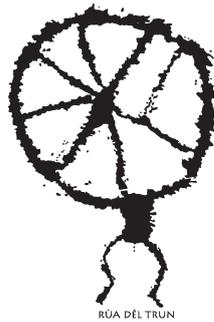


Debaprasad Bandyopadhyay

The Psychology of Silence

The story of Bharat



(Summarized and translated version of a Bangla pseudo-novel, published in
Kalodhvani, [ed. Prasanta Chatterji] 13:1, October, 2005)

diaforia July 2011

Index

Canto I	1
I.1 Investigation into the docile body of Bharat	1
I.2 Bharat's Personal History	2
I.3 The last medical intervention	4
Canto II Transitional phase: when Purana reappeared	5
Canto III A new searching	7
III.1 Mitra's searchings	7
III.2 Bharat's diary	8
Canto IV Remedy?	11
IV.1 The ultimate diagnosis	11
IV.2 The ultimate remedy?	12

Canto I

I.1 Investigation into the docile body of Bharat

What happens to you Bharat? Why are you not speaking? Pancajani was feeling the heat of nuclear-radiation when the *SPET* was going on; an isotope was localized in the left side of Bharat's brain by inserting a catheter to his vein to find out the causes behind the dumbness of Bharat.

Bharat was not speaking ... Several expensive diagnostic procedures were executed. When Bharat initially stopped speaking, Pancajani took him to an ENT-specialist. It was diagnosed as *Aphonia*. However the *Laryngoscopy* test failed to detect the actual cause behind Bharat's non-speaking. Therefore, ENT-specialist referred him to a neurologist.

The physician stroke through the earlier diagnosis and suggested a possibility for *Spasmodic Disphonia* or, he thought, it might be a case of *Global Aphasia*. There might be something unusual in Bharat's left hemisphere, especially in the Broca's Area: a supposed zone in the frontal lobe, which is responsible for our speaking. The neurologist suggested a series of tests: *Cerebral Angiography*, *Electroencephalogram (EEG)*, *CT Scan of the head*, *MRI of the head*, *Skull X-ray* etc ... Nothing was "abnormal", but, in the meantime, Bharat's body was ruptured, scortched, blooded ...

Doctor's conjecture was then that it was a case of *Cerebral Motor Aphasia*. He put an acronym under his diagnosis: *AUO (Aphasia of Unknown Origin)*. Health Care Provider was searching for origin – causes and effect, effect and cause, cause and effect.

He initially prescribed a medicine: Pentoxyphylin; afterwards it was supplemented by Amphetamine – the remedies for non-speaking! Though, to the doctor, the etiology of Bharat's non-speaking was still unknown.

After *PET (Positron Emission Tomography)*, now it is a time for *Single Photon Emmission Computed Tomography (SPECT* or less commonly known as *SPET*). That test discovered a peculiar phenomenon: quite contrary to the determination of earlier diagnosis, though there was an “intense neural activity” in the frontal lobe of Bharat’s brain, the parietal lobe was totally inactive.

What would be the next step for Pancajani for curing his husband, Bharat? The limit of Medical Insurance was exhausted; the expensive tests penetrated the docile body of Bharat. Bharat, from now on, like Ulysses, could not return to his initial phase, thanks to the violent medical tests.

Pancajani was feeling the suffocating warmth of nuclear bombs at the moment of medical nuclear tests on the blooded body of Bharat.

Bharat was then referred to a neuro-psychiatrist. He suggested a blood-test to judge the level of lithium and sodium in Bharat’s blood though nothing was “abnormal” in his blood. His prescribed medicines then were: Amit-ryptilin and Alprazolam SR.

Despite such tests and regular intakes of different experimental medicines, Bharat did not return to the non-silent zone of speaking! Bharat is now suffering from *DOMP*. What is that?

I.2 Bharat’s Personal History

At the moment of intervention of a neuro-psychiatrist, Bharat was just like a dead body – he was neither speaking nor moving.

The neuro-psychiatrist was curious about Bharat’s personal life, childhood configuration, family history, etcetera, though he, as a busy physician, did not have enough time to listen to Bharat’s story from his peer group and on the other hand, Bharat’s friends did not have time also as they had already rejected him – not for his non-speaking, but for his reduced “market-value”.

