MIZORAM UNIVERSITY JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES
A Refereed Bi-annual Journal
ISSN(P): 2395-7352
eISSN: 2581-6780
Vol. VIII, Issue 2 (December 2022) http://www.mzuhssjournal.in/

Masculine "Snēha" (স্নেহ) in Ajit Ganguly's Hangsharaj (1976)

Anirban Ray*

Abstract

Ajit Ganguly's Hangsharaj (1976) depicts the aspirations of a young "Baul" singer-boy to get recognition in the "Akashvani" in Calcutta. The film features subtle moments of male-male bonding in terms of "snēha," which approximately translates in English as the tender, affectionate concern felt by a senior person for a junior. Hangsha (or Hansa) receives care, guidance, and protection from two young men (Shamu and Basanta, representing two different kinds of masculinity) and with their assistance fulfills his aspiration. The themes of teacher-student interaction and the success of talent have been depicted in many Indian films. Hangsharaj differs because the film focuses on the male same-gendered closeness and features men's acceptance of the emotional needs of other men. These are not much featured in mainstream films since these films are usually "heteronormative" in content. This paper explores the themes of masculinity and male affection in Ganguly's Hangsharaj and discusses these with references to the Vaishnava/"Baul" views on gender.

Keywords*: "Snēha," Gender, Masculinity, Vaishnavism, "Baul".*

Interpreting "*Snēha*"

For an Indian, the word "*snēha*" evokes the perceptions of tender and protective attachment a senior feel for a junior; "*snēha*" also implies spiritual inclinations associated with meditation and "*sadhana*" for the Divine. With reference to the devotional poetry (and philosophy) of Akka Mahādēvi, Jan Peter Schouten explains that not only there exists "*snēha*" in the yearnings felt by a lover or a friend forming a bond, "*snēha*" in its visceral significance also refers to the bodily "secretion" (qtd. in Schouten, *Revolution of the Mystics* 117) (Schouten, *Revolution of the Mystics* 117) which Schouten identifies as a building requisite for a cocoon produced by a silkworm (Schouten, *Revolution of the Mystics* 117; Schouten, "The Unconventional Woman Saint" 125–126). As Schouten explains, citing Akka

*Assistant Professor, Department of English, Presidency University, Kolkata, WB, India. Email: anirban.eng@presiuniv.ac.in.

Mahādēvi's silkworm-image, "*snēha*" symbolically indicates an agency for connecting with existence (the silkworm being a metaphor); it also alludes to the material (the silkworm's secreted ingredient) binding experience and belonging together (Schouten, *Revolution of the Mystics* 117; Schouten, "The Unconventional Woman Saint" 125–126). This connection, through service and nurturance, can be perceived in different contexts. The parents, siblings, teachers project "*snēha*" to create trust and provide comfort, enabling minds to prosper; the "*snēha*" interconnects different inhabitants in the "*samsara*." But the ties of "*snēha*" sever as we grow up and seek individual existence.

Contextualizing "*Snēha*"

Indian audience has accommodated (i) women-centric films, (ii) films centering on female protagonists, and (iii) even friendship between straight men carefully balanced by the incorporation of the straight female lead. Thus even if we are able to perceive tenderness between men in everyday interaction, the same perception has not been conspicuously taken up as a sole plot-component for depiction in full-length films. Mainstream films depend on rather conveniently identifiable expressions and modalities of masculinity; depiction and evaluation of "*snēha*" (which brings out male protectiveness for male friends/juniors, rather than, or with equal importance for women and/or female partner[s]) on the screen can be difficult to be grasped. Though Indians celebrate "*bhaiphonta*," the "heteronormative" exchange aligned with preferences for sons re-establishes the notion of the brother as the caretaker of the family following the parents; the man having a sister (even if she is the older sibling), is expected to bear some responsibilities of his sister's security and conjugal arrangements. Thus even if "*snēha*" is a theme, the "heteronormative" inclinations generally take over the plots, preferring brother-sister relationship and/or brother-in-law/sister-in-law interaction to sole brother-brother relationship or sole male-male friendship/bonding. Since mainstream Indian films still reflect the general demands and expectations from the individual genders, it shows roles required exclusively by a largely straight audience. In that case exploration of affection between men might seem *unnecessary*, even unbalancing the "heteronormative" structure. The brilliance of Ajit Ganguly's *Hangsharaj* (1976) lies in reinterpreting the unnecessary as important and as equally *natural*, as well as providing space for same-gendered care within an extensive "heteronormative" social structure. Ganguly's *Hangsharaj* enables a village boy to receive recognition through the affection ("*snēha*") from two male Calcuttan young men.

