



Representation of Disability and Goddess Manasa: A Comparative Study of Two Texts of Manasa Mangal

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Abstract

The medieval long narrative poems of Manasa Mangal[i] were and still are widely read and sung across rural Bengal; however, it is rarely taken into account that the goddess Manasa is presented as ‘disabled’ in the texts known as Mangal Kavyas. Various versions by different poets in medieval Bengal focused on different aspects of disability and ‘defects’ in her body. Interestingly, she is a goddess, a daughter of Lord Shiv, and the patron goddess of snakes. In the texts, she is worshipped as well as hated for several reasons, one of which is her disability and a lack of ‘goddessly beauty.’ Disability in these texts has rarely been studied using a systematic methodology and theoretical frameworks. This research intends to look at how the disability of goddess Manasa is represented in two major versions of Manasa Mangal, i.e. Manasamangal of Ketkadas Khemamanada (17th Century) and Bijoy Gupta’s Manasamangal (1484-86), by utilising Disability Studies, feminist and caste discourses. The study provides an insight into the precolonial Indian/Bengali representation of disability in literary texts/mythology.

Keywords: Caste, Disability Studies, Feminist Disability Studies, Gender, Manasa Mangal, Medieval Bengali Literature, Snake Goddess

Introduction

Disability Studies have allowed us to re-read and re-examine texts, folklore, and myths with which we are very much familiar, yet we have not been able to distinguish the ‘disability’ or ‘impairment’ or the treatment of the same within that particular context of myth and folklore or other media of creative expressions. It is only in recent years that, through Disability

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Studies, we can look at individuals with ‘disability’ with a completely new perspective and a new set of understanding and one such text, rather a myth, is that of the goddess Manasa, the patron goddess of snakes. Each year, during the Bengali month of Srabon, corresponding to the English months of July-August, prayers are offered to her accompanied by performative rituals of acting and singing known as pala-gaan or mangal gaan or ‘auspicious songs’ sung in series in Bengali. These pala-gaans are usually based on the texts of Manasa Mangal, written by various poets in medieval Bengal between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries, in the precolonial times. These long narrative poems in Bengali are known as ‘akhyan kavya’ and are based on myths^[iii] associated with the origin of different gods and goddesses—their birth and then subsequent establishment of their cult by the mortals. Chandi Mangal and Dharma Mangal are among others to mention. These texts are written in various regional and colloquial dialects of Bengal, before the so-called ‘standardisation’ of the Bangla language set by the European colonisers.

From medieval times to the present day, the myth of Manasa has been the subject of many literary and cinematic adaptations. Although the cult of Manasa had a Puranic origin, as Wendy Doniger^[iii] points out in her introduction to the book by Kaiser Haq titled *The Triumph of Snake Goddess Manasa* (2015), in the Bengali version of her myth, she is much indigenised, immensely influenced by local traditions rather than the Aryan or Sanskrit^[iv] traditions. Modern adaptations of Manasa in cinema and TV serials, such as in the cinema “মনসাকন্যা”^[v] or *Manasa Kanya* released in 1997, starring Tapas Paul, Sabitri Chatterji, Antara Sinha, and others, where she is depicted as a beautiful young goddess, more like a fair Aryan goddess such as Annapurna and Chandi^[vi], the two other goddesses of the Mangal Kavya tradition in medieval Bengal. But Manasa, in the versions of medieval Bengali writers, is ‘disabled’ as she is blind

in one eye i.e. she is a physically and visually impaired goddess. In different versions by different writers, her appearance is depicted in various ways — neither a good-looking goddess nor elegant — with a head like a fish or a snake. Perhaps it was because of her ‘disability’, apart from not being ‘fair’ as a goddess, that she had to fight her way into the Aryan (or Brahminic) pantheon. Although in the contemporary cinematic adaptations and or popular representations, Manasa’s disability is often overlooked, without them, Manasa’s being as a goddess is unimaginable. This research seeks to understand the representation of goddess Manasa’s disability and the treatment of it in two popular versions of *Manasa Mangal*—one by Ketkadas Khemananda titled *Manasa Mangal* and other one by Bijoy Gupta known as *Padmavati Kavya*.

