The 19th-Century Kobigaan Performances with Special Reference to Anthony Fhiringhee

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ABSTRACT:

The 19th century Bengal was promenading under the influences of various factors like the Bengal Renaissance of various literates and the Babu culture of the nouveau rich. It was also the time when the countryfolks came to Calcutta seeking jobs, imbibing elements of folk art with popular culture. Soon with the transition of time, there arrived a stage when the artisans were more engrossed with the cash economy of urban life. Thus, Calcutta became a hub for different art forms and musical cultures, amongst them was Kobigaan. A musical duel among the poets, it became an enlightening form of entertainment amongst the Bengali literates and they would frequently hold Kobilorai sessions in temples. Kobigaan rose in prominence around the period of colonial Bengal of 18th and early 19th centuries. Kobigaan was seen as a concoction of Vaishnavite poetry with religious and ritualistic themes combined with satire. It was also the time when Bengal Province was witnessing the influx of many cultural, political and sociological episodes. This research is a descriptive study of Kobilorai and Kobiyal Anthony Fhiringee from the nationalist lenses. Using qualitative and descriptive methodologies, the research performs a holistic study on the rise of the popularity of the Kobigaan performances during the nationalist hour, and analyses through the lenses of Cultural Nationalism the treatment of the 19th century kaviyals towards the Portuguese poet Hensman Anthony.

Keywords: Kobigaan, music, folk music, 19th century Bengal, Bengal Renaissance, Nationalism, entertainment, Bengali literates, Anthony Fhiringhee.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Music is an epitome representation of human invention which carries the essence of culture. It is a powerful medium of expression evoking thoughts and emotions. It acts as the repository of culture. Over time, music has undergone many evolutions through various ages and periods of development of society but it continues to serve the same purpose as it did years ago. It continues to resonate with the song of love and transience. The visual representation of which we can notice in Srijit Mukherjee's movie 'Jatiswar' (Mukherji, 2014), where the director carefully tried to craft the transformation of music with its accompanying instruments from Kirtaan, Tappa, Kobigaan to Rabindra-sangeet to Bengali rock music and band culture, which is responsible for the advent of new culture among the youths and it originated because of the process of acculturation. Music breaks the language barrier and connects people. Our study focuses on the prominent form of entertainment among the Bengali literates of the 18th century, Kobigaan (or the poetic duel). But before we diverge into that, we should first understand the various periods of transition

in Bengali music. Bengali music has witnessed various progressions over time, and it can be roughly categorized into four heads:

- **Folk Music:** Folk music can be considered as the repository of archaism and it documents the culture, beliefs, language, literature, and other traits of the rural people. They are the outcome of the relationship between man and his environment. Among the various forms of Bengali folk music, Baul (Datta, 1978) is widely known and it is still practiced today in parts of West Bengal and Bangladesh. The lyrics of Baul are not based on any specific religion, but rather on the philosophy of life and a set of beliefs. It preaches secularism and religious tolerance. The singers usually wear saffron-colored loose robes and carry Ektaara, a single-stringed musical instrument along with them as they travel from one village to another. Baul bears the philosophy of society. The biographical musical drama by Goutam Ghose '*Moner Manush*' (Ghose, 2010), is based on the life of the famous Bengali poet and philosopher, who later became a Baul singer*, Lalon Fhakir* serves as a visual text about Baul and the poesy of Baul lyrics. It also explicitly discusses the religious tensions and the stigma that corrupted the rural areas during the time of the Bengal Renaissance (Mondal, 2020). The movie is based on the novel by Sunil Gangopadhyay on the titular name (Gangopadhyay, 2008).
  Kirtaan is folk as well as religious music which was traditionally based on the love ballads of Radha-Krishna, later there arose another branch in Kirtaan that devoted its lyrical compositions to Goddess Kali. Bhatiali gaan is prominent in the banks of Bangladesh and it is a song of the boatmen and the fishermen, their journey, and their longings. It pirouettes around water: its availability and scarcity. There is also another form of folk music dedicated to a tribal community residing in North Bengal 'Rajbhonshee', called Bhawaia, sung with Dotara, a double-stringed musical instrument. Bhawaia mirrors the regional psycho-social character of an individual.

- **Traditional Urban Music**: It arose in Calcutta fused with the folk element and rose in prominence in colonial Bengal. It includes Tappa and Kobigaan. Tappa is based on Hindustani ragas while Kobigaan is based on Hindu scriptures and mythological tales.

- **Songs based on musical personalities:** These arose in the later part of the mid-19th century when famous Bengali literates would write poems and poesis and musical adaptations of them would be performed. It is said that Rabindranath Tagore has written more than 2500 songs and today they are referred to as Rabindra-sangeet. These verses are inspired by Hindu scriptures, folk renditions, western influences, and many more. Kobi Nazrul was known for his poetic patriotism and has written songs like 'Shoshan e Jagiche Shyama Maa', 'Pashaner Bhangale Ghum', and many more. The musical adaptations of Kobi Nazrul's verses are referred to as Nazrul-geet.

- **Adhunik Gaan or Bengali modern music**: It reached the spotlight around the 1930s and it was a culmination of talented musicians and singers with varying compositional elements. Some of the personalities from Bangla Adhunik Gaan are Hemanta Mukherjee, Asha Bhosle, Lata Mangeshkar, Sandhya Mukherjee, Shyamal Mitra, and many more.

Kobigaan (Basu, 2017) arose at a time when Bengal was undergoing radical changes within the society to relinquish the cultural anarchism of the past. With musical motifs ranging from parlor gossip to political

affairs, the art form was used in multitudes of platforms from entertainment to education. The reason I have selected this subject is because of its myriad of oral tales that encompass mythological, humanitarian, and egalitarian themes. And Anthony Fhiringee (Ghosh, 2022) is a notable figure from the world of Kobilorai, being a Portuguese merchant and foreign to the culture and language of Bengalis, established himself as one of the influential Kaviyals and indulged in musical duels with famous Kaviyals like Ram Basu and Bhola Moira.

Kobigaan or Kobilorai has the essence of theatre performance, infused with verse dueling and dance movements. At the time when salon musical performance was prominent amongst the nouveau riche milieu of Bengal society, Kobilorai used open spaces for their performances.
In contemporary times, Kobigaan is still practiced in parts of West Bengal, Southeast Assam, and Bangladesh.

Dr. Sushil Kumar Dey explains how the existence of Kobigaan began around the 18th century but the period between 1760 and 1830 witnessed a massive increase of kaviyals. With the introduction of the printing press in the mid-18th century, there was tension among the inhabitants to disaffiliate from religious content and focus on the more pressing matter of the political chaos of that time, so it submerged along the lines.

A number of notable Bengali films were produced during the period of 1970s and 1980s on the prominent kobiyal figures and sometimes using circumstantial incorporation of the performance within the cinematic narrative(Basu, 2013) like the 1967 Anthony Fhiringee movie by Sunil Banerjee (Banerjee S. , 1967) based on the poet Anthony Fhiringee, and the 1967 movie by Tarun Majumdar which addresses one of the ignoble Indian practices, Child marriage (Majumdar, 1967). There is mention of Mukunda Das's song *'Chhere Dao Reshmi Churi'*, which was sung by Sabitabrata Dutta. Mukunda Das was a famous Bengali poet and freedom fighter who spread the Swadeshi movement in the rural parts of West Bengal. In the later part of his life, he had taken up Kobigaan and composed many ballads (Banerjee S. , 2022) There was also a 1977 Bengali biopic film directed by Piyush Ganguly, starring yesteryear's heartthrob Uttam Kumar on the Kobiyal Bhola Moira (Ganguly, 1977). There is also a recent 2014's cinematic spin-off on the same poet by Srijit Mukherjee in the context of urban tales (Mukherji, 2014).

Bengal peasantry possesses such an affluent store of folk music with simple tunes and harmonious melodies, incorporating religious piety with egalitarian and philosophical themes.