Theoretical Framework

As scholars of a once colonized nation when we academically engage with gender we have (i) the Western/White patterns of masculinities on the one hand, and (ii) the emotional brotherhood inspired by tenets of Indian spiritualism on the other hand. The impact of "*snēha*" on the Indian masculinities and the role of "*snēha*" in male bonding (involving giving and receiving emotional tenderness) might be difficult to connect. However, since cinema is a public medium in which subtle gestures can exist in the broader corporeal register it is possible to read "masculine *snēha*" in Ganguly's *Hangsharaj* applying R. W. [Raewyn] Connell's readings of "hegemonic masculinity" and "subordination" discussed extensively in her book *Masculinities* (1995). The current Indian constructs of masculinities incorporate

Western dimensions contextually because of colonialism, which exist simultaneously with our occasionally disoriented yet contextually inclusive appreciation of traditional thoughts on art and gender. I shall also connect the friendship between Basanta and Shamu in Ganguly's *Hangsharaj* with Todd A. Migliaccio's discussions on the "instrumental" pattern in male friendship (Migliaccio, "Typologies of Men's Friendships" 119–147), as Ganguly very creatively has created a storyline in which Basanta and Shamu despite their differences in masculinities cement their friendship in being "instrumental" (here applying the concept discussed by Migliaccio ["Typologies of Men's Friendships" 119–147]) in helping Hangsha. In the process Ganguly provides scope for exploring masculinity in different forms while simultaneously rescuing masculinity from aggression and enabling men of same age to show comfort for each other and communicate senior men's "*snēha*" for junior men.

When we infer that masculinity is insecure and/or toxic men are easily triggered when their masculinity is questioned, we largely practice this derivation on the basis of men's expressed/perpetrated violence against women, which indeed is a global scenario. We do not equally take into consideration how such assertions affect men who resist the "dominant" male group and who are "subordinated," the premises of which have been perceived by Connell in *Masculinities* (1995). Hangsha's "Baul" identity, his emotional mindset might have been challenging for contextualization if the storyline is considered beyond its scope as a "children's film." As Connell observes, when a straight man out of prejudice and phobia is willing to detect or is driven to detect "gayness" (or lack of overt maleness) in another man, the act of discrimination is often influenced by "hegemonic masculinity" (156). "[E]ffemina[cy] is by default connected with homosexuality which obviously is a crude derivation (Connell 161–162). Connell notes that from the colonial perspective, the Indians experienced re-structuring of identities (including masculinities) while Indian men were recruited for "subordinated labour force" (198). Connell perceives that this re-structuring of masculinities was also racially distinguished: Sikhs and/or Pathans were appreciated for their strength and spirit while the Bengali men were judged as "effeminate" (198). Based on that awareness of India's conflicts over masculinities, and also because of the presence of the tradition of the "Baul" and the perceptions on gender in Vaishnavism it may be observed that there are simultaneous spaces for diverse forms of masculinities in the Indian scenario.