Gender, Disability and the Goddess: A Multidimensional Approach

It is pertinent to chart some relevant theoretical propositions already laid down by noted scholars of Disability Studies before we undertake a critical analysis of the two select texts of *Manasa Mangal* to understand the representation of the goddess Manasa’s disability. At the outset of this study, it must be acknowledged that Manasa’s disability has to do more with her gender than the impairment she carries in her body. Gender and disability are both power relationships expressed through social structures and institutions, argues Nandini Ghosh in her article “Bhalo Meye: Cultural Construction of Gender and Disability in Bengal”^[vii]. She goes on to argue that gender has been conceptualised in human society through various power relationships expressed through social structures and institutions. She writes, “Gender uses culturally given and accepted ideologies to distinguish between activities, behaviour, norms, and representations accorded to the socially constructed genders, and to legitimise the sexual distinction between men and women in the society” (201). Dan Goodley, in his article

“Dis/entangling Critical Disability Studies” (2013), suggests that disability in certain contexts can be a form of social oppression, such as race or sex (632). In *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (1997), Rosemarie Garland-Thomson draws a parallel between female and disabled bodies, arguing that American society and literature construct and hierarchise certain body types as “monstrous,” “deformed,” or “disabled,” thereby distributing power, privilege, and social value unequally. Persons with disabilities stand at the receiving end of society and are thus defined by race, gender, patriarchy, and other parameters of hierarchy. Interestingly, Manasa in the selected texts becomes subject to oppression not only owing to her physical defect, but also to social and gendered exclusion.

Thomas J. Gerschik argues in his article “Toward a Theory of Disability and Gender” (2002) that disability plays an important role in processing and experiencing gender and persons with disabilities suffer discrimination and social exclusion and thus, “stigmatization is embedded in the daily interactions between people with disabilities and the temporarily able-bodied” (1264). Apart from the aforementioned discourses on politics and power, this too is relevant in this context. Among others, Abby Wilkerson, in her article “Disability, Sex Radicalism, and Political Agency” (2002), argues that this gendered treatment of individuals with disabilities is often seen not just as incompetent or incapable but also politically powerless. Similar is the case of Manasa; her disability is treated with a gendered approach, and she is considered a politically powerless opponent, one that a mortal human being can challenge and humiliate. Although the narrative ends with Manasa triumph, the treatment she has received leaves a permanent impression not only in her mind but also in the reader’s mind.

Disability and Gods/Goddesses: West and the East

There are several disabled gods in various mythologies across the world, and a sufficient amount of research has been done on these figures. Hephaestus is one disabled god in Greek mythology who has been subjected to endless discrimination despite the fact that he excelled in his skills otherwise. Interestingly, in Greek mythology, disability is treated as an incurable disease, something unnatural that cannot be lived with. In her article “Encountering the Disabled God” (2005), Nancy Eiesland talks about how the people (or gods) with disabilities have been subjected to prejudice and mistreatment in the major world religions like Judaism and Christianity (584). She suggests that there is a link between sin and disability; disability is the result of a sin (584), which is the most common assumption. Several scholars, such as Wendy Doniger, Edward C. Dimmock, A. K. Ramanujan, Roma Chatterji, Pranabandana Jash, and others have consistently worked on Indian mythologies, gods and mortals in various texts, particularly on that of the goddess Manasa and her cult. As mentioned before, Wendy Doniger in *The Triumph of Snake Goddess* traces the Puranic origin of Manasa. Whereas Dimmock, Ramanujan and Jash are interested in the figure of Manasa of an indigenous cult and how she is worshipped in various parts of Bengal and elsewhere, Chatterji is interested in the theatrical aspects of Manasa Mangal kavya. Little attempt is made to understand the fact that the goddess of snakes appears as a ‘disabled’ and thus she is (mis)treated in the texts. Thus, this paper also explores how this special case of the goddess Manasa intersects and engages with feminist and caste discourses.