OBJECTIVES:
The objective of this study:
1. To perform an analytical study of Kobigaan.
2. To study the integration of variances of spaces in musical performances, chiefly the salon music of the nouveau riche Bengalis and Kobigaan of rising Bengali literates performed in temples and 'streets'.
3. To study the life and Kavilorai sessions of Kaviyal Anthony Fhiringee.
4. To analyse the treatment of other fellow Kaviyals towards Kaviyal Anthony Fhiringee from a nationalistic approach.

METHODOLOGY:

Research work constitutes employing various methodologies to properly scrutinize their findings to validate their research data. Thus, for my research, the following methodologies have been used:

Qualitative method:

Qualititaive Method is engaged to understand the beliefs and experiences of people that shaped their attitudes and behaviou. (Pathak, Jena, & Kalra, 2013). Qualitative research data can be obtained from documents, case studies, artifacts, and many more. I have employed this method to gather extensive data on folk songs, Kobigaan and Kobiaals, and cultural practices through secondary data (like books, online websites, and visual texts).

Descriptive method:

"The Descriptive Research method involves observing and collecting data on a given topic without attempting to infer cause-and-effect relationships" (Sirisilla, 2023) The findings of the Descriptive Research method provide valuable insight into the research topic allowing the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the topic. I have employed this method to validate my research problem by performing an extensive study on the folk elements of Bengali music and Kobigaan, a musical duel of the poets of 19th-century Bengal. My study is focused on West Bengal and the affluent practice of Kobigaan during the 18th and 19th centuries and identifying the underlying socio-economic politics through satiric verses exchanged during the musical performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Given below are some of the texts (including visual texts) that I have primarily used for my study on this chosen arena:

Madan Bondhopadhay's Kobiyal Antony Fhiringee:

The novel is based on the life and works of Sir Hensman Anthony, also known as Anthony Fhiringee (Majumdar, 1967) (Bondhopadhay, 1958). The text illustrates his life and the journey following which he received the title of Kobiyal and his face-offs with the other prominent kobiyals of his time. This novel serves as the first reference in literature and the 1967 Sunil Bandhpadhay's film Anthony Fhiringee (Banerjee S. , 1967) and 2014 Srijit Mukherjee's Jatiswar (Mukherji, 2014) is based on this novel.

Priyanka Basu's Becoming 'folk': religion. Protest and cultural communism in the Kabigaan of Ramesh Sil and Gumani Dewan: Dr. Priyanka Basu has performed relatively notable jottings on Bengali folk music, especially Kobigaan. In this composition which was published in the journal of 2017's South Asian History and Culture, she discusses how Kobigaan which was originally associated with the 'folk' genre underwent concurrent changes in its socio-political themes and stressed the Kabilorai sessions of Ramesh Sil and Gumani Dewan, who used it to fuel the minds of the citizens of social India. The author calls kabigaan as 'repository of vernacular minds.' The author also discusses how colorful egalitarian, anti-capitalistic, and avant-garde ideas and messages were channeled through kabigaan verses.

Dr. Priyanka Basu's Before the dance: "Nascent" Dance movements in non-dance performances: the case of Kobigaan: Released in the year 2013 in the Journal of Emerging Dance Studies, this article discusses how Kabigaan was merely not limited to the verse dueling component of the musical

performance but certain bodily gestures were followed during the Kobilorai sessions to add visual treat and comical demeanor to the opponent. In this article, Dr. Priyanka Basu performs an analytical study of the physical and facial expressions of Kobilorai and their associations with the temperament of the verses. It tries to explain why it was 'deemed as theatre genres' in certain instances.

Satyajit Ray's 1958 film Jalsaghar: 'The Music Room' (Ray, 1958)was made in the timeframe between the second and third movie of the Apu trilogy (Ray, Apu Trilogy, 1959) and is the first film that maneuvers a substantial infusion of classical Indian music and dancing. It is an ornate story about the transposition of history which runs parallel to his later film, 1977's 'Shatranj ke Khiladi' (The Chess Player) (Ray, Shatranj ke Khiladi, 1977). The story focuses on a regal lord, Biswambhar Roy (played by Chabbi Biswas), in the center of art and politics in slow decline, encapsulating the conflict between feudalism and capitalism (or the rising bourgeois class). The director uses the film to portray the decadence of the aristocratic class and their divertissement extravaganza with the expansion of East India Company (instilled in the cinema through the moneylender) and utilizes musical sequences (performed by various musical maestros like Pandit Ravi Shankar, Ustad Bismillah, Begum Akhtar and many more) to unfold the narrative of the film. The film is based on a short story authored by Tarashankar Bandhopadhay and won the Presidential Award for Best Film in New Delhi. Incidentally, the film was shot in the palace of Upendra Narayan, the same individual on whom the author has written his short story upon.

Srijit Mukherjee's 'Jatiswar': Released in the year 2014, this film serves as a cinematic spin-off of the tale of Anthony Fhiringee as a historic-mystic character unfurling dust from the sepia pages of history. The film is based on historical research performed by the director and depicts the evolution of Bengali music spreading the narration over two centuries through modern-day research student Rohit and Kushal Hazra, a librarian who suffers from a debilitating disease with the recollections of his past life as Hensman Anthony. With comfortable crisscrossing across two timelines, the film focuses on the life of the Portuguese merchant and his Kobilorai sessions with Ram Basu and Bhola Moira.

Sunil Bondhopadhay's 1967 film Anthony Fhiringhee: The film is based on the novel of the titular name by Madan Bondhopadhay (Bondhopadhay, 1958), following the life of Anthony (played by yesteryear's hero Uttam Kumar) and his introduction to Kobilorai. With few alterations from the original text, the film illustrates his ardent admiration of Kobigaan highlighting few of his notable Kobilorais and the social ostracization he endured as a foreigner.

Saugata Bhaduri's 'Polycoloniality': The 2020 text Polycoloniality (Bhaduri, 2020) studies the non-British European functionaries who inhabited Bengal's land during the colonial period and their miscellaneous activities- chiefly Portuguese, the French, the Swedish, the Dutch, and many more in a comparative frame with the English, who were scrambling for power in Bengal's land.

CHAPTER 2

In the former chapter, we have bandied how music fills up the needful indigeneity of any culture, hoisting artistic and literal knowledge within itself, music brings people together. We have wandered onto the land of Bengal and witnessed the musical elaboration from folk musical forms to *Adhunik Bangla gaan* and how colorful factors were bestowed to the metamorphosis of music through the passage of time. The 18th and 19th century Bengal was promenading under the maestros from multitudinous art forms, one similar that we will be probing into is the salon or salon music that was isolated to the upper-class gentry or feudal lords. The English- educated bourgeoise stood in discrepancy to their lavish culture and with the demise

of feudalism, they perceived the need to communalize music and lead the way to 'conference' or '*sammelan*' musical performances.

2.1 From Salon soirees to Kabilorai

The 18th-century polycolonial Bengal society (Bhaduri, 2020) was pirouetting under the impact of various social transformations which reflects the attempts made by the people to communalize music (Bhattacharyya, 2011)

With the demise of the Mughal empire under the reign of Muhammed Shah leading to fierce circumstances, the courtesans, musicians, and dancers locomoted to hubs seeking refuge and patronage deserting North Indian conurbations. These artisans found patrons in Bombay, Lucknow, and Calcutta. Bengal soon grew into mosaics of various cultural fetes. And the nouveau riche milieu of Calcutta lived in the nocturnal bouts of musical soirees and recitals. These musicians and dancers brought forth North Indian classical musical heritage into the realms of North Calcutta and they were patronized by the elite class '*Babus*'[1] (Ghosh A. , 2002). Soon a 'salon' musical tradition was established where the musicians residing in Kothas began holding exotic private performances for the Bengali elites (Banerjee S. , 1989)