Hangsharaj: An Artist's Journey

Ganguly's direction traces two arcs uniting into a circle: the first arc shows the talent appreciated within the devotional practice and values; the other arc categorizes talent as an examined and evaluated performance. Hangsha (played by Arindam Gangopadhyay) is a gifted "Baul" singer whose natural talent flourishes within the village pastoral setting. The film thus interprets that music/singing has space-based reception: (i) singing is valued as a gift of divine benevolence, while (ii) the generic recognition of "folk song" is evaluated in an urban ambience before theoretically oriented elite judges. The difference between the village and the city with reference to the reception of arts is crucial in the film, thus the loving assistance that Hangsha receives from the two young urban men becomes important in our discussion. Even after receiving the cash award after the stage performance Hangsha gives the amount away to his benefactor's (Shamu's) father, having imbibed Vaishnava philosophy

of love and sacrifice (for Vaishnava principles, see Bhatia 1–24), and returns to his idyllic village but with an extended insight of "*snēha*" present even in the material and artificial city (Ganguly, *Hangsharaj* 01:41:56–01:46:33). *Hangsharaj* projects men's tenderness for men and men's dependence on men through subtle gestures, and the film emphasizes the protective care Hangsha receives from Basanta (played by Sanjib Dasgupta). The interaction does carry some indication of "bromance" (for discussion of the featuring of "bromance" in films, see M. Sen 139–164), since Hangsha openly admits his yearning for Basanta when Basanta is not turning up right before Hangsha's scheduled departure for his village (Ganguly, *Hangsharaj* 01:43:55–01:45:34). We can perceive Hangsha's expression of desire to see Basanta as pre-adolescent naivety since Hangsha's voice is yet not masculine. However it is noteworthy that the dialogues expressing male tenderness and the male wish for fellow male accompaniment are retained in the film which validate that the aggressive (yet kind) Basanta is much attached to Hangsha and it also implies that Ganguly's directorial vision wishes to accommodate room for male strength as well as for male vulnerabilities.

"Baul" Meets Cricket

The cricket scene in the film (in which Hangsha meets Basanta and Shamu for the first time) features incoherence between masculine performance and feminine/feminized singing; however Ganguly has very innovatively shown how the "Baul"-performance can balance the two (Ganguly, *Hangsharaj* 00:16:00–00:23:10). Michael A. Messner cited by Connell perceives that "institution" assists in masculine contests and sports-"learning" (Messner cited in Connell 35; Connell 35; also see Messner, *Power at Play: Sports and the Problem of Masculinity*; Messner, *The Politics of Masculinities: Men in Movements*; Messner, *Taking the Field: Women, Men, and Sports*) and Connell observes that sports is an important avenue for the "construction of masculinity" (Connell 35). Even when the "instituti[onal]" investment in sports is not to achieve an overtly major successful male sportsmen-population, the "institution" sees sports as a forum for control and essential for "the production of masculinity" (Connell 35). It can be observed that Ganguly arranges for the meeting of two "institutions": (i) the urban, secular, codified and curriculum-based public "institution" arranging for the boys to go for a cricket-excursion in the village and (ii) the rural, spiritual, oral, and public "institution" being aware of the devotional fervor of the "Baul" music and holding the harmony of the pastoral setting and defining its cultural-identity together. However, since the game is cricket in question, it is connected with the colonial, "hegemonic" influence of Western sports-performance; Varisha Sharma perceives that the male-oriented political maneuvers during colonial regime left their influence upon entertainment like cricket, prohibiting women's anticipation to play as female cricketers as women were associated with less "strength" (2). Sharma notes that cricket has enabled (as one of the platforms) the separation of women from men, based on bodily, gendered features (2). Interestingly, therefore, Hangsha enters the village cricket field as a singer-interpreter; with his boyish and feminine demeanor and imbibed "Baul"-philosophy he melts the gender-based segregation associated with cricket and earns admiration from Shamu and Basanta who have come to play cricket (Ganguly, *Hangsharaj* 00:16:00–00:23:10). The response of feminine/feminized music to masculine sports in the village setting does not risk any counter masculine criticism. From this point onwards, the film takes a unique journey: two young

adult men (Basanta and Shamu [played by Basudeb Pal]) try to arrange singing opportunities for a boy (Hangsha). There is no dearth of films tracing the growth of the artist-figure and the plots also ensure that the artists get both the recognition for talent and the love of their partner (usually of the opposite sex) thereby repeatedly establishing "heteronormativity" in the circuit and trajectory of inspiration and cooperation. Ganguly takes a different path, showing "*snēha*" which makes two male young-adults offer time and energy for another boy, which in other instances we might prefer to see represented in case of a male protagonist exclusively supporting his female muse or talented love-interest.