Manasa Mangal: The Central Plotline

With some variations and local influences in different parts of Bengal, the central plotline of various Manasa Mangals remains the same. In the long narrative poem, a fierce fight breaks out

between goddess Manasa and her mortal counterpart, Chand Saodagor, a rich merchant. Manasa wants her cult to be established and worshipped continuously by the mortals. However, the main obstacle is Chand — a stubborn patriarch. As a rich merchant and a devotee of Shiv, he not only refuses to offer puja or worship Manasa but stops others from doing the same by using his financial and social influence. This enrages Manasa and she kills six of his sons. She even submerges the seven merchant ships in the water and destroys all his properties. Years later, Manasa even killed his youngest son, Lakindar, in his bridal chamber. But on the insistence of Behula (the newlywed wife of Lakhindar) and other gods in the court of the King of Gods, Indra, Manasa finally restores the lives of the seven sons of Chand at the end of the narrative poem. She also returns the seven canoes filled with merchandise by doubling them up, and finally, Chand, although reluctantly, starts worshipping Manasa. Her cult is finally established in the martya or the mundane humane world.

Disability/Impairment and Goddess Manasa

As it is stated earlier, the present study compares and analyses two different versions of Manasa Mangal to argue how Manasa's bodily 'defects' work as an agent that ensures her further marginalisation not just as a goddess but as a 'lower caste' ordinary woman. In short, the goddess is triply marginalised. The essence of purity, which is often associated with Vedic/Brahminic gods/goddesses, is subverted and often negotiated with her so-called low-caste identity and bodily defect. She remains a victim for most of the long narrative poem. She often becomes a sorrowful figure in the existing power structure, only waiting to be approved or graced by the (male Aryan/Brahminic) gods. In short, there are multiple patterns through which she is marginalised and a close study of the same might reveal a few.

Goddess Manasa is introduced as ‘loghujaati Kanee’^[viii] or ‘a low caste blind woman in one eye’ in Bijoy Gupta (66-67) and ‘Changmudi kani,’ ‘a fish-headed goddess’ in Ketkadas Khemananda (16). In the Bengali folklore/folk beliefs, she is popularly known as a goddess with one blind eye, sometimes toothless, old and vengeful. At the same time, she is venerated and worshipped for her generosity and her ability to bring back life from deaths caused by snakebites. In the two select texts, she is deeply despised, hated, and abused, both verbally and physically, especially by Chand, not only for being a patron goddess of snakes—an animal, abhorred by man—but also for being a disabled goddess. Thus, the select texts at this juncture pose certain questions about disability and Manasa’s identity as a goddess: How do we look here at the questions of disability of a goddess who is despised and venerated at the same time? How do we look at the questions of impairment and disability when she is on her own, trying to fight out a position for herself in the mainstream Aryan pantheon? The following paragraphs shall explore these relevant questions.

Both Ketkadas Khemananda and Gupta begin their texts in *medias res*, where we see Chand and Manasa appear as fierce antagonists engaged in a violent discord. The fight is between two individuals of completely contrasting and unequal positions. Manasa is the divine one, a daughter of Lord Shiv^[ix]. She is powerful. On the other side, Chand is a devotee of Shiv. He is proud of his Brahmin Aryan origin, and above all, he is a mortal human being. Then, can a mortal being engage in a fight against Manasa, a goddess? Is it just because she is disabled? Is her disability portrayed in such a way that she is lowered to the state of a mortal man? Is it because she does not look like one of the beautiful goddesses of the Aryan pantheon? In both texts, we see Manasa harm Chand by destroying his property or harming him physically. But in return, Chand abuses her severely, for being blind in one eye, for having a head shaped like a fish—narrow and shallow—and for being of low birth as she does not have a

biological mother and was born directly on a lotus leaf. In this instance, her divinity is compromised, and she is treated/marginalised like any other lower caste woman. In fact, she lost her divinity owing to her bodily defect, and she fights to regain it. Through this act of fighting or resistance, she frantically attempts to regain control over her bodily narratives. However, in the end, she is made to compromise.