Bengal had long before established connections with the Mughal Empire. Through the chronicles of Minhaj-al-Siraj, we learn about the conquest of Muhammad Bakhtiyar in 1204 during the reign of the Sena dynasty (who ruled Bengal during the 11th and 12th centuries) which marked the entry of the Perso-Islamic political ideas into Bengal. The brute force that Mohammed Bakhtiyar and his armies displayed over the defeated Bengalis overwhelmed the local population who were unaccustomed to such naked display of power. As Peter Hardy, a Lecturer and a Reader at the School of Oriental and African Studies, judiciously states how the Muslim ruler ruled the land because the conquered their lands without any apathy. (Hardy, 1972). By the end of the 13th century, Bengal was conquered by the Turkish, Muslim Sultanates, and Sufis with politically radical models that differed from the Hindu population formerly ruled by the Sena Dynasty. Bengal was ruled by the Sultanates until a powerful noble, Shams al-Din Ilyas Shah, wrestled for Bengal's independence in 1342 leading to a fierce battle between Sultan Firuz Tughluq however the latter failed to amass the delta. In the following years, an emerging ruler conquered the presence of the rising conflicts between the Indo-Turkish ruling class and Hindu Bengali society at the beginning of the 15th century. He dwindled the political domination of the influential Muslim elites but his son Jadu (later named Sultan Jalal al-Din Muhammed as he adopted Islam religion) reversed his father's policy respecting the Chisti Sufis in Bengal and adopted Hanafi legal tradition. The land of Bengal was witnessing a plethora of internal conflicts with sovereignty whilst the Bengali Hindus were rising above as administrators. However, the independence of Bengal was annexed after almost a century following the rule of Jal al-din Mohammed, when the Timurid Prince Babur defeated Sultan Nasiruddin Nasrat during the Battle of Ghaghra and captured Bengal in 1529. This marked the beginning of the transmission of cultural composites between Bengal and the Mughal Empire. (M. Eaton, 1993)

The year 1856 witnessed the establishment of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah on the outskirts of Calcutta, near the banks of Hooghly River, in Matia Burj[2] (Tankha & Allana, 2007). After his banishment from Lucknow, Nawab Wajid Ali Shah, along with his association of musicians were harbored in Matia Burj where he built up several beautiful Kothas transplanting the lavish Islamic culture from Lucknow to Northern Calcutta (Shah, 2017). The 1977 cinema by Satyajit Ray, 'Shatranj ke Khiladi' performs the cinematic

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[1] an honorific term used for the Zamindari estate owners
[2] a name given by the locale because of the presence of a high risen earthen mound situated in that place.

representation of Nawab Wajid Ali Khan where he is enthralled as the great patron of arts as he battles for arts in a dwindling society. The character is played by the veteran actor Amjad Khan.

Nautch[3] **performances** (Mukherjee, 2017), **Mujras**[4] (Rege, 2000), **Khyal**[5], **Thumris**[6] (Manuel, 1986), **Tappa**[7], **Kathak**[8] (Chaudhuri, 1973) were nurturing its popularity among its patrons. The elites supported and financed the court singers and became their customers with regular visits to their kothas for musical galas. The landed gentlemen class began to embrace these Mughal darbar musical fetes for the approval of the ruling class. (Bhattacharya, 2011). Often, British officers would be invited to the private sessions of the glittering nautch performances held in *jalsaghars* of the aristocratic Bengali houses during festive occasions. One such instance can be drawn back to William Hickey's report in the Bengal Gazette for the nautch performances in Raja Nabakrishna Deb's mansion during Miss Wrangham's birthday where he vividly explained the elegance of the performances chiefly the galas of the female singers (Dutta, 2008). Kothas were not merely a venue for musical performances for the congregates of Bengali elites but also a place for relaxation and conversations where music and luxuriant courtesans formed the backdrop of the atmosphere. Soon, North Indian classical music was slowly becoming an insignia of the upper-class gentry.

The 1943 Bengal Famine brought about anguish and suffering among the inhabitants of Bengal and people were starving from the basic needs of life. It was around the same time that Calcutta witnessed an unprecedented growth in the number of prostitutes. There were queer cases of parents selling off their daughters for a meager number of necessities while the widows and the unmarried daughters arrived in Calcutta in search of job opportunities and ended up in the brothel (Banerjee, 1993)

Nevertheless, Bengal Famine was not to be blamed centrally for propelling disparate brackets of women into this business. The decline of feudalism in Bengal contributed to a significant number of courtesans resorting to brothels since they were losing their older patrons of art. Following the succession of events, the occupation was beginning to get stigmatized in Bengal society. The residents started to view the changes through Manichean[9] lenses. Peter Lamarche Manuel affirms the timeframe from 1870 to 1920 as 'the period of transition' from feudal to bourgeois patronage of art (Manuel, 1989).

Change is inevitable in any cultural expression and culture is always in the act of alteration. Henceforth, feudal lords were replaced by the new generation of English-speaking '*Bhadraloks*' (Banerjee S. , 1993). They became the new patrons of art in the rising Bengal society under colonial administration and were resolved to sculpt a new musical culture of their own without the interference of the cultural anarchy of the aristocrats. The Bengal Renaissance was fueled by the need for a '*Hinduised*' identity during the period of colonialism. (Bhattacharya, 2011). The 1958 Bengali film by Satyajit Ray 'Jalsaghar' (The Music Room) encapsulated the conflict between feudalism and capitalism. Set against the backdrop of aristocracy on the decline in the world of finances, the story was intricately woven around idle landlord, Biswambhar

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[3] the word is an anglicized version of the word 'Nach' which finds its roots in the Sanskrit terminology 'Nritya'

[4] it is a form of dance that was born in the tradition of courtesans during Mughal era. In the period of Mughal rule, Mujra was preserved as a familial artistic tradition passed from mother to daughter. The Mujra sessions were performed in houses called Kothas

[5] the term finds its origin in Arabic meaning 'imagination. It is a modern genre of classical vocal music in North India

[6] romantic ballads with lyrical compositions filled with girl's fondness and piety for Lord Krishna

[7] a form of Indian semi-classic vocal composition filled with romantic ballads

[8] Kathak is a form of Indian Classical Dance performance performed at Mughal darbars.

[9] It refers to the Manichean idea of dualism (Hutter, 1993), which originated from Manichean philosophy of the existence of two opposing thoughts. It is a gnosticism religion founded in the Sasanian Empire, the Empire of Iranians, by the 3rd-century prophet Mani)

Roy who continued to dissipate himself in the lavishness of privileged lifestyle. The film is political in the sense that it depicts the transmission of power from the hands of the zamindars to the moneylender (who represents the rising bourgeoisie) and it uses several cinematic motifs like the scene where the smoke coming out of the neighbor's motor vehicle faded the puissant elephant that the zamindar obstinately upholds to represent the growth of the new machine dominated age, the river by the Zamindar's palace which swallows his family and his land connotes the decline of aristocracy. Biswambhar Roy devoting his expenses to the lavish musical soirees parallels the Babus who would spend bouts of their finances in the kothas and Gangapada Bose, a commoner unlike Biswambhar, holding performances in his mansion depicts the rising middle-class threatening the anachronist lords. The moneylender, through the lenses of the film theorist Gilles Deleuze, can be called an 'attendant figure' who chaperones a historical occurrence and indulges in the narrative from time to time (Zhang, 2011). The music room itself is a character in the movie as it witnesses the transposition of history and the battle of patronage of the landlord between the moneylender, which mirrors the political situation of 19th-century Bengal.

And thus arose the *Sammelan* (or concert) culture. The transformation in the space for musical performances from Salon (or parlor or private confined spaces) to *Sammelan* (or streets) marked the emergence of the rising educated middle-class equipped with Western ideology. The reverberations of this alteration affected the socio-economic and cultural activity in Calcutta.

The events that pursued the transition of musical culture in Bengal were contemporaneous with the urban performances by folk laureates like Haru Thakur, Ram Basu, and Bhola Moira in Kobigaan.