"*Snēha*" and Vaishnavism

Carola Erika Lorea notes that the "training" years of "Bauls and Fakirs" require the establishment of comfort and the growth of expertise in women/feminine representation in "*yātrā* and *pālā*" (194). Hangsha has realized the illusion of sexual difference, probably that is why he is able to accept the "*snēha*" of the tender (but not effeminate) Shamu and the aggressive yet vulnerable Basanta. The realization of "*snēha*" can be understood in the framework of Vaishnavism which recognizes the androgynous experience as essential for devotion. As Dr. Carl Olson perceives, the Vaishnava saint Nammāḷvār perceived Krishna as the male; the feminine aspect of the soul was thought by him to seek attachment with the Divine in love (Olson 55). Citing Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's *Caitanya-caṛitāmṛta* Olson notes that the androgyny of mortal man is conditioned in counterpart to the "sole male," that is the "univers[al]" Kṛṣṇa [Krishna]; the "feminine attitude" is required within the worshipper (even if he is male) to realize the Divinity and His veneration (Olson 57). In other words, an essential effeminization of the devotee is recognized, and even though "*snēha*" is certainly possible from a person of any gender to another person of any other gender, it also requires curtailing of male ego and aggression. The male-to-male "*snēha*" can also be given through disciplined tutelage. Protective possessiveness is perceived in case of both love and "*snēha*" but in the "heteronormative" context love retains the difference between the sexes. The "*snēha*" seems to rise over that and the recipient's sex/gender is expected not to condition the distribution of "*snēha*" from the giver. Hangsha's gender does not stop Basanta and Hangsha from actively participating for the materialization of Hangsha's aspiration. It is possible probably because Basanta and Shamu see Hangsha in terms of his "Baul" identity which extends their capacity of acceptance.

Basanta and Shamu: Their Individual "*Snēha*"

Migliaccio perceives that "instrumental[ity]" is a guiding force in friendship between men while a lot of "expressi[ons]" are crucially expected and communicated in friendship between women (Migliaccio, "Typologies of Men's Friendships" 121). The "expressive intimacy" is conventionally not initiated by men while they interact with men, even when paradoxically "expressive intimacy" can be identified, appreciated and adored by men with reference to the practice of such "intimacy" in art and in women's groups (Migliaccio, "Typologies of Men's Friendships" 122). Thus even when a straight male writer and/or a director is able to dedicate substantial literary space and screen time respectively to (i) feminine portrayal and/or women's emotions, and (ii) men's provision of security and emotional support to women, the male writer/director is not willing to develop equally

substantial space for featuring (i) men's vulnerabilities, (ii) men's tenderness for men and (iii) men's provisions of support for men. For non-creative male groups/circles sensitivity towards the need for representations of male emotions is further reduced in expression. Migliaccio realizes that despite "personal needs" a (straight) man does not attempt to risk "emascula[tion]" by exposing his feelings since "femininity" in connection with "expressive intimacy" puts his image as man on a tense podium (Migliaccio, "Typologies of Men's Friendships" 122). Through survey, Migliaccio perceives that "performance" of masculinity remains undisturbed in the "status quo" of friendship; "masculine context" is regarded in terms of "interactions" (Migliaccio, "Typologies of Men's Friendships" 123–143). Ganguly shows that masculine "*snēha*" can also be "masculine performance" and "instrumental" in defining friendship (if Migliaccio's view is applied ["Typologies of Men's Friendships" 119–147] for discussion in this context); in fact Basanta and Shamu represent two aspects of the urban male benevolence, the stoic (Basanta) and the skeptic (Shamu). Their views regarding the imbalance between opportunity, talent, and economy clash in Ganguly's film mutually but their friendship "instrumentalizes" (applying Migliaccio's perception ["Typologies of Men's Friendships" 121, 143]) "*snēha*" to strike a balance between recognition and tradition and connect cosmopolitan acknowledgement with pastoral spiritualism.

