

INTERACTIVE ARTICLE COVER

RUPKATHA JOURNAL

ON INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES IN HUMANITIES



ISSN 0975-2935

About the Journal

Journal DOI	https://dx.doi.org/10.21659/rupkatha
Journal Home	www.rupkatha.com
Indexed by	Scopus Web of Science: Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI) DOAJ
Journal Metrics	CiteScore 2021: 0.2 SJR 2021: 0.194 SNIP 2021: 0.642 JCI 2020: 0.50

About the Issue

Themed issue	Volume 4, number 2, 2022 (March-June) Themed Issue on Literature of Northeast India
Guest Editor	Jyotirmoy Prodhani
Issue DOI	https://doi.org/10.21659/rupkatha.v14n2
TOC	https://rupkatha.com/v14n2.php

About the Article

Title	Art, Ecology and Affective Encounters: An Ecosophical Study of Folk Tales from Tripura
Author/s	Partha Sarathi Gupta
Affiliation	Assistant Professor, Department of English, Tripura University, Tripura, India.
Author IDs	0000-0002-5629-0436
Funding	No funding received. Published free of any charge.
DOI	https://doi.org/10.21659/rupkatha.v14n2.06 Pages: 1-9
Full Text HTML	https://rupkatha.com/v14n2ne06
Full-text PDF	https://rupkatha.com/V14/n2/v14n2ne06.pdf
Article History	First Published: 09 June 2022
Article Impact	Check Dynamic Impact
Copyright	Aesthetics Media Services
Licensing	Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial 4.0

This Open Access article is published under a Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. For citation use the DOI. For commercial re-use, please contact editor@rupkatha.com.

Art, Ecology and Affective Encounters: An Ecosophical Study of Folk Tales from Tripura

Partha Sarathi Gupta

Associate Professor, Dept. of English, Tripura University, Tripura, India.

Email: parthasarathi[at]tripurauniv.ac.in, parthasarathigupta15[at]gmail.com

Abstract

This paper promotes an anti-anthropomorphic approach to the study of folk oratures of India's Northeast with special reference to select motifs in the folk tales of the Bongcher and Chakma communities of Tripura (in English translation). The tales are replete with strange transformations from humans to beasts and birds, and vice versa. This motif of metamorphosis serves to situate the folk tales of this region in a paradigm which explores and accommodates a literally symbiotic kinship between art and nature. Timothy Morton's observations on "ecological thought", and the "mesh" resting on the pillars of inter-human and inter-elemental relationships which they foreground, offer a methodological premise to this study. This paper pursues an ecosophical study of select folk tales like – *Rulrengtenu Retape* (Bongcher), translated as "The Story of the Snake-Queen" and *Bucya buri a Egpal Bandar* (Chakma), translated as "The Old Man and the Band of Monkeys". Besides, this study may also be situated at a crucial juncture in human history, when concerns of late capitalism and its consequent ecological collapse have begun to threaten life on this planet. Hence, this study also draws on Guattari's notion of ecosophy engaged upon in his work *The Three Ecologies*, and explores how folk tales of India's Northeast encompass the material, social, and perceptual realms of ecology in all its diverse life-affirming varieties.

Keywords: ecosophy, becomings, ecological thought, interconnectedness, mesh, affects.

Last Christmas, holiday hunters in the Eastern part of India thronging the Sundarbans, along with some channels on National Television, like paparazzi, pursued a certain "Dakhinroy" – the folk pseudonym of the big Bengal cat – an endangered species of the region, who was out to hunt flesh, having trespassed the fragile fortification of its habitat, deep in the estuaries. TV channels turned obese feeding on the sensational spectacle of a tiger put to sleep by foresters in order to ensure the protection of the lives of the inhabitants of a village in Kultali, in the South 24 Parganas of West Bengal. As the pseudonym of "Dakhinroy" flashed on the television screens, folklore enthusiasts must have felt the goosebumps, and environmentalists must have frowned to witness the audacious invincibility of human agencies in a war with a predator on the prowl, right at the apex of our food chain. The incident created ripples in the electronic media and must have stirred the minds of folk enthusiasts. But a dark shadow was cast on our ticking ecological clock. The various versions of the tale of Dakhinroy in the tiger territory may have faded away from the mouths of the residents of the region, but the vestiges of them in popular culture annals still continue to speak volumes on the pantheistic interconnectedness between man and the wild, and the thin porous line separating their territories. A few days later, a similar incident drove the residents of a village in Gosaba (District South 24 Parganas, West Bengal) to spend sleepless nights fortifying their territories from the advances of another *Dakhinroy*. Occasionally, folk suddenly juts