2.2 Kobigaan of the 18th century

Ancient Indian society has a rich myriad of oral tales encompassing various mythological, humanitarian, and egalitarian themes nurturing specific bordering amenities and its socio-cultural aspects which has kept the nation apart from the globe. These oral tales comprise historical and rudimentary aspects of our culture and nation. When the colonizers treaded on Indian soil in the year 1608AD, they perceived the divine necessity to educate and civilize the Indians although their primary motive was trading interests. They felt the Indians were lurching in darkness and it is 'The White Men's burden' (referring to Rudyard Kipling's 1899 poem 'The White Men's Burden') to contort the natives into the rigid normative of the imperialists. But India possesses multi-dimensional aesthetics which participate in the establishment of its indigeneity. Indian oral traditions are not merely a medium of individual expressions that provide room for everyone to savor the allocation of their respective space but also it is well-enriched with allegorical components that openly criticize or expose human maneuvers. Hence, when the British colonizers critiqued the natives for the claustrophobe ambiance, their interest was at the same time piqued by the cultural traditions. Several archival records disclose their encounters with the festivities of the Indians. One such cultural display they attended was Kobigaan of 19th century Bengal (Dey, 2016).

Kobigaan or Kobilorai is a Bengali folk performance where poets sing and perform musical verse-dueling against each other in a court filled with attendees. It involves the use of traditional musical instruments and the debate is usually held within two troupes which consist of *Kobiyals* (or Sarkar as it is called in Bangladesh), who are the leading poets, and *Dohaars*, they are the accompanying singers who chime with the words of their leaders. And *Dhuli* or the drummers who hold a significant role amongst the Dohaars and set the melody for the Kobigaan session.

"Krishtey aar Krishney kicchu bhinno naire re bhai
Shudhu namer phere manush pherer

Eyo kotha shuninai
Amar khuda je, Hindur hari shey
Ei dekh Shyam dariye acche
Amar manob Janam shaphal hobe jodi eyi ranga charan paai"
Translation:
"Brother, there subsists no discrepancy between Krishna and Christ
Where prayers are not simply mere chanting
But where souls swarm
Your Vishnu and my god are all the same
Behold here stands Shyam
My human entity will celebrate itself if only I had his lotus feet" (Chatterjee, 2020)

The above-mentioned is one of the famous verses dictated by Kaviyal Anthony Fhiringee in his duel with another eminent Kobiyal Ram Basu in a Kobilorai session.

Kobigaan or Kobilorai comprises several components within itself and they are:

o *Bandana*
o *Sakhi-sambad*
o *Biraha*
o *Kheur*
o *Lahar*

The Kaviyals are announced their subject at the very onset of the performance and they initiate the session by *Bandana* or *Gurudever geet*. *Bandana* is a prayer song that is usually devoted to Hindu gods and goddesses and sometimes the Kaviyal chooses *Gurudever Geet* which is a prayer song for their gurus or sage. The next part is *Sakhi-sambad* where the poets sing ballads for Radha-Krishna accompanied by dancing gestures through small footsteps and emotional re-enactments to cannotise the symbolism of Radha and her beau Krishna. The audience reacts in enthusiasm and sheer joy, while the dohaars break into tears and with their arms flung open embracing the Kaviyals as the female audience ululates. This episode epitomizes the gratitude and respect of the audience for the laureates (Basu, 2013). The *Sakhi-sambad* or the song narratives of the passionate fondness of Radha and Krishna are marked by the hefty usage of stereotypical limb movements that illustrate playing flute, lifting *kalsi* (or water vase), quiet footsteps of their nocturnal liaisons and many more. The next segment of Kobigaan is *Biraha* where the poets chant melodies of the mortal pangs authored by writers and poets. With dramatic gestures signifying pain, elation, and sorrow, the audience reacts accordingly to the versatility of the performer. *Kheur* was renowned in the 17th-century urban perimeters of Krishnagar, patronized by Raja Krishnachandra, it consists of metaphorical and erotic verses of the love songs of gods and goddesses with mild utilization of profanity by the Kaviyals. Finally, the competitive part of Kabigaan or Kobilorai is *Lahar*. The following is a delineation of *Lahar*, where the famous Kaviyal Bhola Moira, in a room full of people, attacks Anthony Fhiringee on his hybridity of nature.

"Keo ba korchen Baristery
Keo ba korchen Ministery
Elem er jore, keo ba korchen yojgiri
Ei betra pujor bari, pujor lobh e nacchte eseche."
Translation:
"Some people aspire to be a barrister

Some people aspire to be a minister
Man, in accordance with his capability, is aspiring to make a name.
Behold the presence of this man, tempted by the colorful festivities, who has set foot in the temple to waltz amongst us."

Lahar is the combative segment where the Kaviyals trivialize each other through quick-witted, spontaneous verses performing short comic digs with comical body movements belittling each other. Sometimes blatant and abusive insults are hurled at each other as the audience cheers and gasp in excitement. For instance, Kaviyal Anthony Fhiringee was usually, in a Kobilorai session, addressed with verses like *"Tui beta jaat fhiringee."* Dr. Priyanka Basu in her journal 'Before the dance: "Nascent" Dance movements in non-dance performances: the case of Kobigaan' documents how often the local audiences would demand Lahar, which the 'Bhadraloks would refer as 'vulgar.' W.Ward, a Baptist Missionary referred to Lahar performances as 'obscene' (Basu, Before the Dance: "Nascent" Dance Movments in non-dance performances: The case of Kobigaan, 2013). On one occasion in the Saraswati puja of 1825, during a live performance, a poet addressed the officials who were trying to halt the session:

"beta pathey hagey aar chok rangaye"

Translation:

"he who expels in public and imperils others"

Kobilorai is more than a verse-dueling contest among the poets and their accompanying singers. It is a theatrical performance involving verses and dance movements. Within a limited time frame, the *Kaviyals* deliver verses on allocated themes and compete against each other with witty deliverance. The performance depends upon spontaneity and accelerated orchestration. Dance movements are key to the entertainment of the audiences. Employing vigorous waist movements, and gesticulating torso with hand movements according to the verses being sung engage the focus and attention of the audience. In this context, **Lacan's gaze theory** (Felluga, 2015) can be applied to the power dynamics in Kobigaan performances. The Kaviyal through direct eye contact with the audience addresses a certain desire and 'demand' from them to seize the audience's focus onto their performance, subjecting the performers potentially to the projections of desire and fantasy. The performer in turn is being subjected to the audience's gaze. The male Kaviyal usually displays suggestive body movements capturing the attendees and complementing their visual pleasure. Kobigaan is inevitably a male-populated art form but there is no gender bias in action and there are few collective numbers of female performers.

Kobigaan developed in the 18th century and soon it gained popularity amongst the new rising middle-class Calcutta literates. The folk performance grew in the pastoral lands of Bengal. Emerged from the opulent folk culture of the pastoral lands, Kobilorai sings tales of the ordinary, poor, and marginalized sections of the society It is similar to Kalighat paintings where the rural artisans locomoted to Calcutta residing around the locales of Kalighat Temple selling Mill-based paper paintings to the devotees to endure the economy, Kabigaan traditions culminated through the rural parts and reached the capital to be patronized by the Babus and the rising middle class. Often the nouveau riche Bengalis would find themselves at the butt end of the jokes and satires. Bhola Moira was once invited to a rich miser patron's mansion where he insisted to perform a session. With an impromptu composition, the kaviyal sang on the pinchpenny nature of the host.

Kobigaan was a traditional media of communication among the masses in 19th-century Bengal. Supplemented with humanitarian, philosophical, and secular messages, the art form was also used in

political conventions. In March 1945, Ramesh Sil and Gumani Dewan, two affluent kaviyals were invited to Kabilorai session in All Bengal Progressive Writers and Artistes' Convention to deliver on the messages of communism and anti-capitalism through their 'Farmer vs Landlord' debate (Basu, 2017).

The Kabigaan sessions disseminate wisdom and knowledge through entertainment where the responses of the performers are spontaneous, shaped by their thoughts and ideologies. Prior to holding Kobilorai sessions, the aspiring kaviyals are taken under the wing of established kaviyals (like Haru Thakur took Bhabani Ben, Nilu Thakur and Bhola Moira under him) and they are educated through various religious and mythological Sanskritised scriptures. The Kaviyals are fluent in Vedas, Puranas, philosophy, geography, cosmology, locale idioms and phrases, Quran and politics. Their verses consist of satires, humor, riddles, and allegories serving the dual purpose of Kobigaan: education and entertainment. The Kaviyals, with exaggerated gestures, seldom use folk tales and stories of the common man from various aspects of life and history, drawing oral caricatures of the tales and stories of man adding to the entertainment of the audiences. They express their thoughts, ideas, and plights through questions and answers which are attended by hordes of men. Sometimes these sessions last longer and go on for three days and three nights.