Hangsha's attraction for Basanta seems to be based on the difference between their masculinities while Shamu can be perceived as occupying a middle position (in terms of masculine gradation) between two of them, oscillating between strength and weakness/vulnerability. Parallel to the straight male leads in mainstream films protecting their ladyloves, Basanta braces public humiliation for the sake of Hangsha (a boy, not a girl, junior to him) (Ganguly, *Hangsharaj* 01:09:20–01:11:17); he rescues Hangsha and fights with other men trying to stop Hangsha from reaching the stage to sing for recognition and the cash award (Ganguly, *Hangsharaj* 01:32:23–01:37:44). Shamu is skeptically practical and understands that money is needed for everything; however, he offers lodging to Hangsha in his house and in one scene he feeds Hangsha, even from his own plate (Ganguly, *Hangsharaj* 01:04:09–01:05:15). Shamu's "*snēha*" is nuanced and Basanta's "*snēha*" is strongly expressed. It can be said that the "Baul" identity in Hangsha communes with Shamu, but Hangsha as an emotional boy is also immensely drawn to the powerful leading qualities in Basanta. Chaitanya himself was a combination of both, displaying strong leadership qualities for a peaceful movement in turbulent times as well as also shedding tears during chanting and contemplating on Krishna and Radha (see Bhatia 1–24; Olson 55–64; Rosen, *Śrī Chaitanya's Life and Teachings: The Golden Avatāra of Divine Love*; A. P. Sen, *Chaitanya: A Life and Legacy*).

Shamu keeps reminding Hangsha that the city does not carry any hope for his singing opportunity but Hangsha keeps on hoping that Basanta will arrange something (Ganguly, *Hangsharaj* 00:54:17–00:59:50). It is possible that Shamu, who is not physically dominating as Basanta, and might not have been able to assist Hangsha alone, might have experienced a faint, unpronounced rivalry with Basanta in terms of being an older brother-figure. These tropes are expected in the genre of "romantic comedy" and perhaps all of us feel ambitious to bring smiles to our partners since we tend to hold an expanded appreciation for their talents

and wish to see them duly recognized. This otherwise emphasis on "heteronormative" exchange regarding loving someone and featuring/nurturing their talents is however envisioned in the context of same-gendered "*snēha*" in Ganguly's *Hangsharaj*.

"Instrumentality" in terms of "friendships" is elaborated by Migliaccio with references to "masculinity": depending on context, profession and "social circumstances" men seek to merge "instrumentality" and "masculine aspect[s] of friendships" together or exclusively/individually regulate the two (Migliacco, "Men's Friendships" 229). Migliacco aptly notes that the contexts which require "physical strength and control" will be preferred by two male friends and/or men "performing" their friendship, which will result in "stoic[ism]" juxtaposed with "anti-femininity" (Migliacco, "Men's Friendships" 238). Migliaccio perceives that such attitude is however geared towards being "masculine" and not inherently connected with *naturally* "being a man" ("Men's Friendships" 238). Thus Shamu's lack of determination and hope regarding Hangsha's musical success/prospects in Calcutta angers Basanta (Ganguly, *Hangsharaj* 01:08:15–01:09:24). Yet it is clearly discernible that Basanta is immensely emotional; his masculine emotions do not imbalance his masculine image as he stoically endures physical injuries (Ganguly, *Hangsharaj* 01:44:30–01:45:36). Migliaccio infers that while making a male friend a man engages in "Doing Gender" (qtd. in Migliaccio, "Men's Friendships" 229) (Migliaccio, "Men's Friendships" 229); mutual appreciation for "men's behaviors" and "masculine performances" are "expectations" in male friendships which form the basis for male bonding (Migliaccio, "Men's Friendships" 239). Basanta achieves an impossible feat for Basanta - to probe into the elite channels who recognize talent; Basanta's sacrifices are deemed "masculine performances," (if the perception by Migliaccio ["Men's Friendships" 239] is applied) his friendship with the tender Shamu remains steadfast over the mission, while his strong "*snēha*" also remains "instrumental" (in the sense noted by Migliaccio ["Men's Friendships" 229]) for Hangsha.