its neck upward from the sands of time to peep into the corridors of the present, propelling us to revisit narratives of ancient wisdom. Perhaps this is what Raymond Williams called “residual” elements of culture (Williams, 1977, p. 122). The present study engages with the concerted attempts of Sahitya Akademi North East Centre for Oral Literature, Agartala, at retrieving the rich tapestry of oratures from the minefield of folk from India’s Northeast, a region which is home to distinct ethnic communities and cultures that proudly boast of a treasure trove of folktales. Translation of all these tales into English under the aegis of the Centre, has facilitated not just a revival of ancient wisdom; it also opens up new perspectives to the understanding of ecosophy as an approach to non-anthropocentric versions of culture. This study narrows down its corpus further to only engage with select folktales from Tripura.

The study of folk tales deserves a true renaissance. To use the analogy of the English metaphysical poet Andrew Marvell, we have wasted hours in marveling upon their morphology, days in ethnographical pursuits, and years in anthropological debates on nature, culture and civilization. It is time we resist the “ecology of bad ideas” (Bateson, 1972, as cited in Guattari, 2000). The academic territory we ought to create in our revaluation of the folk, ought to be first fortified by sound ideas and frameworks which are both sustainable and enriching at the same time. Richard Schechner in his book *Performance Theory* traces the roots of performance to ancient rituals which were participatory in nature, involving man’s relationship with the elemental and cosmic forces. Folk too goes back to early man’s aesthetic representation of the human body’s kinship with the elements, which included bestial and vegetative properties. Given this truth, it makes no sense to engage academic discourses of folk with the currents of high theory and the fashionable critical turns of post-humanism, historical and cultural materialism, and race and ethnicity studies. Studies of folk have been clogged by the centripetalism of critical theory, which seemed to respect and reiterate the same crises with more and more anthropocentric modes of analysis.

The present paper proposes to read into select folk tales from Tripura (in English translation) which engage with the metaphysics of transversality: a notion which describes how spaces may intersect – spaces separating earth’s varied species – animals, birds, insects and other invertebrates and even microorganisms, that inhabit their respective niches. We may replace the word “transversality” with the word “intersectionality” to describe this approach which snatches away the focus with vengeance from man and man only, and his associated discrete authorized epistemes which have been legitimized in history. Moreover, this study shall also attempt to explore such intersections and connections found in these folk tales, and study how the currents of global crises may groom and condition our reading of the same tales today.

The tales are replete with motifs of transversality between humans, animals, birds, and microorganisms. In them, the representation of kinships between different species, like man and beast, or man and bird, are often built on the pillars of trust, accommodation and acceptance, and sometimes on malice, enmity and connivance, leading to gory violence. While we read them, the teller keeps deflecting the focalizer’s position from that of the human narrator to that of the bestial, voiceless creatures of the green or the waters. Such an approach on the part of the teller naturally reveals an intersubjective switching over from one state of being to the other, abjuring all sense of anthropomorphic hierarchy. A particular folktale from the Mraima (Mog) community of Tripura may be cited here, popularly called the “the tale of Dewa”. Its principal protagonist is an invisible forest deity or *dewa* (Chaudhury, 2012, pp.123-126) who is both dreaded and revered.