Bharat, though an ordinary junior lecturer in Linguistics (for the period of 18 years) in an international academic institute, was once invited to attend a prestigious non-residential fellowship to execute a book-project on **Chom-**

skian hypothesis on linguistic creativity and his salary was reduced for some unknown reasons. Dejected Bharat was merged with huge debt as he lost almost hundred thousand Indian currencies for transporting his family from one place to another.

From then on, friends were avoiding Bharat and he began to suffering from persecutory paranoia as he imagined a big conspiracy around him. Bharat was a regular writer in a political weekly, where he raised his voice against statist, religious or economic discrimination and those papers were referred in the parliament. According to Bharat's fantastic imagination, it were those political writings that were responsible for his degradation in that governmental institute. Bharat, as Pancajani reiterated it to the doctor, then questioned Pancajani, "How could it be possible Jani, my salary is reduced when I'm awarded?"

The neuro-psychiatrist found the following facts about Bharat from his family:

1. *Pertussis* (whooping cough) at the age of 2
2. Ear-wax blockage at the age of 6 and *Otitis Media* (an inflammation/infection of the middle ear) at the age of 26

The physician tried to relate these organic failures – throat and ear problems – with Bharat's silence. He found the fact that Bharat was suffering from wax blockage at that time, when he was living beside a ball press factory that used to emit almost 100 db per pulse. All the State apparatuses (Local Municipality, Pollution Control Board, Directorate of Factories, Department of Health Hazards, etc) did not pay any heed to Bharat's appeal to stop that noise and Bharat had lost his faith in welfare state.

Moreover, there was a religious organization of *vaisnavas* (*akhra*) beside the Bharat's flat. They're singing *kirtanas* (a type of dramatic singing in Bengal) through 24 hrs. In certain occasions, they're using 11 loudspeakers to spread their musical messages. Therefore, Bharat and Pancajani used to wear ear-plugs to avoid two types of unwanted noises. And it was also found in his family history that his grandpa had become dumb and was lost in the crowd after the great Indian partition in 1947.

The Health Care Provider tried to relate all these incidences to Bharat's "disease" by all his faith in deterministic cause and effect theory. His ques-

tion was: is it an organic failure or a functional failure?

However, he also cut a sorry figure in curing Bharat. Pancajani was crying and blaming Bharat for playing a role of a malingering silent man. How could Pancajani run the family?

I.3 The last medical intervention

The concluding diagnosis of the neuro-psychiatrist was *Anxiety Neurosis*. Bharat was suffering from anxiety, therefore Bharat was not speaking – and it's a case of repression. He referred Bharat to a psychoanalyst. Psychoanalyst was frustrated with Bharat's non-speaking as it was impossible for her to execute behavioral therapy without any response from a non-speaking person.

Whatever may be the disease's name, Bharat's condition was not improved but it was worst than ever. Lastly, when Mitra, a non-practicing anti-psychiatrist and a friend of Bharat, came to Pancajani's home, first word he pronounced was an acronym, *DOMP: Diseases of Medical Progress* – Bharat's body was ruptured by the repeated medical interventions and Mitra said, "I am now unable to communicate with Bharat as he is living within silence. How did it start?"

"It's a long story, Mitra. He was totally alienated with his academic institute. He was not doing anything according to the demands of the academic market, e.g., he is not developing a speaking-machine as requested by his institute. He had even refused to go to foreign countries. He wanted to prove that a new theoretical work – a paradigm shift – could also be possible in without being stamped by a foreign institute. He is a fool – he projected himself as a third world local subaltern academician with his own's voice. He was not following any model-theoretic approach to his work; instead, he was sabotaging the existing model. He was not a part of any data-collecting academic team also. He was spoiling his time by writing in his mother tongue in non-referred magazines. He had no connections with local political parties as he hated patron-client shoe-licking relationship . . . How could he get promotion?"

"Yes, as a friend of Bharat, I know all these facts. However, please tell me Pancajani, the moment, from which he started his non-speaking . . .", said Mitra.