In the selected texts, we see Manasa bringing attention to the fact that she felt insulted and pained by the abuses hurled at her by Chand. She says, “Chanoder bhotsone amar mone lage batha/ loghur opomane amar shorir bikol” translated as: “Chand’s insults strike me painfully/ He abuses me for my disabled body” (Gupta 80). The fight of ego has now shifted to a fight of dignity for Manasa, not just as a goddess but also as a disabled woman—a very gendered approach. Here, she loses control over her bodily narrative. Her disability and her lowly origin strip off her divine modesty and purity. Gradually, she appears to be rude and offensive, which might as well be seen as an act of resistance, particularly in the text of Bijoy Gupta, which is quite unlikely to be seen in a goddess of her stature. Bijoy Gupta describes: “Shuni Kop barlek debi Manasa”—Manasa is the one who gets angry quite easily (Gupta 45-46). As a result, more than a goddess who maintains her divine dignity, Manasa appears more like a bad-tempered woman—a stereotypical projection of a (lower caste/class) woman. Even though insults and humiliations often unsettle, belittle and anger her, she tries her best to maintain her ‘goddess-ly’ modesty and dignity. But in the end, she had to submit herself to vengeance. The negative connotation of her portrayal cannot escape a mindful reader. Eventually, Manasa’s sense of humiliation and alienation compelled her to kill the six sons of Chand, but as soon as she does that, she is overcome with regret and empathy. Poet Bijoy Gupta describes the state of mind of Manasa this way: “Ovimane podda bole ki kori upay./ loghur bhotsona aar sohon na jay” (Gupta 65), translated as “What could I do now, says Manasa in

dejection/ I cannot bear abuses by Chand any longer”^[x]. In such a way, Mansa is seen as alienated primarily based on her bodily impairment, which may have compelled her to take tough actions. Manasa is out of the norms of an ideal body. The need for an ideal or perfect body is urgent, as she is a goddess and is to be worshipped by the masses. To Chand, she becomes unacceptable because of her deformed body; she does not possess the ideal form of body-- she does not qualify to be a goddess. Her gender and low birth are mere additions to this. Therefore, Chand resents worshipping Manasa.

Manasa’s disability is easily associated with her low birth or her being from a lower caste, although it is a matter of a separate debate which caste she could possibly belong to, whether she is really low in caste owing to her extraordinary nature of birth. Chand addresses her in anger as “Laghujati” (Gupta 66, 67), or lower-caste; it seems in the text, disability not only extends to physical impairment but also to her low caste, an abnormal birth of Manasa. Whereas Manasa is addressed as the “Kanee” (26, 33) or a woman blind in one eye, Chand in Bijoy Gupta is addressed as “Dwij” or “twice-born,” a word used to show respect to Brahmins. Although she is the daughter of the most powerful god, Lord Shiv and possesses the power to kill and restore life, she is somehow subdued in the texts selected. She becomes a secondary character who is cowered down in front of a dominant and hyper-masculine upper-caste Aryan male. It is simply because of her disability that Manasa loses her quality of being a perfect goddess to be venerated and worshipped. The treatment of the disability of the goddess Manasa is completely indigenous and the issue concerning her physical impairment needs a more nuanced and indigenised approach.