The tale may be read as an archetypal narrative that symbolically erases the boundaries between the animal and the human, and the hunter and the hunted. The tale begins with the journey of two princes, who lose their way in the forest and unconsciously cross the borders of their realm (Chaudhury, 2012, p.123). They decide to spend the night in the forest below in the valley. One of the brothers declares that he fears neither the bear nor the tiger, but is mortally scared of *dewa* – the spirit. Coincidentally, the younger prince is overheard by a tiger from behind the bushes, who decides to teach him a lesson on mortal fear. The turn in this seemingly flat tale appears when the same tiger, out to hunt the princes, spots the duo sleeping intertwined with each other with the head of each facing opposite directions. An optical illusion is created when the tiger mistakes the prince for a spirit with two heads. The foolish tiger suspects that he had seen *dewa*, a spirit with two heads, and slips away. Coincidentally, the lives of both the princes are saved. The tale does not have any credible narrative evidence to suggest the identity of *dewa*, whether he is a benevolent spirit or an evil one, is not clear. Yet there is an insinuation that the apparition might have been that of the invisible deity who may have had swallowed the princes and was sleeping over a meal. The tiger, in mortal fear, flees the spot, and later dozes off on the forest floor. The next morning, the brothers – bleary-eyed after a good night’s sleep – mistake the sleeping tiger for their lost horse, and in a daze, mount upon its back. The tiger, on the other hand, in mortal fear of being possessed, runs amuck and bangs himself in a net of wild bushes. The chain of events in this tale evokes an elemental connection between the human and bestial worlds. This interconnection is represented in two ways, first, through a purgatorial ritual by which the tiger promises to ward off the evil influence of the ghost; he beckons all the animals and birds in the forest and announces the performance of the ritual. A cow, a goat, and a hen are hunted and killed by the tiger, jackal and a cat respectively – all three carrying out their individual predatory roles – in order to propitiate the alleged evil spirit. All these events occur in a chain, as, one by one the animals devise new strategies to ward off the evil. At certain junctures in the tale, the intersections between the two worlds – human and animal – take the tale forward to the next step in the narrative scheme. However, the tale ends with the triumph of man over the animals; only the tiger manages to swim safely ashore after the two princes dupe all the animals and drown them to death. Ironically, the faith, which the beasts repose on the humans, is rudely snapped by the human duo as they engage themselves in a game of deception. The survival of the tiger is a silent acknowledgment of the chief predator at the apex of the food chain. The tale is a grim prophetic reminder of the future of a human-centered civilization dedicated to assert the supremacy of man, and at the same time asserts the importance of acknowledging the interconnectedness of being on this ecologically challenged planet.

This is where ecosophy may intervene. Instead of being judgmental about the history of anthropocentric attitudes to civilization and culture, ecosophy may be practiced as an activity that encourages transversality. Anthropocentric attitudes to life have too long dominated our planet, led on by the megalomania of late capitalism. The time perhaps has come to subject man to what Guattari calls a “schizo-therapy”. Such a practice, to Guattari, may draw from principles of psychoanalytic schizo-therapy that can “decenter the singular, dominant and brutal psyche of capitalism, which is currently considered the only mind of the Earth” (Gardner and MacCormack, 2018, p.5). Folk tales are first hand instances of ecosophic practices which engage in affective

encounters between human and non-human elements in the cosmos, through which reciprocity is generated. Gardner and MacCormack, in their commentary on Guattari observe:

Ecosophy manifests itself as a science of ecosystems encompassing the three ecologies: the material (ecology, biophysical), the social (cultural and human); and the perceptual (human subjectivity articulated through images, sounds and hapticity). In short, ecosophy is politically regenerative, ethical, aesthetic, analytical and life-affirming – embracing but also *generating* difference (11).

The present essay is more concerned with the chosen folktales' engagement with perceptual ecology, the third of Guattari's "three ecologies" – an engagement with subjectivities from a non-hierarchical and non-anthropocentric vantage point of the teller whose sole function is to circulate and pass on the baton of the orature to his/her posterity. Moreover, in the words of Timothy Morton, it is extremely difficult to rationally explain this interconnectedness, which, perhaps, only may be partially perceived or sensed. The promise of complete scientific knowledge of such interconnectedness is frustrated soon, as we find ourselves disoriented in our pursuit of this metaphysics. The infinitude of this interconnectedness is chiefly responsible for this disorientation; the reality of not being able to discern the logical wholeness of it all. Morton observes:

We can't see everywhere. We can't see everywhere all at once (not even with Google Earth). When we look at x , we can't look at y . Cognitive science suggests that our perception is quantized – it comes in little packets, not a continuous flow. Our perception is full of holes. The nothingness in perception -we can't plumb the depths of space...the infinite is not an object to be seen (22).