Canto II

Transitional phase: when Purana reappeared

Bharat was sitting in front of a TV. He was watching “Animal Planet” – a lioness was attacking a pregnant deer. She jumped and grasped her. The TV screen was full with blood.

Bharat stopped speaking – an absolute “pathological” silence . . . He was silent as if he was a corpse.

Bharata the Matter - A zombie in the Jambu-island

Once upon a time, there was a king in the island called Jambu. He was Bharata, son of Risabhadeva. Being aggravated by his family and kingdom, he shunned off all the bondages and went to jungle for contemplation. One day, when he was meditating, a pregnant deer jumped into his lap to protect herself from the attacking lioness. And she died by giving birth to a child.

Bharata had begun to rear that child. That deer was his everything – sage Bharata had become a deer-fetish. And the king-turned-sage Bharata, as it was told by the *Purana*, in the next birth, would become a deer.

During his deer-life, Bharata practiced sexual austerity and cultivated knowledge-system and in the next birth, he would become a *Brahmin*. However, he shunned off ritualistic practices as well as all types of daily performances including interactive acts – thus he had achieved complete reification. For his complete “transcendental” silence, he was famed as *Jarabharata* (*Bharata the Matter*). However, Purana told us, Bharata was a very know-

ledgeable person.

One day, the king Rohu, sitting in a palanquin, was passing through Bharata's hamlet and wanted to replace one of his tired palanquin-bearers. He got Bharata and engaged him in bearing the palanquin. Bharat was unable to carry the palanquin as he was obese (thanks to his non-activity) as well as a zombie. The king Rohu was angry and rebuked Bharata. Bharata then initiated an epistemological discourse with the king regarding the status of master and servant.

In this non-puranik time, Bharata had become Bharat, though a thinking-person, he was told by his authority to build up archive or to act as a surveyor – that is the “real” work of so-called third world local subaltern academicians. They cannot contribute their epistemological voices in the realm of the “Theory” ... Bharat had become dumb.

Bharata the Matter had become reincarnated Bharat in *kaliyuga* ... Diachronic facts reappear in a genealogical synchrony ... This country, **Bhaarat**¹, now follows the name of Bharata – it was named after him.

¹India

Canto III

A new searching

III.1 Mitra's searchings

Mitra, a former anti-psychiatrist-(a la **Laing**)-turned **Lacanian** psychoanalyst, was searching Bharat's diary, threadbare notes and even the search history and favorite items in the internet account of Bharat. And he found astonishing facts: Bharat collected large material on silence from the internet. He put asterisk marks on the Virginia University site on silence especially the celebration of the day of silence; he also gathered information about the use of the phrase "conspiracy of silence" by **Marx** and **Engels** from the Marxist Archive. He referred to the Commission for Historical Clarification and its subsequent the Memory of Silence Document of Guatemala. Was he "internationalizing" his individual silence?

As reported by frustrated Pancajani, in the phase of gradual inclination towards silence and when Bharat was disturbed by the local real estate developers as well as local party members, he was then interested in silent music. Apart from listening to Rabindrasangit or **Tagore**'s songs and Indian classical songs, he was also interested in **John Cage**, the *No-Music* of **Dieter Schnebel** and **Gerd Zacher**. He was collecting the minimalist white paintings of **Robert Ryman** and **Robert Rauschenberg**. Perhaps, he was suffocated with his discipline – linguistics, a discipline on visible speaking only. Bharat's different scrap notes had revealed his claustrophobic existence within the mainstream linguistics.

III.2 Bharat's diary

(These notes were re-represented by Mitra in so-called “rational” language and in chronological order for the therapeutic convenience)