Deeply rooted in philosophy, enigmas in scriptures, or scandalous interludes in a nouveau riche's parlor, it sheds light on the subjects that do not make it to the broad daylight. Through its verses, it infuses egalitarian messages while nourishing religious sanctitude. Verbal jugglery remains vital to the Kobilorai, with logic, humor, and satire coated on the stark contrasting school of thoughts, the laureates procure the argument.

Music is incomplete without its integral part, musical instruments. Like all forms of music, Kabigaan, as discussed earlier, involves the assiduous synergism of instruments. Initially, at the beginning of the 19th century, the traditional Dhaak[10] was used to chorale with the *dohaars* but with the progression of time, evolution in the musical instruments occurred. In contemporary times, the performers use Dhol, keyboards, harmonium, and kaansi to coordinate with the rhythm of the song.

One of the distinct features of Kabigaan is that it abducts devotional ballads of Hindu gods and goddesses from the mythical world surrounding the four corners of the temple and presents them to the masses of people irrespective of their sociocultural status in society. Religious piety sung with intelligentsia motifs constitutes the conjugal part of the Kobilorai and is seldom attended by merchants and travelers and sometimes Britishers. Mythological tales and devotional ballads are sung merging with real-life characters from the contemporary Bengali assembly drawn parallel to immortal divine deities almost leading to the 'humanization' of religious icons. Adaptations of religious subjects, imagining the deities through real-life caricatures can be understood through **symbolic interactionism** (term coined by American sociologist Herbert Blumer in 1937) (Dennis & Martin, 2007) where circumstances and allegories create shared understandings of human experiences. Symbolic interactionism is a sociological theory that proposes that humans develop their comprehension of the world through their synergies with others which results in the formation of meanings. In Kavigaan, the contrast between humans and their relationships with deities is a symbolic representation of human experiences and relationships. Furthermore, this phenomenon can also be understood through **Emile Durkheim's concept of myth and ritual**. According to Emile Durkheim, the concept of myth and ritual (Seagal, 1980) are intertwined religious practices that fortify social bonds creating a shared sense of identity or solidarity. Comparison of human beings and their relationships with

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[10] it is a large drum-shaped barrel that is played by using elongated sticks on a spherical structured flat surface.

that of gods and goddesses can be witnessed as myth-making that facilitates the creation of a shared sense of the values and beliefs in the society. The utilization of generating the contrasts can be understood as a form of ritual that reinforces a sense of solidarity among the individuals. These religious icons and imagery drawn parallel to humane experiences emphasize the importance of symbols that creates a shared language.

Kavigaan reiterates the tales of high society domestic infidelity in sarcastic pleasure and Bengali babu, his wife and mistress often become the common motifs of humoristic narratives and scuffles.

Dr. Priyanka Babu states that Kobigaan is often associated with the 'folk' genre (Basu, 2017) although the performance on many such occasions has displayed its versatility of narratives and themes, starting from parlor gossip reenactments to religious sanctity to addressing political conventions. But there were also a few writers such as Ishwar Chandra Gupta and Manmohan Babu, who never stressed the categorization of Kabigaan as folk but rather saw it as a tool that collects and preserves songs and culture of the Bengali tradition. The famous Bengali writer Ishwar Chandra Bidyasagar's comment on Kobigaan and Bhola Moira reached the spotlight, where he is in all praise of the tradition of the performance session and of the well-loved orator Bhola Moira. Rabindranath Tagore had many a time written on Kobigaan and Baul galas with much acknowledgment and admiration.

Kobigaan has now reached the patronage of the masses as well as the government and is generally performed during festivities or cultural occasions. After the partition of India into East Pakistan and West Pakistan, the art form is now practiced on the soil of Bangladesh.

Kobigaan is a form of traditional media and entertainment that orates stories, folk tales, and folk sayings. At the core, it aims to educate and entertain the audience with visual pleasure, irrespective of one's socio-cultural and economic status quo in the society creating a sense of bonding amongst the members of the community.

In the upcoming chapter, we will be reading about the life of Kaviyal Anthony Fhiringee. Chapter 3 will also engage in the active scrutinization of various kabilorai plenaries that he participated in against major kaviyals of his time like Ram Basu and Bhola Moira, and how Hensman Anthony was treated by the other Kaviyals of his time from the nationalistic approach.

CHAPTER 3

The previous chapter through an elongated dossier, explains the circumstances because of which 19th century Bengal witnessed a shift from a salon musical performance culture to a conference or sammelan culture when the powers of feudal lords diminished and the land of Bengal witnessed a shift in the power of hands from feudal lords or zamindars to the educated middle class who wanted to communalize music. The politics of power that led to the communalization of music accouched 'sammelan'. The events pursuing the transition of music were contemporaneous with urban performances of Kabigaan or Kabilorai by laureates like Haru Thakur, Bhabani Ben, Anthony Fhiringee, Ram Basu, Bhola Moira, and a few more kaviyals. Chapter 2 delves into the cerebral realms of Kabilorai performances and analyses the dance motifs of the kaviyals as they perform on the stage in a room full of ubiquitous audiences unbiased of societal standards. The political occurrences that succeeded in the growth of Kobigaan, as a folk medium that displays a multitude of themes in its performances from parlour gossip of the rich Bengali houses to political conventions, marked a shift in the physiognomy of Bengal during the colonial period.

In this chapter, we will be reading about one of the infamous kaviyals Anthony Fhiringee and explore the demeanor of other kaviyals towards him from nationalist lens.

3.1 Anthony Fhiringhee

"Soshur bari baaper bari eki poshak eki bhesh
Ei desher chhele ami Fhiringeero Bangladesh"

Translation:

"The abode of my father-in-law, and the abode of my father have the same apparel
I am the son of this nation, I am the Fhiringee of Bengal"

In Chapter 1, we have read how trajectories like 'the Bengal Renaissance' of Raja RamMohan Roy, Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee; 'the Babu Culture' of the nouveau riche Bengali society; and the rich folk cultural art forms of Calcutta (present-day Kolkata) ruled the land of Bengal. It influenced the popular forms of entertainment of that time. People were uprooted from the agriculture-based economy and came to Calcutta in search of job opportunities, among them majority became folk artisans. Bringing folklife from the villages to the civic led to the integration of folk art with the economy of urban life. It was around the same time when Chandannagar (earlier known as Farashdanga),[11] (Dutta D. , 2019) witnessed the magnification in the popularity of a Portuguese merchant by the name Sir Hensman Anthony. Not much is known about the life of the poet, although there are books and visual texts dedicated to his life however it is difficult to find fragments of him in the pages of history, just like Rohit vulturing the streets of Chandannagar asking the locales about the poet (in the 2014 movie Jatiswar), the readers have to scroll through the various historical texts to find countable mentions of him. The Portuguese colonial activities in Bengal began from the 1510s onwards, although Vasco Da Gama's arrival in 1428 in the land of Calicut marked the initiation of the Portuguese relationship with Bengal (Dutta D. , 2019). The Portuguese were referred to in Bengal as 'f*hiringi*' or '*harmad*'[12]. The Portuguese set foot in Bengal to acquire spices and monopolization their export in Europe. Tracing back to history, the first Portuguese mercantile contact with Bengal was made in 1512-1513, when a Portuguese trader, Martin Lucena, arrived by land route from the Indian West Coast and became a resident at Gaur, the capital of Bengal (Bhaduri, 2020). By the 1530s, Portuguese trading activity was established in Bengal, during that period Bengal had an increased commercial buoyancy due to the growth of intra-Asian trade. But after the collaboration of Portuguese forces along with the then Sultan of Bengal, Mahmud Shah against Afghan Sher Shah Suri in 1535-1536, aided them in being granted residential allocations in two chiefs ports of Bengal: Chittagong and Satgoan. And the domains of Bengal became their 'Shadow Empire'[13] (Winius, 2011). All these successions of events enhanced the relationship between Bengalis and Portuguese and the Portuguese began to set up their residential facilities there. The colonial activities in Bengal were not simply secluded in the hands of the East India Company and Portuguese, but also by the Dutch, the French, the Greeks, and the Prussians, who established themselves, and traces of their existence