A folktale belonging to the Bongcher community of Tripura "The Story of Chemchawrmanpa" (Bongcher and Bongcher, 2011, pp. 115-18) narrates a chain of chaotic events piercing through the lives and habitats of birds, beasts, insects, vertebrates and invertebrates, and even ends up disturbing the equilibrium of inanimate objects. The folktales of the Bongcher community have raised enough anthropological curiosity with respect to the community's fast fading census data – its dwindling population and its endangered tongue – as recorded in a few indigenous treatises, including the "Introduction" to the Sahitya Akademi anthology of Bongcher Literature of the oral tradition: *Echoes From Lungleng Tang* (2011). But, the focus of the present study does not concern itself on the anthropological question. Instead, ecosophical vistas open out, once the reader delinks herself/himself from locus of the Anthropocene and embraces the immanence of the "mesh" (Morton, 28) – the infinitude of interconnectedness of multiple threads of the animate and inanimate worlds. What the folktale reveals in its apparent chaotic multiplicity, is what Timothy Morton calls "mesh".

By extension, "mesh" can mean "a complex situation or series of events in which a person is entangled; a concatenation of constraining or restricting forces or circumstances; a snare."... Since everything is interconnected, there is no background and therefore no definite foreground. (Morton, 2018, p.28)

Drawing on Darwin's theory of the "Great Tree of Life", Morton explains, "All life forms are the mesh, and so are all dead ones, as are their habitats, which are also made up of living and nonliving beings" (Morton, 2018, p.29). Moreover, Morton observes that the *mesh* does not offer any

privileged central position to any particular species, contrary to the theoretical stance of humanist thought, post Renaissance and the era of the Enlightenment. Morton observes:

In contrast, mesh doesn't suggest a clear starting point...Each point of the mesh is both the centre and the edge of a system of points, so there is no absolute centre or edge...All life forms are the mesh, and so are all dead ones, as are their habitats, which are also made up of living and nonliving beings. (Morton, 2018, p.29)

Folk wisdom in the oratures of Tripura and other regions of India's Northeast possessed the ancient wisdom of this *mesh*, reiterated in tale after tale. But what is particularly unique to these tales is their utter disregard for what we understand as codes of narrative propriety. What is generally rarefied in the discursive parlance of urban storytelling, is spontaneously absent; with elements of the bawdy and the scatological, happily scattered and mixed with other elements of narrative. With the lack of a central core, the narrative admits infinite play of events and tropes which "rhizomatically" (Deleuze and Guattari, 2005, p.8) roll up into a *narrative mesh*, opening up infinite possibilities of *becoming*. The folktales of the Bongchers of Tripura are archives of this notion of *mesh*. "The Story of Chemchhawrmanpa" (Bongcher, and Bongcher, 2011. pp. 115-118) involving a cascading sequence of events, seemingly generates a never-ending inertia of motion, had it not been for the teller's overarching role to bring the narrative to its desired *telos*. It all begins with Chemchhawrmanpa's squatting posture while fishing, which reveals his dangling testicles to a hungry lobster in the shallow waters, who mistakes the dangling object for food. The bite of the shrimp begins a sequence of violent motions. The man jumps up in agony and plunges his axe into the bark of a bamboo tree, which bangs into the scrotum of a squirrel. The squirrel in pain tore apart a soft tendril, in which nested a poisonous ant. The ant vents its ire on the abdomen of a wild boar, and the cascading effects of the chain of events finally fell upon the hovel of an old woman who was just about to attend to nature's call. The chain continues unabated. The artful game of toppling over one another in a mad jostle for space may evoke comical affective responses in the listener/reader. However, within the sequence of events lies the folk-world's sensitive understanding of deep ecology – that the human is just a component in the long and huge paradigmatic pole of an eco-system replete with multiple genera and species. The non-privileged position of humans recurs again and again as an underlined motif in almost all the folktales from the hills of Tripura.