Basanta's tenderness is hidden under his maleness; it is a gift unperceived by his parents even. His attachment to Hangsha is clearly discernible when he makes it to Shamu's house right in time before Hangsha's departure for his village, even when Basanta had endured a head injury before that (Ganguly, *Hangsharaj* 01:44:30–01:45:36). Same-gendered friendships might be strong; but they require a different degree of open-mindedness for heterosexual men to give support and time to other men despite their own physical pains and also on matters not connected with heterosexual relationships and women (see Ray, "Men, Maleness and Masculinities" 00:16:44–01:20:42). The investment of strength is expected to be reserved exclusively for the ladylove, at least in the context of film/screen which rewards the heterosexual male lead, fighting all odds for her sake (see Ray, "Girish Karnad's Devadatta and Kapila" 59–61). Ganguly's *Hangsharaj* is exceptional in this context; the male-male bonding of "*snēha*" receives highlight since Shamu and Basanta do not have individual ladyloves. "*Snēha*" in *Hangsharaj* is not intersected by "*prem*" ("প্রেম"; "romance"), thus the exclusive tenderness of a very masculine Basanta makes us believe in the beauty of male same-gendered closeness.

Conclusion

In Bengal the "*dada*" ("older male sibling")-addressing is witnessed on a daily basis. It is applied in several contexts, starting from references to political figures, to senior and same aged men, to strangers and passengers in public spaces and transport. And yet, our films lack sufficient spaces for sole representations of brotherhood with particular reference to mutual male dependence without serving the patriarchy-defined notions of masculinity. The "bro"-bonding is noticeable in many same-gendered exchanges between heterosexual males who may or may not have partners (see also Flood 339–359). A major part of these male same-gendered talks involve the opposite sex; thus (i) the "care" given from a senior male to a junior male and (ii) the importance/respect given by the junior male to the senior male depend considerably on the regulation/perception of their mutual maleness/masculinity involving their individual heterosexual relationships (see also Flood 339–359). Heterosexual women, however, are better able to verbally communicate care for the same sex (female) members in female groups even while simultaneously investing their nurturing attitude for their male partners (Ray, "Men, Maleness and Masculinities" 00:16:44–01:20:42). Apart from family, the mutual caring between men of different ages is perceived usually in the context of mentor-protégé exchange. The depictions of such exchange in films are not exclusively featured as "*snēha*" through touches and dialogues; hence male-male interdependence does not receive open expression, like that between female characters on the screen.

The straight male lead in a film may have male "sidekicks" but the plot may not show much emotional dependency between men (or male friends) since that can be difficult for the insecure (and homophobic) male viewers, and/or for men watching it with their female partners. The turning of the camera towards the image of Nityananda and Chaitanya appearing in a framed photo in Shamu's house right after Hangsha offers the money for Shamu's father's eye-surgery reminds the audience of the compassionate "*snēha*" and brotherhood that can be contextualized in the relationship between the trio Shamu, Basanta, and Hangsha (Ganguly, *Hangsharaj* 01:42:43–01:43:54). Basanta is so caring that he even asks others to provide Hangsha with a comfortable "middle" seat while boarding the car to the Howrah Station; this is one of the film's crucial moments to feature the innate masculine desire to protect and safeguard another boy (Ganguly, *Hangsharaj* 01:44:30–01:45:36). Such protectiveness is otherwise expected from the physically strong straight man protecting his ladylove; the mainstream culture banks upon such an image and we are conditioned to appreciate it as a fulfilling feature of a conventional relationship depicted on the screen (see Ray, "Girish Karnad's Devadatta and Kapila" 59–61). The framed photo of Nityananda and Chaitanya towards the end of the film (Ganguly, *Hangsharaj* 01:42:43–01:43:54) needs to be kept in mind along with another scene in the beginning of the film featuring the exclamation "*Joy Gour Nitai* [meaning 'Hail Gour Nitai']" shortly after the film opens, while Hangsha completes his first song (Ganguly, *Hangsharaj* 00:03:00–00:03:06). Thus a circle of companionship is generated in terms of fulfillment of wish and the realization of the self and through music, in the urban and rural spatial and cultural dichotomy. Ganguly in *Hangsharaj* effectively incorporates the Vaishnava and "Baul" philosophy to merge the delicate-yet-strong connection between the Divine and the devotee (for Vaishnavism see Bhatia 1–24;