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[11] it was a Portuguese colony from 1537 until the East India Company set up a factory there in 1651

[12] the word 'harmad' is a colloquial contortion of the Portuguese and Spanish word 'armada' which means a fleet of ship. 'Armada' because they came through the sea route in ships with the collaboration of Arakanese and Moghs, to carry out expeditions

[13] the term was coined by the History professor George Winius in his journal 'The "Shadow Empire" of Goa in the Bay of Bengal'

can be still found in parts of Bengal, especially in the small town of Chandannagar where Indo-French architecture can be noticed. (Dutta D. , 2019)

When the Bengali musical language was at its nascent stage, Hensman Anthony, was a "truly polycolonial figure" (mentioned by Saugata Bhaduri in his 2020 book Polycoloniality (Bhaduri, 2020). Through the term 'polycolonial' the author refers to the multiple imperial forces who were concomitantly competing against each other to colonize the same nation. According to the author, the multiple colonial forces between the early 16th century and mid-19th century displayed a lustrous conglomeration of polycoloniality, meaning the polycoloniality allowed healthy and fair bargain between the colonizers and the colonized leading to hybridization in terms of culture, cultural knowledge, and many other aspects, in both the cases) enchanted by the culture of the land, began attending Kabilorai sessions of Haru Thakur and Nilu Thakur and other affluent kaviyals of that period. Hensman Anthony or Anthony Fhiringhee was a 19th-century Bengali folk poet (kaviyal), composer, and singer. It was during those times when Bengal was experiencing a sturdy flow of nationalist movements where the citizens were resolute to communalize music, detaching themselves from the cultural anarchies of the past (as we have read about in Chapter 2). Anthony Fhiringee stood in contrast against the archetypical projection of Bengali laureates that the dominant Bengali community wanted to project. He belonged to a lineage of Portuguese merchants (except for his grandfather, who was a barrister) who settled in Bengal for trading purposes. But his perseverance to learn Bengali and participate in Kabilorai did not deter him. Arup K. Chatterjee in his 2020 journal *"Who was Anthony Firinghee? Remembering the Portuguese-origin singer who is part of Bengali folklore"* (Chatterjee, 2020) noted that Anthony's association with Kabigaan grew through his wife, Saudamini, when he held a *Kabi sammelan* held in his house on one Durga puja occasion. Enthralled by the art form, Anthony decided to learn it. Many a text compose Anthony's first encounter with Kabilorai through varying inducements. As we have read beforehand, very little can be known about the poet's life and encounters apart from prevailing knowledge of his association with Kabigaan. Nonetheless, he mastered the language with time, embracing the regalia of Bengali babu accoutrements, he resided along with the inhabitants in his abode with his wife Saudamini.

Hitherto this section, we have read how the art form Kabigaan had a handful of female performers. One amongst them was Kaviyal Joggeswari, who did not forgo the opportunity to ridicule Anthony during one of their Kabilorai sessions:

"Saheb dekhi Bangalir choddo besh e esechen"

Translation:

"Behold, the fascade of Saheb who has hand-picked the veil of Bengali"

In various occasions during the *Kobilorai* session, there were questions raised against his approbation of the Bengali apparel, to which he would reply:

"Ei Banglai bangalir beshe anonde te acchi"

Translation:

"In the realms of Bengal, I'm suffused with exhilarated with gleeful joy in the vestments of Bengali"

The 19th century Bengal society, which was witnessing a nationalist movement to forgo the cultural anarchism of the past, composed **Antonio Gramsis' Cultural hegemony** (Gottdiener, 1985) that sought to promote Bengali culture and identity after the end of feudalism and the extravaganza of North Indian musical galas. The local Kabigaan artists were a significant section of that held the hegemonic power and the idea of Hensman Anthony performing Kabilorai and amassing popularity and success was succumbing into a threat to their cultural heritage. Anthony being ridiculed by other kaviyals on grounds of wearing

the regalia of a Bengali laureate can be understood through **Micheal Foucault's Othering notion** (Connolly, 1985), where the poet through the Manichean lenses of dualism (as is discussed in Chapter 2) was contorted as the 'Constitutive other' (refers to Emund Husserl's concept of 'the other') in the Bengal society because of his hybrid nature. According to Micheal Foucault, 'othering' is heftily corresponded with power and dominance. Anthony's hybrid persona earned him the disparaging term 'Fhiringhee' and he was subjected to discrimination and prejudice by the 'custodians' of Bengali culture. Often *"Tui beta jaat Fhiringhee"* was catapulted at him by other kaviyals during Kabilorai sessions. The following *Lahar* verses are directed by Kaviyal Bhola Moira when he went on par with Anthony, ambushing the poet for his hybrid disposition:

"Keo ba korchen Baristery
Keo ba korchen Ministery
Elem er jore, keo ba korchen yojgiri
Ei betra pujor bari, pujor lobh e nacchte eseche."

Translation:

"Some people aspire to be a barrister
Some people aspire to be a minister
Man, in accordance with his capability, is aspiring to make a name.
Behold the presence of this man, tempted by the colourful festivities, who has set foot in the temple to waltz amongst us."

Sir Hensman Anthony metamorphosed into Anthony Fhiringhee. Soon he gained popularity among the audiences through his performances in Calcutta's cabarets and Nawab's courts. The people were drawn to his unique style of singing and his spontaneous compositions filled with the mellifluous romanticization of Hindu gods and goddesses. Antony used his poetry to preach to the audience about love, devotion to God, and equality. Through his rich devotional songs, he garnered admiration amongst his audience. In his viable existence as a poet among the Bengali poets, he faced reproval and was referred to as "Fhiringee" (i.e; half cast minstrel) because of his hybrid ethnicity by the Brahmanical society of early 19th century Bengal. The following verses from Ram Basu's and Anthony's *Lahar* session highlight how Anthony's hybrid orientation was often a subject preyed upon.

Ram Basu:

"Saheb sundor er pujari
Tai ginni r kothai
Jishur bhojona cherediyechen
Akhon khrishner bhojon korchen"

Translation:

"Saheb is a worshipper of beauty
Henceforth, his feebleness is influenced by his wife
Now, here he stands amidst us, abandoning Christ's orisons
Singing devotional ballads of Lord Krishna"

Nevertheless, Anthony had accumulated fame amongst the inhabitants years prior to being transmogrified into a Bengali laureate. It was an incident that took place around Calcutta's Red Tank, which is also known as Lal Dighi or Tank Square, where he nabbed a few of the sepoys of British East India Company in Bengali profanities, that he picked up from the locales. Henry Newman recalls in his book that he tried to

grab hold of some of Anthonian verses in Kobilorai, but there is a stark lack of proper assemblage of historic episodes during that period.

Writer Henry Newman, in his 1937 book The Indian Peep Show claimed the proximity of caste politics in Anthony's lifetime. He implies that Fhiringhee was in fact a derogatory term that was especially used by the upper caste cultural pioneers to denote the fallen Europeans amongst them. The writer further goes on to explain how the term 'Fhiringhee' is applied to Europeans in general and it implies to be as rude and discourteous (Newman, 1937).