Another interesting tale from the Bongcher orature of Tripura *The Story of Rulrengtenu* or "The Snake Queen" (Bongcher, and Bongcher, 2011, pp. 122-127) may be considered for a case study. In the first part of the tale, there are no human characters. Members from the world of mammals, reptiles, amphibians and birds dominate the story-world, like the land-tortoise, deer, python, pheasant, kite, and frog. They often form an entire narrative unit in such tales, often resembling a beast fable. However, as this tale proceeds, we find that the next unit foregrounds humans as simply an additional element, and nothing more, in the chain of events. The first unit ends with the archetypal war between the snake and the kite, in which the kite tears the body of the python in meaty shreds, a large chunk of which falls into a *jum* field nearby. The *jumia* collects the chunk, brings the meat home, cooks a portion of it, and leaves the remaining portion to dry over a fire. He then forgets all about it. Between fits of a strange amnesia over the meat, as he is about to decide on preparing the next meal with it, the strange amnesia grips him again and again, and the meat remains untouched. As he gets suspicious about his own recurrent amnesia, he begins to note

another strange daily occurrence. Some deft hand seemed to be smartly performing all the regular household chores, much to the amusement of the *jumia*. The strange occurrence which recurs each day, is silently watched by the *jumia's* neighbour – an old lady, who, one day, sees the strangest sight. Each day, after the *jumia* leaves for the hills, a beautiful damsel emanates from within the meat chunk and “meticulously performed all the household chores, including cooking, serving, and even collecting water. After everything, she quietly slipped into the meat chunk again. (Bongcher, and Boncher, 2011, p. 124).

The second section of the story marks a sharp departure from the world predominated by the beasts to a world where animal flesh metamorphoses into the human form of a lady, and begins to cohabit with a human, and even gives birth to two human children after a matrimonial union. The climax of the story is centered upon a marital vow; in which the snake lady extracts a pledge from her husband that he would never reveal her true identity to anybody ever. The pledge is soon forgotten at a vulnerable moment when the *jumia* is in an inebriated condition. He reveals the secret to their sons, who are shocked at being snubbed as the generation of snake children, by their own father. When the lady learns of this breach of trust, she disappears after performing her last chores. But before she departs, she promises to reveal herself to her children at a designated spot at the sea-side. The snake-queen metamorphoses into a fish and begins to oversee her children henceforth. Later, when her husband discovers the secret, he hires fishermen to trap her in the shallow waters when she is spotted playing with her children. However, the tale ends abruptly, as do most of such tales, with the fish mother jumping into the air with her children, high above the reach of invasive powers of the human world, and plunges into the deeper waters nearby.

If we deem the tales to be carriers of ancient wisdom, one might even detect in them prophetic forebodings about humans as invaders and trespassers. Through centuries, they have occupied territories of other species only to fulfill their own needs. There are other tales which have resonances of mistrust between humans and other species. A Chakma tale popularly known as *Bucya Buri a Egpal Bandar* or “The Old Man, the Old Woman and the Band of Monkeys” (Chakma, and Chaudhuri, 2013, pp., 95-102) is a lore studded with doubt, connivance, malice residual and violence inflicted upon each other by humans and the band of monkeys. The tale ends with the human couple resorting to a malicious plot to drown all the monkeys to death. Only one of the animals survives the catastrophe. A Mraima (Mog) folktale almost on the same motif “The Tale of the Old Couple and the Monkey” (Chaudhury and Chaudhuri, 2012, pp. 118-122), with minor alterations, presents the human couple as victims of the beastly menace of monkey fury. Despite the couple’s kind gesture of parenting a monkey-child, the monkey child ultimately betrays his foster parents to ultimately kill the whole family. The tale is loaded with gruesome violence and cruelty. The lack of empathy between humans and the monkeys resonates through these ancient narratives of the oral tradition. Two of them have already been referred to above. A third one from the Bongcher orature *Zongkhak tepu* or “Tale of Chimpanzee” (Bongcher, and Bongcher, 2011, pp. 84-86) is replete with gruesome violence, once again reinforcing premonitions of a conflict-ridden future in which prospects of cohabitation may be questioned. In this story the chimpanzee marries the youngest sister, and a son Taitari is born to them. The chimpanzee husband takes good care of his family, but to no avail. He fails to impress his human bride, who is in search of an opportunity to escape. She is successful, much to the disappointment

