

Article
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Locating Homo Ethicus: Ray's *Nayak* and Chatterjee's *Rajkumar*



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...the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature, to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure. (Hamlet; Act III, scene iii)

Biographical details would rightfully claim that Soumitra Chattopadhyay (hereafter 'Chatterjee', as his surname is commonly referred to in English) adapted an eminent Clifford Odets play during the early seventies of the previous century. Apparently, Chatterjee's play *Rajkumar* (premiered 1973) is a reconstruction of Odets' *The Big Knife* (premiered 1949). Notwithstanding the originary source text of the play, the present essay would like to argue that Chatterjee adapted the Odets play in order to make a comment on the famous Satyajit Ray film *Nayak* (The Hero; 1966). The Odets text in that sense has only been instrumental in building up an intended dialogue with the said film. Hence, quite expectedly

the adapted version by Chatterjee continues to gesture towards the eponymous hero of *Nayak*. So much so that it can fairly be argued that Chatterjee's *Rajkumar* effectively is simultaneously an adaptation of and a clandestine counter-text to *Nayak*.

Unpacking the critical dimensions of the stance taken by Chatterjee vis-à-vis the said Ray film would also point to the fact that he has deftly woven his text within the narrative texture of a crucial phase in the annals of Bengali cinema. Odets' play was pivoted on the personal tragedy of one certain person. Chatterjee, while adopting, made the text

multi-valent, adding a collective dimension to the dilemma that haunts the protagonist and the disaster that befalls him. Despite being centred on a designated singular, *Rajkumar* does not keep itself restricted into the travails of that individual only. Chatterjee places the play within a certain chronotopic frame of the Bengali film industry. It is a space that imploded with a set of crises and the fissure spread itself along a clearly identifiable political faultline. While both the Ray-film and the Chatterjee-play, in respective ways, try to disrupt the construction of the hero, the modes this disruption is negotiated with are radically different. The politico-ethical position of the subject is what differentiates the two. The Ray film does give some flashes of the crevices within the self but ends up threatening to decenter the dominant subject. Effectively what it strives towards is recentering of the same, subsequently managing to keep the *stasis* in place. The play by Chatterjee, on the contrary, refuses to recenter the threatened and violently displaced subject.

2.

While interrogating the authorial intention behind a translation/adaptation, the agency of the translator who adapts a text is something that needs to be looked into. Sprung from the Latin word *adaptatio* that denotes a certain type of translation which approves a good amount of creative autonomy to the translator, the very idea of adaptation involves, as Corinne Lhermitte explicates, “the idea of transformation, adjustment and appropriation when it first appeared during the 13th century.” (Lhermitte: 2004) Making a strong case for the creative license to be given to the translator adapting any text, she quotes Douglas Kelly tracing back the originary sense of the term. Kelly writes:

‘There are three prominent modes of *translatio* in medieval French: translation as such, including scribal transmission; adaptation; and allegorical or extended metaphorical discourse. In each case, a source, an extant *materia* surviving from the past, is re-done by a new writer who is, in effect, the translator.’ (Kelly: 1978; quoted in Lhermitte: 2004)

Interestingly Kelly informs that during medieval period *translatio* was pivoted on what he called ‘topical invention’. It is something which ‘translates, transfers the past to the present’ certainly with ‘... artful elaboration of true or credible arguments at suitable points in a given source’ (Kelly: 1978; quoted in Lhermitte: 2004)

While adapting ‘The Big Knife’, Chatterjee has re-done the *materia* deploying an intriguing *topical invention*. For him, the transferring of content occurs at more than one layer. The Hollywood in the forties of the twentieth century provides him with a perfect setting to transfer the narrative to the space and time he was rooted to. Again, in order to operationalize the (inter-cultural) transferring of a particular content, he makes the source-text (which is a foreign content) constantly conjure up another content that his audience is more familiar with: *Nayak* by Satyajit Ray. This is the moment of a veritable shift, since this is precisely when he decides to converse simultaneously with two different texts as his source. He brings the agency of the translator into play, making full use of the artistic autonomy (as the translator). As a result, the adaptation configures itself with a unique double bind of origination: the proto-text and the text that he seeks to address. Officially ‘The Big Knife’ has been adapted, but at the same time, Chatterjee maintains a conceptual dialogue with *Nayak*.

The *topical invention*, as has been mentioned above, is what facilitates this dialogue. In a unique intervention Chatterjee introduces a self-reflexive stance into the construction of the protagonist. It is a phenomenological construction in which the author (as adaptor) lets his own self intrude the protagonist. The protagonist, then, is made to gesture to another text conceptualized by Ray.

