva*, together with *Viṣṇu* and *Brahma*, one of the three main Gods of the Hindu pantheon. *Śivaism* and *Viṣṇuism* are two strongest streams in Hinduism.

^v Cf. with the worship of male (*Śiva*'s) genitals – the *lingam*.

^{vi} On Hindu mythology, cf. Kinsley (1986), Filipický (1998), Zbavitel (1993).

^{vii} The all-mighty female power belongs to the cultural context of the fertility and rebirth myths (cf. Pratt 1981); according to Pratt, they symbolize an undisturbed connection between woman and nature, a matriarchal order of the society, „where man is an indispensable but on the whole disturbing factor“ (ibid., p. 171). Pratt characterizes these myths as one of the important archetypal models of the European women's fiction.

^{viii} On the term „masculine domination“, cf. Bourdieu, Pierre (2001).

^{ix} For modern subversive paraphrases of the witch motif, see, e.g. the short-story „Dāinī“ (The witch) by a Bengali writer Mahāśvetā Debī (Debī 1979), with a strong social critical interpretation of a political misuse of superstitions against the socially marginalized.

^x On the character of *virāṅganā* and its modern modifications in Hindi literature, see Damsteegt, 1999.

^{xi} *Ṭhākur*, Rabīndranāth (1861-1941), a poet, prose-writer, dramatist, painter, author of new musical style („rabīndra-samgīt“), pedagogist and essayist. Nobel prize winner for literature (1913).

^{xii} If not given otherwise, the Bengali quotations are translated by the author of this article.

^{xiii} We use the term „post-Tagore“ (and not „post-Thakur“) as this English-shaped version of *Ṭhākur*'s name has been used as denoting the writings till 1950s or 1960s in the context of later development of Bengali poetry.

^{xiv} On the personification of river as woman in the poetry of Sunīl Gangopādhyāy, see, Knotková-Čapková 2000.

Sunīl Gangopādhyāy, born 1934, one of the most famous living protagonists of the literary generation entering the Bengali cultural scene in the 1950s. He has been writing both poetry and prose (short stories and novels). He was also the associate editor of the reputed Bengali literary fortnightly *Deś*. In 1985 he got the Sāhitya Ākādeṃi Award for his historical novel *Sei samaye* (In that time).

^{xv} Translated into English by Martin Kirkman, in: *Contemporary Bengali Poetry*, p. 22.

^{xvi} Chandrakala Padia (a feminist Indian philosopher, rather reformist than radical) apologetically says: „The underlying idea that resonates most clearly in our basic philosophical tradition is that a person is not only an individual among other individuals, but is, in principle, knit indissolubly with a family, a community, and ultimately with the whole human race. This is the reason why we have never looked on society as a mere aggregate of individuals, but rather as living organism where everyone is a complement of the other, and should therefore help creating, sustaining and reinforcing an evolved social order.“ (Padia 2002, 2-3)

^{xvii} The *Śivsena* (Hindu integrist party) leader Bal Thackeray criticized the film especially for giving the two unhappily married sisters-in-law the mythological names Sita and Radha: „Why does the story revolve around a Hindu family?“ he said. „Why has the filmmaker named the main characters Sita and Radha?“ He said his party would stop the attacks if the two women were

given Moslem names. "Could not the filmmaker have named them Shabana, Saira or Najma?" he said. "Fire may have received 14 international awards but will anyone deliberate on the harm these people are doing by ushering in a wretched culture?" Fire's Canada-based director Deepa Mehta and leading Indian film personalities including actor Dilip Kumar and director Mahesh Bhatt, filed a 17-page petition in the Supreme Court last week seeking protection for the film." (Quoted on 27th March 2005, from: <http://www.umiacs.umd.edu/users/sawweb/sawnet/news/fire.html>)

^{xviii} *Nadī, tumi nadītei thāko, bāṛite eso nā!* (Gangopādhyāy 1991, 27-28).

^{xix} This image draws two lines of similitude – metaphorical, snake crawls like water's waves, and symbolic – snake, like water, in the archetypal mythology is also a symbol of rebirth, and of a fear-inducing power. (See Biedermann 1992, 310-313).

^{xx} A. G. Hāzrā, a Bengali poet, literary criticist and theorist, and a renowned translator, entered literature in the 1960s.

^{xxi} Subhāṣ Mukhopādhyāy (1919-2003), after Ṭhākur one of the most original and famous West-Bengali poets, belonged to the generation entering literature in 1940s. He has also been appreciated for innovating the poetic form, bringing colloquial language and free verse as a common means of poetic discourse (however, the first poet having introduced it into Bengali poetry was Ṭhākur).

^{xxii} Mallikā Sengupta, a Bengali poetess, literary criticist, university lecturer and feminist activist. In the recent years her discourse has moved to be more radical in the subversive criticism of the patriarchal gender stereotypes (cf. e.g. her collection of poems *Kathā mānobī* (Female voice), 1999).

^{xxiii} Subodh Sarkār, a Bengali poet, literary criticist and university lecturer (Mallikā Sengupta's husband).

^{xxiv} Water is a symbol of an idyllic lost harmony also in other Gangopādhyāy's poems, e.g. „Marvelous river“ (*Āścarya nadī*, Gangopādhyāy 1991, 33-35). The river's surroundings are a place which calms conflicts and influences people to be harmonious. The river personifies the harmonious natural beauty, in contrast to technical civilization which may be comfortable, but alienating people from each other and from themselves. The idea is ecological; the symbolism also refers to the archetype of purity with the moral connotations of love and peace. The poetic connection between river and nature is also metonymic: river is a part of nature, and also represents nature as a whole.

^{xxv} On demystification and metaphorization of woman, see Knotková-Čapková, 2003.