of her beast husband, who begins to frantically search for her. In his anguish, he kills a neighbouring dog “and made a *champreng* with its intestines” (Bongcher, and Bongcher, p.85). He then plays the *champreng* whenever he goes in search of his lost wife. Finally, when he finds her, she refuses to acknowledge him as her husband. She even abandons her son, born of her chimpanzee-husband. In the end, she scalds him to death by pouring boiling water on him. The child escapes into the forest to live with other chimpanzees, but the others do not accept him as one of their own and kill him. The tale may be interpreted as having prophetic resonances of a future that does not augur well for any prospect of cohabitation between species. Such doomsday echoes embedded in folk traditions may need fresh critical revaluations in ecosophical analyses of oral narratives. Hence, translation of these tales becomes ethically necessary.

The revival of the folktales of Tripura through transcriptions and translation into a commonly intelligible language is no mean a task. It has an ethical function which gradually might become indispensable to the realization of a global ecological objective. It is this function which Raymond Williams called residual:

By residual I mean something different from the ‘archaic’, though in practice they are often very difficult to distinguish. Any culture includes available elements of its past, but their place in the contemporary cultural process is profoundly visible...the ‘residual’, by definition, has been effectively formed in the past, but it is still active in the cultural process, not only and often not all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present. (Williams, 1977, p.122).

Our journey towards more and more sophisticated and digitally equipped culture of late capitalism is a one-way movement, the costs of which have compelled us to seek refuge in the *residual*. Folk offers us a path adjacent to that highway, a path to an ecosophical understanding of life – the same building block of the organic world which we are desperately seeking in interstellar space. It is in this context that the folktales chosen for study from the oratures of Tripura, and by extension, other regions of India’s Northeast, may be read as ecosophies in practice. They inspire new ecological thoughts and inspire “affective encounters” through which reciprocity is activated between man and his surroundings on this planet (MacCormack, and Gardner, 2018, p.11). Besides, Aranye Fradenburg Joy’s concept of “care” as a transformative practice can also be encouraged as a therapeutic strategy to heal the sores and scars that humans have perpetrated on both themselves as well as the entire ecology by extension. In her essay “Care of the Wild: A Primer,” Fradenburg provides a radical reassessment of the function of art and aesthetics, weaning all of us away from the conditional world of critical theory – heavily and parasitically dependent upon late capitalist terms of reference. Her proposition of the true function of art once again ignites the flames of affect-centric critical practices, and is of particular relevance to non-anthropomorphic studies of folk literatures across the globe. “Care” becomes in the hands of the literary critic, a tool for new *becomings* and *embodiments*. She observes:

All artfulness requires, and aims to design and sustain attention. It therefore has the potential to modify sensation and the functional architecture of the brain. The art’s striking and broad ranging use of sense perception (of synesthesia, ekphrasis, *energeia*) suggests that the arts heal because they transmit and amplify sentient experience, within and without the organism...the arts practice

ecological thought, because they invite, focus on and potentially sustain shifts in awareness and perspective and new (material) connectivity. The arts 'care' in part by changing embodied minds (Fradenburg, 2018, p. 72).