Olson 55–64; Rosen, *Śrī Chaitanya's Life and Teachings: The Golden Avatāra of Divine Love*; A. P. Sen, *Chaitanya: A Life and Legacy*), which highlights the connective and encapsulating powers of "*snēha*" that brings worldly knowledge to Hangsha, resumes hopes in Shamu, and redeems the aggressive Basanta by revealing his tenderness unperceived by others.

Connell notes that the thinkers in the Seventies' decade of the Twentieth century envisioned that "androgyny" would in future come in vogue in the place of the "hegemonic"/"institutional" forms of masculinity (228). In this context Ganguly's filmic vision is noteworthy as he maintains "masculine friendship" and male softness in balance keeping Vaishnava/"Baul" perceptions as the points of convergence. In fact, we cannot but acknowledge Hangsha's energy (distinguished from the performative strength of a "hegemonic" male) since he does not lose his composure and retains his musical energy despite the physical exhaustion of travel (Ganguly, *Hangsharaj* 00:25:50–00:30:00). It is also implied that Hangsha's warmth brings out the softness hidden beneath Basanta's maleness. Ganguly's film inspires us to see both the sports and the music as expressions of physical energy and spirit. Simultaneously *Hangsharaj* is one of the rare Indian films in Bengali to break the notion that male-male bonding does not involve constructive use of time and makes us rethink that relationship does not always have to be rewarded with an economic and conjugal outcome/fulfillment. We all have affectionate male seniors in our lives but our interactions as brothers are not projected solely as plots for film; even if they were, the extensive focus remains pivoted on the straight relationship between the leads who may seek support from the brother/sister figures in the plot. *Hangsharaj* therefore is a significant film quite ahead of its time and needs to be re-watched by both same-gendered and "heterosocial" groups negotiating with the patterns of contemporary flickering relationships. The Twenty-first century culture features as well as counters homophobia and it is important to trace the mutual anxieties and hypocrisies layered beneath the male-to-male "bro"-bonding on the surface and aim for same-gendered brotherhood based on trust and emotional acceptance. Ganguly's *Hangsharaj* can provide a very empathetic insight for the discussion of male mental health, gender variation, and for addressing serious issues like (homophobic) bullying and trolling.

Note: I have spelled the title of the film and the name of the protagonist as *Hangsharaj* and "Hangsha" respectively; the English spellings of the Bengali names vary and they can also be spelled as *Hangsaraj*, "Hangsa," or "Hansa."

****

References

Bhatia, Varuni. "Sisir's Tears: 'Bhakti' and Belonging in Colonial Bengal." *International Journal of Hindu Studies*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2017, pp. 1–24. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/44983881. Accessed 3 Sep. 2022.

Connell, R. W. [Raewyn] *Masculinities*. 2nd ed. 1995. University of California Press, 2005.

Flood, Michael. “Men, Sex, and Homosociality: How Bonds between Men Shape Their Sexual Relations with Women.” *Men and Masculinities*, vol. 10, no. 3, 2008, pp. 339–359, doi: 10.1177/1097184X06287761. Accessed 3 Sep. 2022.