In the initial days of exploration of Bengali art forms, Antony was smitten by Kavigaan and aspired to be discipled under Bhola Moira, who was taught by Haru Thakur. But he was rejected on the grounds of being a foreigner and foreign to the language and history of the culture. This incident emphasizes how **Cultural Nationalism** (Nanda, 2006), grappled with the conscious minds of the people. The ideology of Cultural Nationalism was put forward by Johann Gottfried Herder, a German philosopher, and literary critic, and it insists on the emphasis of placing one's culture at a higher station in shaping national consciousness. The ideology of Cultural Nationalism prioritizes the celebration and preservation of cultural identity. In Chapter 2, we learned how Bengali writers like Ishwar Chandra Gupta and Manmohan Babu accentuated Kabigaan as a 'tool that collects and preserves the culture of Bengali tradition'. Hence, Kabigaan was viewed as an apparatus of Cultural Nationalism by the hegemonic Bengalis of the 19th century. Anthony was rejected by the Kaviyals because they perceived his participation in the sessions (through the lenses of ethnonationalism) as a presenter would threaten the purity of their ethnonational identity, especially in the period when Bengal was witnessing nation-building. Eric Taylor Woods argues that this phenomenon usually occurs in the early stage of a national movement, which is evident in this case. (Woods, 2015)

Nonetheless, it must be remembered that *lahar* is the combative segment of Kabilorai where the poets trivialize each other through unsusceptible aspects accompanied by spontaneous witty remarks. And Anthony Fhiringee' exclusion from kavigaan sessions was ubiquitous, as some artists recognised his talent and endowment in kavigaan compositions.

Ram Basu:

"Saheb! Mithye tui Krishna pade matha murali

Tor padri saheb sunte pele

Gale debe chunkali"

Translation:

"O Saheb! Your fabricated flattery of Krishna's avatars

If your padre transpires to learn of it

He'll blacken your cheeks with tar"

Antony, known for his humanist approach in Kabi-lorai, quoted one of his most famous song:

" Krishtey aar Krishney kicchu bhinno naire re bhai

Shudhu namer phere manush pherer

Eyo kotha shuninai

Amar khuda je, Hindur hari shey

Ei dekh Shyam dariye acche

Amar manob Janam shaphal hobe jodi eyi ranga charan paai"

Translation:

"Brother, there lies no discrepancy between Krishna and Christ

Where prayers are not simply mere chanting
But where souls swarm
Your Vishnu and my god are all the same
Behold here stands Shyam
My human entity will celebrate itself if only I had his lotus feet"

Anthony's response to Ram Basu blurs the line between Krishna, a Hindu god, and Christ, a Christian god. Thus, preaching equality and devotion with a secular message. Anthony, despite facing exclusion, integrated secular motifs in his songs and sang songs of Goddess Durga. He was famous among the poets for his Agamani Geet. Madan Bondhopadhay in his novel on the life of Anthony Fhiringee documents the ardent love and devotion of Anthony Fhiringee which eventually persuaded him to construct a temple for Goddess Kali in the Bowbazar locality of Central Calcutta (present day Kolkata) and he invited other fellow kaviyals, amongst them was Bhola Moira. Amid people and attendees, he sang (Bondhopadhay, 1958):

"Bhojon pujon jaanine maa, jatite fhiringhee
Jodi doya kore taro more ay hobe matongi"

The verse serves as an atonement to the goddess for his lack of displaying sacred customs, blaming it on his 'foreign' disposition, the poet prays to the goddess asking him to bless him for the new chapter in his life. Kaviyal Anthony Fhiringhee, despite being discriminated, persevered and established himself as one of the celebrated kaviyals who contributed to the heritage of Bengal. 'Fhiringhee Kalibari' now stands in the heart of present-day Kolkata as a remembrance of the late kaviyal.

3.2 Cinematic Projection of Anthony Fhiringhee

In the history of Bengali art culture, Antony bears a riveting sentiment. As we have already discussed in Chapter 1 how a number of notable Bengali films were produced incorporating kavigaan performances or verse within the cinematic narration. Since time immemorial, various researchers, writers, and filmmakers have taken an avid interest in his life. The 1967 movie adapted from Madan Bondhopadhyay's book 'Kaviyal Anthony Fhiringee' by Sunil Bondhopadahay starring the yesteryear's heartthrob Uttam Kumar in the lead and Tanuja as his beau focuses on the journey of the poet to become kaviyal and finally be accepted by the other accomplished kaviyals like his sparred opponents like Ram Basu and Bhola Moira. Although the prime focus was laid on the kabi-larai and how he was influenced by the art of Kabigaan, it also highlighted the pertaining indifferences that he had to withstand in his career.

Bhola Moira:

"Beta chilo bhalo Saheb chilo
Holo Bangali
Ekhon kobir dole ese mile pete kangali."

Translation:

"Behold this man who once was a good saheb
Now living in the accoutre of Bengali
Coalesced with the poets, but existing on starvation and cravings."

Whilst the 2014 movie 'Jatiswar' bridges the evolutions of Bengali modern music through the ages of Kirtan, Tappa, Bhatiali with an underlying love story.

Often when it comes to a cinematic adaptation of any historical text or classic novel, there is an eminent question of 'auteur'[14] (Hess, 1973). Visual texts are deprived of their authenticity and there is the inclusion of remote elements. We have witnessed instances of that in the adaptation of Sarat Chandra Bondhopadahay's 1917 novel Devdas by Sanjay Leela Bhansali (Bhansali, 2002), Jane Austen's 1813 classic Pride, and Prejudice by Joe Wright (Wright, 2005), Andre Aciman's 2007 coming-of-age book Call me by your name by Luca Guadagnino (Guadagnino, 2017) and many more. There would be uncountable mentions once we start off with this list. The variance is not a matter of predicament but rather an ingenuity in which Srjit Mukherjee excels. Prior to Jatiswar, he also performed cinematic adaptations like 2010's Autograph based on Satyajit Ray's 1966 movie Nayak starring Uttam Kumar. His work received nationwide acclamation and it was also his first film with Prosenjit Chatterjee. Jatiswar spins the story of two outsiders: a modern-day Gujarati boy caught in the syanandrous urbans of West Bengal and a Portuguese merchant in the land of Bengal. With a non-linear screenplay and a comfortable criss-cross of the two wide timelines, the director brings up various themes: an outsider's struggle, the antecedent stage of Bengali music, and Anthony Fhiringee. The superlative presence of Prosenjit stole the show, with his recent transference from commercial Bengali films to art house films, he portrays the role of a deserted librarian Kushal Hazra. Suffering from a debilitating disease of memory loss shrouded by the memories of his past birth superimposing onto the present one. Kushal meets Rohit (played by Jisshu), who is in search of his dissertation topic and also ways to win his love, Mahamaya. Kushal, trapped in the memories of Anthony, is on the verge of losing his sanity. Buried under the colossal weight of his previous life, he narrates the story in a stochastic manner uphurling the sepia pages of history. The movie is a culmination of musical memories with the brilliant contribution of the musical maestro Kabir Suman who has without any form of manipulation, orchestrated 13 kabiyal songs of the composers Anthony Fhiringee, Ram Basu, Thakur Singh and Bhola Moira. The film also focuses on the lack of any historical documentation on Hensman Anthony and the scene where Rohit walks around the town searching for any information on the poet is a bonafide attempt to create awareness on that matter.

Perhaps the title 'Jatiswar' (meaning 're-incarnate') is a befitting name. We all go through different reincarnations in our lifetime. Kushal and Rohit are both Jatiswars traveling dissimilar paths of life, meeting at a junction, Anthony Fhiringee. Every obstacle we face reincarnates us into a new person, a person we are destined to become. As the verses from Bhagavad Gita states:

"Vasamsi jirnani yatha vihaaya

Navani grhnani

Anao aparani

Tatha sarirani vihaya jirna

Nyanyani samyati navani dehi"

The movie ends with the famous song orchestrated by the musical maestro Kabir Sumon 'E tumi Kemon Tumi':

"E tumi kemon Tumi chokher taray ayna dharo

E kemon kanna Tumi amay jokhon ador koro

Janmer ageo janmo poreo janmo tumi emon

Shurero gobhir shure podabolir dhoron jemon…."

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[14] referring to Auteur Theory which originated in France through the *Cahiers du Cinema* film magazine where film critics such as Jean Luc Godard, Francois Truffaut, and Claude Chabrol emphasized director's personal cinematic style as the creative force that distinguishes it from other directors.

Translation:

"It is you, how is this you, who bears mirror in your eyes
How are these teardrops, when you endear me
Even prior and thereafter this birth, you are an essence
Akin to the deepest ballads of sonnet of bygone days." (Translation by Aditya Chatterjee, E tumi Kemon tumi).