It may be mentioned here that Fradenburg's analysis of care is heavily drawn from Gregory Bateson (1972, as cited in Fradenburg, 2018) who proposes a new "ecology of the mind". Fradenburg's theory of *care* may open up new vistas for the understanding of folk literatures in the twenty-first century, initiating a paradigm shift from all anthropological interpretations of the subject; in that, new connections may be rebuilt to sensitize folk researchers on the power of affective encounters between humans and their *eikos*. Aesthetics of folk may hence be studied through "embodied, extended and distributed cognition" (Fradenburg, 2018, p. 71). Old binaries of *mind-body*, *organism-environment*, and *matter-thought*, may hence be done away with, looking forward to a new psychoanalytic practice in which "mind is now understood to be 'distributed' well past the brain, the nervous system and even the body..." (Fradenburg, 2018, p.71).

Fradenburg further observes that among the great apes, human beings are particularly good at pro-social acts like food-sharing, child-care, care for the sick, injured and elderly, and teaching. "We are cooperative breeders, meaning that the responsibility for child care does not fall exclusively on the mother but is spread out to husbands, siblings, grandparents, friends, and so on, with, of course, significant variations in the ways responsibility is shared (Fradenburg, 2018, p.73). This, as she suggests, may be extended further to include the *eikos*, if we at all look forward to a progressive vision of civilization. The folktales analyzed in this study may open up new encounters of care in which expressivity may be reconceived as a "dynamic and transformative movement, so that thinking, acting and caring can function as co-constitutive forces and powers for the sustenance of a healthy territorial life" (MacCormack, and Gardner, 2018, pp. 12-13).

A spate of recent events reported on the media, with which the present study begins, on the territorial encroachments of wild animals from their habitats and enclosures, poses uncanny and menacing questions on the way we have trespassed the prospects of a healthy territorial life. Within a span of not less than a week after the events mentioned in the introduction to this study, another set of bizarre incidents of aggressive monkey revenge unleashed upon street-dogs and human infants in a Maharashtra village, grabbed headlines in the print and electronic media. Once again, territoriality came into question, invoking action on the part of civil and forest authorities. Folktales and their ecosophical subtexts often remind us of the need to connect once again to the *residual* elements of culture. They remind man of the importance of co-habiting with other species in a world which is staring at an impending ecological holocaust.

Declaration of Conflicts of Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest.

Funding

No funding has been received for the publication of this article. It is published free of any charge.

References:

- Bateson, Gregory. (1972). *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. Ballantine.
- Bongcher, Zohming Thanga, & Bongcher, Kamal. (Eds). (2011). *Echoes from Lungleng Tang: Bongcher Literature of Oral Tradition*. Sahitya Akademi.
- Chakma, Niranjana. (Ed). (2013). *Chakma Folk and Modern Literature*. Sahitya Akademi.
- Chaudhury, Kriari Mog., & Chaudhuri Saroj. (Eds). (2012). *Mraima Folk Tales and Folklores*. Sahitya Akademi.
- Deleuze, Gilles & Guattari, Felix. (2005). *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. (Brian Massumi, Ed. & Trans.). University of Minnesota Press. (Original work published 1980)
- Fradenburg, Aranye Joy. (2018). Care of the Wild: A Primer. In P. MacCormack & C. Gardner (Eds.), *Ecosophical aesthetics: art, ethics and ecology with Guattari*. (pp. 65-94). Bloomsbury Academic.
- Guattari, Felix. *The Three Ecologies*. (2017). (Ian Pindar & Paul Sutton, Trans.). Bloomsbury. (Original work published 1989)
- McCormack, Patricia & Gardner, Colin. (Eds). (2018). *Ecosophical Aesthetics: Art, Ethics and Ecology with Guattari*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Morton, Timothy. (2010). *The Ecological Thought*. Harvard University Press.
- Schechner, Richard. (1988). *Performance Theory*. Routledge.
- Williams, Raymond. (1977). *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford.

Partha Sarathi Gupta, PhD, is an Associate Professor in the Department of English, Tripura University. His areas of specialization are Drama, Theatre Studies, Indian English Theatre, and Translation Studies. He has worked extensively with the Sahitya Akademi North East Centre for Oral Literature and Culture, Agartala, in translating folktales of ethnic communities of the region, viz. Bongcher, Mraima (Mog), Chakma and Tripura. His translations have all been published by the Sahitya Akademi in anthologies dedicated to each respective ethnic community.