Ganguly, Ajit, director. *Hangsharaj*. Tarama Chitram, 1976. *YouTube*, uploaded by Bengali Movies- Angel Digital, 14 Nov. 2021, www.youtube.com/watch?v=HNBQs-eEpsw. Accessed 30 Aug. 2022.

Kavirāja, Kṛṣṇadāsa. *Caitanya-caṛitāmṛta of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja. Edited with the Commentary Caurā-kṛpa-taranginī* by Radhagovinda Nath, Bhakti-pracānabhāndan, 1949–1950, 6 vols.

Lorea, Carola Erika. “Pregnant Males, Barren Mothers, and Religious Transvestism: Transcending Gender in the Songs and Practices of ‘Heterodox’ Bengali Lineages.” *Asian Ethnology*, vol. 77, no. 1/2, 2018, pp. 169–214. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/26604838. Accessed 8 Sep. 2022.

Messner, Michael A. *Power at Play: Sports and the Problem of Masculinity.* Beacon Press, 1992.

Messner, Michael A. *Taking the Field: Women, Men, and Sports.* University of Minnesota Press, 2002.

Messner, Michael A. *The Politics of Masculinities: Men in Movements.* Sage, 1997.

Migliaccio, Todd. “Men’s Friendships: Performances of Masculinity.” *The Journal of Men's Studies*, vol. 17, no. 3, Fall 2009, pp. 226–241, dx.doi.org/10.3149/jms.1703.226. Accessed 24 Sep. 2022.

Migliaccio, Todd A. “Typologies of Men’s Friendships: Constructing Masculinity through Them.” *Masculinities and Social Change*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2014, pp. 119–147, doi: 10.4471/MCS.2014.47. Accessed 24 Sep. 2022.

Olson, Carl. "The Vaiṣṇava Mystic: A Study of Androgyny and Liminality." *Religious Traditions: A Journal in the Study of Religion*, vol. 4, no. 1, 1981, pp. 55–64.

Ray, Anirban. “Girish Karnad’s Devadatta and Kapila: Men and Male Beauty.” *Gender Fluidity in Indian Writing in English*, edited by Parul Mishra, Sentics Publications, 2021, pp. 54–67.

Ray, Anirban. "Men, Maleness and Masculinities: Stereotypes and Sensitization in the Indian Context." "Day 3: Gender: Looking Beyond the Boundaries: Dept. of Political Science" ["International Level Webinar Series on Gender Studies: Multidisciplinary Perspectives"]. *YouTube*, uploaded by Shyampur Siddheswari Mahavidyalaya, 2 Sep.

2020, www.youtube.com/watch?v=s2xYUJcDgHU. Accessed 1 Sep. 2021. (The duration of Anirban Ray's presentation is approximately 00:16:44–01:20:42 within this video.)

Rosen, Steven J. *Śrī Chaitanya's Life and Teachings: The Golden Avatāra of Divine Love*. Lexington Books, 2017.

Schouten, J. P. *Revolution of the Mystics: On the Social Aspects of Vīraśaivism*. Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 1995.

Schouten, Jan Peter. "The Unconventional Woman Saint: Images of Akka Mahādēvi." *Female Stereotypes in Religious Tradition*, edited by Ria Kloppenborg and Wouter J. Hanegraaff, E. J. Brill, 1995, pp. 123–150.

Sen, Amiya P. *Chaitanya: A Life and Legacy*. Oxford University Press, 2019.

Sen, Meheli. "From *Dostana* to Bromance: Buddies in Hindi Commercial Cinema Reconsidered." *Reading the Bromance: Homosocial Relationships in Film and Television*, edited by Michael DeAngelis, Wayne State University Press, 2014, pp. 139–164.

Sharma, Varisha. "Is Cricket a Gender Biased Game? India in Relation to the World." *International Journal of Law Management & Humanities*, vol. 1, issue 5, 2018, pp. 1–12, www.ijlmh.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Is-Cricket-a-Gender-Biased-Game-India-in-Relation-to-the-World.pdf. Accessed 30 Aug. 2022.