This mellifluous ballad was dedicated to Mahamaya (played by Swastika Mukherjee) who is considered the incarnation of Saudamini in that movie. The song serves as an apology to Saudamini from Antony for failing to protect her from the reverberations of the 'blasphemy' (As the 19th century Brahmins saw him hosting the Durga Puja in his house). Kabir Suman compares the love that Antony bore for his wife to ancient poems with varying depths and layers and intensity of emotions. If the son of a wealthy Portuguese businessman had not fallen in love with colonial Bengal, then perhaps this love song that spans across different timelines would not have witnessed the light of day. The movie won 4 National Awards in 2014 including National Film Award for Best Music Direction by Kabir Suman.

The director in an interview (Mukherjee S. , 2014) interview talks about how the journey to discovering the life of Hensman through his movie character Rohit was itself a journey for him. The 10-minute journey of Rohit in the squalor of the ruins trying to reconstruct the life of Anthony was a mirrored journey of him as he was creating the movie. He talks how through the making of the movie, he lived as Rohit's character, discovering the multi facets of Bengali culture. In a way, he says the journey of Rohit was similar to his. And then after the release, people exclaimed the same. It is rich and vibrant nostalgia to lean about your language and culture and learn how each word one utters resonates a larger history with alluring meaning and orgin.

 The 1967 cinematic adaptation of the poet's life was a culminating ballad of the poet's metamorphosis. From a foreigner on the shore of the land of Bengal to a husband of a Bengali widow. The movie also subtly highlights the ill-treatment of women in society through Nirupama's past experiences. Nirupama, the wife of Antony, is a tragic character. Saved from Sati[15]-ritual, she permeates herself into various roles, much like the female character Marali in the long historical novel by Bimal Mitra's Begun Meri Biswas (Mitra, 2015). Simone de Beauvoir's concept of 'Other' (Green, 2002) parallels Nirupama where she dwells in the construction of identities facilitated by men around her. The French Feminist and author of the book "The Second Sex" (Beauvoir, 1949) explains how women are treated as the 'other' while men are treated as the 'subject' or the 'self'. From being widowed and her tragedy being made townspeople talk, to being harassed by the ghost of the past, to an enchanted courtesan. Her brilliant musical performances caught the attention of the Portuguese merchant who beseeched her to start a new life with him as his lawful wife. But her life was cut short by the Brahmins because Antony wanted to host Durga puja in his abode, which was considered then as blasphemous.

The most yearning segment of the film is the musical duel between the established kabiyaal Bhola Moira and Antony Fhiringee which has been made immortal through this film. There were frequent remarks passed at Antony through "Tui beta jaat fhiringee", an incantation to indicate his hybrid nature. In response, the latter made a pun on Bhola's name in context to Lord Shiva, whose other name is Bholanath. Thus, Bhola Moira as Lord in the court of poets. Bhola Moira, quick and sweet with his words and poesy

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[15] one of the most talked about gore practices of Hindu where widows, dressed in gold and colors, are burned along with the corpses of their husbands

satire at the tip of his tongue, denied and referred to himself as a poet just as any another inhabiting the court and animated the vivid descriptions of his life as a sweet-maker.

The film through all its attempts and adaptation from Madan Bandyopadhyay's novel wanted to pictorially describe the life of Antony and his metamorphosis while the recent attempts on his life by Srijit Mukherjee reconstructed his life and took the audience through a rollercoaster of non-linearity-and-musical-memories. The films produced depict how Anthony was treated by the other Kaviyals, and as we have already discussed in the previous section, the treatment of the people towards the Portuguese poet through Nationalistic approach.

Henceforth, in this chapter we have learn how the nationalistic movement that was prevailing in 19th century Bengal, which led to the transformation of the 'salon' musical culture into a communalized Bengali culture musical performance, intimately imprinted its tenets onto the minds of the hegemonic Bengali vanguards. Anthony Fhiringhee, being a foreigner, faced the reverberations of the onset of National movement, closely Cultural Nationalism, where he was outcasted as the 'other' because the kaviyals, who considered themselves as the custodians of Bengali heritage, feared that Anthony's participation in the Kabilorai would intimidate the 'purity' of Kabilorai culture. In the later part of the discussion, we have read about how Anthony Fhiringhee was portrayed in Bengali cinema. Kaviyal Anthony lacks proper documentation on his life and the novel '*Kaviyal Anthony Fhiringhee*' authored by Madan Bondhopadhay is the only credible source that various filmmakers use as a primary source and perform adaptations of the poet's life.

CONCLUSION

This paper attempts to perform an analytical study to examine the transition that 19th century Bengal was undergoing in its cultural and political context which led to the need for communalized music. It performs an analytical examination of the treatment of the other Bengali laureates towards a Portuguese merchant, who was enthralled by the musical gala of Kobigaan that he decided to learn it, from nationalist lenses.

With the decline of the Mughal Empire under the reign of Muhammed Shah, the courtesans, and dancers of the Mughal 'darbar', had to seek patronage from the landed gentry in Calcutta, Lucknow, and Bombay. Calcutta had long before established multiple relationships with the Mughals and a pivot for Portuguese trading centers or 'Shadow Empire' with the rendition of a few more polycolonial activities. The land of Bengal was witnessing a plethora of cultural and political pursuits. With the transplantation of the Persianate-origin musical galas, the Bengali zamindars lavished in the delights of these performances and this culture received magnification in its popularity. At times these performances would be held in the Jalsagars of the great Bengali houses and British officers would be frequently invited during festive occasions to witness the performances. But with the advent of the Bengal Famine, a huge population of women in Bengal were left stranded to feed for themselves and they had to join brothels to fend for themselves. The domain of Bengal in the 19th century was amplifying, with the decline in feudalism, the baijis and other performers were witnessing the exodus of their patrons, so they had to seek refuge in the depilated cabins of the brothels. It was around the same time, the 'anti-nautch movement' was released and the English-educated bourgeoise class of Bengal regarded the performers to have inferior reputations as that of the prostitutes.

With the rise of the English-educated middle class, the people now insisted on the annihilation of the cultural anarchies of the past. The venue of performances shifted from 'salon' to 'street' where mass people

could attend which was contemporaneous with Kobigaan. Kobigaan is a theatrical performance attended by large sections of people where the Kaviyals hold combative sessions against each other pursuing a variety of themes. The motive of Kabigaan through its sessions is to entertain and educate the people and the performers of the sessions were fluent in various texts and scripts. Kabigaan was also performed at various political conventions. Various literary writers like Ishwar Chandra Gupta and Manmohan Basu considered Kabigaan as a tool to preserve the rich cultural heritage of Bengali culture.

Thus, the kaviyals started to see themselves as the custodians of Bengali heritage and Anthony Fhiringhee's arrival in Kabilorai stirred complications within themselves. Whilst some of the laureates embraced Anthony, others were furious with him and often hurled abusive verses toward him during the kabilorai sessions. Nevertheless, Anthony perserved and went on to become one of the beloved and famous kaviyals and went on face-offs with various other poets like Bhola Moira, Ram Basu, and a few more. The treatment that the Portuguese merchant Anthony received from the other kaviyals when seen from the lenses of Cultural Nationalism and Ethno-Nationalism, was because they feared that if Anthony joined their sessions, it would threaten the purity of their attempt to preserve culture. It was the period when there was heightened growth of the nationalist movement and the kaviyals' response to Anthony, as seen by Eric Taylor Woods, is the phenomenon that occurs at the onset of a national movement.

This paper, through a detailed description of the Kabigaan practice and highlights the life of one of the famous kaviyals, providing a holistic view of the research issue. A nation often witnesses the influx of various cultural elements, which receives multitudes of responses from the subjects. This paper attempts to take a glance at how the salon musical performances of the Mughal courts attained popularity among the Bengal Babus whilst a few Bengali vanguards perceived the performance held at chambers, as inferior and insisted on the communalization of music. Anthony's involvement during the hour of heightened nationalism threatened the Bengali vanguards about the admixture of their culture reflecting the predicament of the 19th-century Bengal.

Through my research, I tried to cover various aspects of the study, though at times I felt the sources were at their limitation, nonetheless, I have taken great delight in pursuing the subject to learn more about the changing Bengali society.

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