- My father was teaching me grammars of my mother tongue, Sanskrit and English in my school days, I had seen the blooded body of language. My language-body was ruptured by the fragmentary, procedural, and prescriptive rules of the grammar. If any Homo Sapiens can create infinite sets of sentences out of finite sets of words, why should we teach grammar? Is it for the “sale”-bration of a standard language controlled by the language-managers, language-police, and language-judges?
- They are searching authentic meaning – they are etymologist; they are creating deterministic genealogy of arbitrary signs – they are philologists. I had to cram all these trashes – phonetic laws, etc. Is it Linguistics as proposed by Saussure and Chomsky? I am getting the obnoxious smell of stale words from my University's Linguistic Department.
- I am reading Chomsky now. He negated the behavioral interpretation of language acquisition, but we are living within the prison/black box of behavioral control. I wish to ask some questions to Chomsky. From where does the ideal creative speaking subject speak? Where is the locus of ideal speaking subject? What about the individual history of such ideal speaking subject? Does the outside influence in the formation of the inside Language Acquisition Device? What happens to transcendental Cogito (as postulated in Cartesian Linguistics), when it is subjected to the outside sociality? (Here I am inclining towards Psychoanalysis – to the construct of “psyche” rather than that of cogito as I am emphasizing on the society-psyche interface). The basic question is: what are the basic differences between the constructs like psyche or Cartesian “Cogito”? The transcendental Cogito, as it is constructed in Chomskian linguistics, cannot escape internalization of the “violent outside”¹. The alchemy of inside and outside is crucial at the moment of constructing creative speaking subject. The Language Acquisition Device, the constructed inside, may or may not be crippled

¹In the context of ecological entitlement, scarcity of natural resources and the subsequent primitive accumulation of it, we all are competitors instead of comrades; we are trying to grasp the resources so that others might not be able to get it. This is the source of *others' violence*. Or, it is better to quote Freud here: “Suffering comes from three quarters: from our own body; from the outer world, which can rage against us with the most powerful and pitiless forces of destruction; and finally from our own relations with other men.” Freud (1930 : 28) [Debaprasad Bandyopadhyay]

by the outside sociality. However, Chomsky did not bother to consider the influence of the outside at the moment of constructing and representing the ideal creative inside. [*Mitra thought that Bharat might be exemplifying/posing himself as an instance for his anti-Chomskian hypothesis: "Crippled Creativity"*]

- Linguistics is a meta-speaking on speaking – meta-symbolic order on the symbolic order. At the moment of speaking, I do not need to know the constitutive algorithmic principles of meta-symbolic order that was inserted into our super-ego as Language-managers/-judges/-police. Silence is an-other in this meta-symbolic order. I want to reject this order of control. I am tired of the speaking game. [*Mitra got the clue for his diagnosis from this word: "reject"*]
- My institute gives me a work to do: Computational Linguistics. Computer should speak as if s/he is a human being. Linguistic data must be fitted according the dictums of available software algorithm. Whatever may be the human linguistic order of things (either being an n-ary system or a system following some procedural or non-algorithmic rule instead of a constitutive rule), it must follow the available binary program. In addition, when the program is “fully” executed, computer pretends as if s/he is a market (wo)man: s/he can repeat/translate stereotypical sentences etc. Could anyone prove the following equation: $speaking\ subject = f(binary\ machine)$ or viceversa? Perceiving body as a machine is a violence.
- Thanks to John Cage, I got a silent zone for my future academic performances. I am coining a term, *silenceme* (like phoneme, morpheme, lexeme ...) – nothing can be called as silence, but there is silence, our chosen silence ... However, there is no absolute transcendental silence. Nevertheless, who will hear this in the disciplinary technology of meta-symbolic order?
- When, in Linguistics, intonation pattern of speech is attested by machine (not by using trained ears of the musician, who can make notation of music as well as speech) by surveying a sample population in a lab-state, a crucial variable of that particular community is totally ignored. That is their cultural audio-exposure to the, as Cage called them, *unintended sounds* or non-discursive sonorities (that is, the noises, music, and rhythm of the habitat or the non-discursive sounds in which the particular population inhabits). It is not possible to gauge the intonation pattern of a particular speaking community without noticing this

context-specificity of unintended sounds/non-discursive sonorities.

- Now, non-coercive dialogue without any manipulation is totally impossible. What can I do? Academic interactions are also impossible in the age of “specialists”. It is better time for me as I’m reading poems on silence by Indian subaltern scholars of the middle ages: Kabir (15 C) and Dadu (17 C). Apart from **Sartre**, **Wittgenstein**, **Derrida**, I am now also going through some indigenous works on silence.
- I still remember the first line of the song sung by a **Baul** in a local train, “When silence would swallow non-silence ...”. The song was composed by an illiterate person Lalon (a saint/baul, 19th. C. Bengal). [*Mitra noted Bharat’s reading list; he was referring to S.N. Ganguly’s Culture, Communication and Silence (Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, XXIX: 2. 1968), Shefali Moitra’s Feminist thought, Androcentrism, Communication and Objectivity (2002) and Kalidas Bhattacharya-Shefali Moitra correspondences on silence*]

Canto IV

Remedy?