The origin of the impairment of Manasa is different from each other in the two selected poets. In Bijoy Gupta, she is blinded by her stepmother, Chandi, when she gouges out one of her eyes in a fit of anger. In Ketkadas, there is no specific reason

or source given to indicate the origin of her blindness in one eye; however, we see, apart from being blind in one eye, Manasa is Changmudi or has a head that resembles a chang^[xi] fish, very common in Bengal and usually not preferred to be eaten. There is no mention of her disability in the myth that Wendy Doniger, A. K. Ramanujan, and W. L. Smith talk about in their studies. However, Manasa is always imagined as a disabled goddess who is both fierce and compassionate. It must be added here that she does not fit into the category of ‘monstrosity’ that Shilpaa Anand talks about in her essay “Historicizing Disability in India” (2013). She is not seen/imagined as a monster in the selected text; however, it is evident that she does not fit into the category of normalcy of a woman or a goddess. Yet she remains, doubly (even triply, as it is argued elsewhere) marginalised for defying bodily norms and gender.

While trying to understand the disability in the selected texts, one needs to understand how Manasa transcends the barrier between the divine and the mortal in the process of social treatment she received for her physical impairment. In the course of the text, one understands that Manasa is not a goddess with much valour and dignity; rather, she has lost her dignity. To Chand, she is an ordinary, foolish, eccentric woman with a disabled body and appearance who causes him unnecessary harm. Interestingly, Manasa fears Chand. She feels threatened by Chand, not just by verbal abuse, but by physical thrashing too. Perhaps there is a gap in the narrative where we need to discover a thin line between the divine and the mortal---a power play between Chand, a devotee of Shiv and Manasa, Shiv’s ignored daughter. Manasa’s political power or legitimacy is denied. She is made to appear powerless and marginalised.

It is noteworthy that both Ketkadas Khemananda and Bijoy Gupta began their work with a benediction to the goddess and throughout the narrative poem claim themselves to be devout servants of the goddess Manasa, who is also addressed as

“Bishohori” or the one who consumes away the poison, the kind and benevolent goddess. But in the course of the text, the rude characteristics and whimsical mind of Manasa are linked with the impairment she has in her body and the social treatment of it. It seems Manasa, as a goddess, draws more sympathy from Khemananda and Gupta than devotion. Although in the bhonita or benediction, the two poets appear to be devoted to the goddess, a substantial portion of the text later shifts their focus to the masculine prowess of Chand, the merchant. This remains the central focus of both texts. In this sense, the reception of Manasa with her disability remains ambiguous. When six sons of Chand are killed by Manasa, Chand laments:

More shok dilo Loghujati Kani.

Chando kande chokkhur pade pani.

Mui obhagiyar char doshe.

Nati Beshe ashilek pase

tokhone Janitam Jodi tui kanee

matha bhangitam tutto jani

(Gupta 155)

Translated^[xiii] as:

‘You have caused me woe, o low-caste blind in one-eyed woman’

Cries Chand.

You have deceived me much

By assuming the shape of Neti, your sister;

Had I known it was you, o blind in one eye woman

I would have smashed your head.

In this long lamentation in Bijoy Gupta's text, apart from blaming Manasa for the mis-happenings, Chand time and again reinforces Manasa's disability and abuses her on that account. He goes so far as to imagine smashing her skull. The following quotation from Bijoy Gupta, though a bit long, reveals the extent of abusive language Chand uses against Manasa:

Mor putro mar bish diy
kanee deshe deshe berao paliya
je din paibo nirbondher bhage.
jeno horin loraiya dhore bhage
Tore debkonya bole kon chare
Kankuli tor bhangitm ekbare
dhamna bhatari to hitahit nai
ami tor debkule bhangibo borai.

(Gupta 155)

In translation^[xiv], it reads:

"Killing my sons with poison
You, one-eyed, run around from one place to
another?
The day I get you by the fate
I will catch you by the neck like a tiger jaws a
hare!
Damn, who calls you the daughter of a god?

I will just break your back in one stroke.

You have no sense of caste,

And I will smash your divine pride!”

Here, we can rarely imagine that a mortal could threaten a divine goddess in such a language. This long paragraph raises concerns not only about the treatment of Manasa by Chand but also about the poet. Perhaps a mortal could dare so much against a divine being simply because the goddess here is disabled? Chand continues to abuse Manasa when he sees her being worshipped by Kalketu, his friend. Chand feels helpless. He charges at Manasa with fierce language: “How my friend worships you I don’t know /And you, O blind goddess, have your fill here?” In such a way, Chand continues to shame Manasa for accepting puja and offerings from Kalketu (ll. 47-48). Gender simply becomes a tool of oppression here, along with disability and caste. This is perhaps one of the few examples from a set of vernacular texts close to the Puranic texts in which a goddess is made to appear inferior to a Brahmin, a man. As disability, gender and caste are used as tools of social oppression, even divinity does not rescue her^[xiii].

In the text of Ketkadas Khemananda, we see similar kinds of abuses hurled at Manasa. When Chand’s all seven ships are submerged by Manasa, and the crewmen and Chand himself are struggling to get out of Kalidoho or the deep water, Chand does not forget to blame Manasa for all the accidents. He says, “Chukkhu ranga bhore pet khaiya chuboni/ Tubu bole dukkho dili chang mudi kani,” translated as: “Even after getting several plunges in the water with red eyes/ Still, Chand says ‘you have caused me all woes, o fish-headed blind in one eye goddess’” (Khemananda ll. 13-14, 5)^[xv]. Chand’s aghast hatred for Manasa is noteworthy. Chand hates Manasa so much that he refuses to take the support of a lotus that Manasa had sent to rescue him in

the water (Khemananda 5). Although there is no mention of the caste of lotus here, the lotus is associated with the lower caste and by touching it one may lose one's religious purity, as Chand says, "If I touch, it will make me impure"^[xv] (Khemananda 21-22).

Again, being a deity of the snakes, an animal which is feared by people because of a high number of deaths each year due to snake bites, Manasa is not afraid of anybody except Chand Saodagor. Time and again, Chand invokes Manasa to confront him in a duel, but Manasa avoids it. Whatever action Manasa took, she did it through some medium or mediator where she did not have to appear in person. Here, the main question that haunts the readers is why Manasa fears Chand. Is it because of his masculine and angry appearance or because of the long wooden stick *henthal*, a strong stick made of a large perennial tree, he carries? It is not clear. The poets do not tell us. However, this fear of Manasa is another point of introspection for scholars of Disability Studies, whether it stems from her impairment and the social treatment of it. It may well be noted here that the two narrative poems aim to establish the goddess and her supremacy, but somehow, they lose their balance in their diabolical portrayal of the one-eyed goddess. Although the goddess resists here, her resistance is more inclined to be depicted as moral depravity than a (social/personal) rebellion.

Manasa is abused by different means associated with her body and impairment. When she complains to Lord Ganesh, whom she asks to eat away all the rice that Chand had collected by begging, she says:

Chand Saodagor calls me again and again
a fish-headed one-eyed goddess!

(Gupta 240)

“Tomar soshur bole more Chengmudi Kani” translates as, “Your father-in-law calls me fish-headed goddess blind in one eye,” she complains to Behula, wife of the last son of Chand, Lakhindar and beloved daughter-in-law of Chand. Here, at a point in the text, we come to realise that Manasa’s fight in the texts is more of fighting for her dignity as a disabled woman (goddess) than establishing her cult among men in the world, the poets would profess in the beginning of the texts. Manasa is suffering from a physical disorder where her head is like a fish available in Bengal, popularly known as chang mach. According to a footnote in the book of *Manasa Mangal* edited by Bijanbihari Bhattacharya, Chand termed Manasa as Changmudi not only because her head looked like that of a chang fish, but the head of the chang fish looked like a snake’s head. Nonetheless, it is to be agreed that Manasa’s physical disorder becomes an easy tool for Chand to mock and humiliate her. Needless to mention, it becomes a tool for oppression.