IV.1 The ultimate diagnosis

Let me tell you something about Mitra. After reading Laing, he once developed a peculiar approach to his therapeutic procedures. He practiced anti-psychiatry and then he read **Foucault**'s work on madness – after that, he turned to Lacanian psychoanalysis and had become a strong supporter of **Ashis Nandy**. He did not believe in absolute “scientific universal truth” or international norm for categorizing mental diseases as according to him, everything is a representational fact – facts were represented according the perspective-dependant perceptions of human observer in the context of certain space and time. We are just playing with only contingent constructed “truths”.

Bharat and Mitra had some interactive compatibility. Mitra knew the epistemological position of Bharat, as there was an academic mutual intelligibility in between them. Mitra was especially interested in Bharat's anti-Chomskian hypothesis on *Crippled Creativity*.

Now it was a turn for Mitra to diagnose Bharat. He said it is repudiation – a case of rejection, not of repression. Bharat was rejecting the entire symbolic order and there was no visible metaphoric or metonymic supplement for the hole (the absence of symbolic order) that was created in his psyche. It was a complete hole without any trace of so called “normal” speaking. Therefore, though Mitra categorized it as *Psychosis* or foreclosure following Lacan, he wanted to put the name of the disease under erasure. Naming diseases, the categorizations, order of things – everything was undecided. Mitra was suffering from acute aporia – he was living within the (un)truth-room of

decidable undecidables (facts/fiction). He could not make any topographical map of Bharat's mind. What would be the remedy then?

“Don't disturb Bharat's truth room, his own little box of silence. Leave him in his own truth-room. Let us try to enrich his truth-room instead of fitting him in a so-called normal Procrustean bed”, thus spoke Mitra.

IV.2 The ultimate remedy?

A reproduction of Ryman's painting (*untitled*) was hanging in the wall by defeating the logic of optics. Bharat was sitting by erecting his spinal cord. A nameless bud was put in front of him. *The Branches*¹ was played in the CD. Sometimes after, it was Bergman's *Silence*, which was shown to Bharat. When Bach's *Goldberg Variation* was played at the moment of lesbian tension between two sisters in the film, Bharat was activated. He was massaging his breasts, the result of his adolescent *Gynecomastia*. Bharat then hugged Pancajani in front of Mitra. *Nietzsche* appeared to him in the film: first, for the licensed (im)morality due to the death of god and then for the historical construction of “soul”, “ghost”, “specter” – the inner self – due to internalization of outside threat and violence. The last word of the film was *hadiék* – none knew that language, however we were told that the meaning of that word was soul.

At this moment, Bharat had changed his sitting position – he was kneeling down – his posture was just like an animal. He was massaging his breasts. Frustrated Pancajani, disturbed by Bharat's act, took Mitra to another room of her flat. Pancajani is expecting a super-woman, a heroine from Mitra. When they are involved in intercourse, Pancajani heard a voice – the voice of Brecht's Galileo: “*Unfortunate is the country that needs a hero to be rescued*”. Pancajani refused to participate further . . . The compatible rhythm between Mitra and Pancajani was broken.

Mitra then put a DVD of *City Lights* and at the moment of the last scene of the movie, when Chaplin biting the rose-stick was recognized in retrospection by the visually cured lady, Mitra again played John's *Branches* in the recorder. Bharat was astonishingly viewing the big close up of Chaplin and

¹A John Cage composition devised with the aid of the Chinese *I-Ching*, the Book of Changes, involving plants to be played

hearing the Branches.

A convulsion occurred in the body of Bharat. He was witnessing the bud – that was blossoming. Bharat was hearing the sounds of blossoming. He was then hearing the sub-sonic sounds . . . He was shouting a word, *sphota* (something equivalent to “spark”), a key term in *Bhartrihari*’s linguistic philosophy.