At a point in the text, when the clash between Chand and Manasa reaches the highest peak, Manasa is trying to find a dignified life, like a goddess. Strangely, in the narration of selected poets--- Ketkadas Khemananda and Bijoy Gupta, we see Manasa is more like a woman with a disability than a goddess. Manasa has lost her dignity as a goddess, and she is reduced to the level of a human being owing to her physical impairment. In her conversations with her friend or sister-cum-confidante—as depicted in two different versions—Neta, her daily interactions with her serpent followers and with her devotees, there is a thin line of separation between the divine and the mortal that gradually disappears. Does disability in the text become a tool for oppression that paves the way for more oppression with her gender and a supposed low birth? To find answers to such questions, contemporary readers and scholars of *Manasa Mangal* must re-evaluate the theoretical frameworks used to understand characters with disabilities in literary texts.

Conclusion

The disability of goddess Manasa somehow compromised her dignity as a divine being, and it is certain now that her marginalisation cannot be understood by looking at disability alone. While studying a text like the *Manasamangal*, one cannot simply overlook the complex power structure politics that intersect with gender, caste and bodily defects, and the selected narratives undoubtedly challenge the common disability narratives. The present study, through a detailed and comparative analysis of two Bengali precolonial texts and by taking into account multiple allied fields of study, not only underscores multiple layers of subjugation and dominance but also interrogates the existing theories on Disability Studies that need an intersectional approach. Further research is required to build upon the findings of the present study. As scholars have sought to decolonise Disability Studies in the South Asian context, increasing attention has been paid to texts from the colonial and postcolonial periods. This scholarship has, in turn, foregrounded the intersections between coloniser–colonised binaries and feminist discourses. As Shaun Grech argues in his article “Decolonising Eurocentric disability studies: why colonialism matters in the disability and global South debate” (2015), there has been a tendency to simplify and generalise disabled individuals by the dominant Western theorists, and now more shifts are taking place in recent years (Grech 7). The *Mansamangal* and the case of goddess Manasa are one of these texts which have been ignored or minimised for a long period of time, and it not only demands an innovative and more nuanced theoretical approach, but there is a legitimate demand to go beyond the colonised and coloniser discourses. In short, Manasa’s vernacular or localised form of resistance needs further scholarly exploration that finds new avenues which intersect with various markers of social hierarchies and dominance.

Endnotes

- i. Otherwise spelt as “Manasamangal”
- ii. Rather mythical retelling of a Puranic origin
- iii. Reference to Manasa could be found in Padma Puran, Devi Bhagavat Puran and Brahmavaivarta Puran.
- iv. Or Brahminic
- v. YouTube link of the cinema: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yj7ffKOGIPY>
- vi. They, too, are subject to two different subgenres of Mangal Kavya, such as Annada Mangal and Chandi Mangal.
- vii. In the book Disability Studies in India: Global Discourses, Local Realities by Renu Adalkha. New Delhi: Taylor and Francis, 2013. P. 201.
- viii. We are spelling it differently here, indicating the difference between the two select Bangla texts.
- ix. This spelling of Shiv or Shib is one of the indigenised Shiva in Bengali, not only phonetically but mythologically. There are certain differences between the two.
- x. Authors’ translation
- xi. (চণা মাছ), scientifically known as Channa punctata, otherwise known as spotted head fish. One can think of a medical condition, “microcephalic”, that Shilpaa Anand talks about in her essay “Historicizing Disability Studies in India” (2013) (in reference to the refuge for the disabled persons in the shrine of Shah Daula in Punjab before and during the early colonial times).
- xii. Authors’ translation
- xiii. In another instance, when Jomraj or Yamraj, the god of death, fights with Manasa, he too indulges in abusive words like “Kanee” or ‘blind in one eye’ or “loghujaati kanee” or ‘low caste blind in one eye’ (Bijoy Gupta 117).
- xiv. Authors’ translation
- xv. Authors’ translation
- xvi. Ibid.

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