Such a distinct autobiographical turn problematizes any linear reading of his text. Also, the narrative now being dispersed into three different discourses (originary text by Odets being adapted, film by Ray being surreptitiously summoned and the autobiographical nodes of Chatterjee himself), it is important to find how the texts are sutured.

Here Slavoj Žižek might be having an interesting light to offer. In an interesting essay 'On Žižek, Adaptation and Fragments of the Whole' Mark Wallace has reflected on Žižek's view of translation and adaptations as well. Borrowing from Walter Benjamin's theorization, Žižek considers the translation (also the adaptation) as a fragment that fits together with the original that is fragmented too. He writes:

These (imagined) variations should not be read as distortions of some lost primordial original, but as fragments of a totality which would have consisted of the matrix of all possible permutations (in the sense in which Lévi-Strauss claims that all interpretations of the Oedipus myth, inclusive of Freud's, are part of the myth). Should we then endeavour to reconstruct the full matrix? What we should rather do is locate the traumatic point, the antagonism, that remains untold and around which all the variations and fragments circulate. (Žižek: 2014; 145-6)

Clearly, the 'traumatic point...that remains untold' is where, as Žižek would have it, the *original* meets the *translation/adaptation*. While Wallace takes this view to be too idealistic – 'one that posits a unity behind each avatar, a unity that cannot be found in any individual work, but only uncovered by the scholar' (Wallace: 2019) – the criticism rings a tad unjustified since Žižek makes no bones about calling any supposed 'organic Wholeness' (of the original) a 'myth' and then in harsher words, a 'fake' – something to be torn apart by the translation itself. He does not seem to be searching for any unitary entity behind the texts, but speaks of locating the point that, notwithstanding being untold, forms the significant rupture in the narrative that keeps on appearing in different variations across languages. Chatterjee, as it appears, would not object to such a motivation (namely a traumatic core) behind his adapted version of (first) an Odets play and (then) a Ray film. In effect, the intriguing genesis of Chatterjee's play seems to encourage a larger exchange of places. Did he pick up the rupture in the protagonist of the film and then decide to engage

with the Odets play since it offered him an opportunity to revisit the rupture he had located in the film? In that case, 'The Big Knife' becomes the surrogate source shifting the Ray film to the place of the *original* source.

3.

All these three texts, in their respective ways, focus on a certain type of lone individual caught in what I would like to call *liminal* bind. The liminality of their positions makes the situations so uniquely ambivalent that the protagonists cannot distinguish between their public achievements and secret personal fall.

Taken from the Greek word *limen* (meaning threshold), the term *liminal* was coined by Arnold van Gennep in 1909 in his seminal work *Les Rites de Passage*. As Gennep claims, every individual in the passage of life must go through the three-phase journey, the second of which is the "liminal" or in-between phase. It stands between the phases of separation (from the previous phase) and of returning to the community. Later, Victor Turner in his *The Ritual Process* engaged with this term only to expand its ambit to a wider phenomenology of this *threshold* place. The displacement of being in the liminal mode has been articulated by Turner: 'Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention and ceremonial. As such, their ambiguous and indeterminate attributes are expressed by a rich variety of symbols...' (Turner: 1969; 359)

As the very concept of liminality, the state of being in-between, flows from a unique conjunct of space and time, the entities in the liminal space find themselves on a slippage that unhinges the fixity of (the processes of) making meaning. Just when the material achievements tend to determine the ways of their seeing, the liminality of their (state of) being turns things indeterminate and vulnerable to the tumult in inner spaces. As a result, the ethical conundrum is what haunts them the most.

All three protagonists describe a killing field, fraught with fame, greed, wealth, debauchery, betrayal and other demons that keep on stalking hugely successful silver-screen hero. To make the situation more subversive, at least for two of them, the professional success and the subsequent earthly pleasures get secretly undercut by some kind of *hamartia*, the tragic flaw carefully buried under their respective past lives. While the nature of this *hamartia* is cataclysmic in the play by Odets (and by Chatterjee, subsequently) – an accidental murder, the onus of which being carefully shifted to the friend of the actual perpetrator – Ray's film does not have the hero getting embroiled to such an explosive situation. His secret repentance has, at its core, a bunch of deeply personal encounters with a few people whom, he thinks, he had not behaved properly with.

For both these categories, however, the central enigma lies in the ethical dimension, something that continues to baffle them. Apparently, they are supposed to bask in the dazzling exploits of their respective material success. Nevertheless, their clandestine pasts marked with sordid details of 'fall', keep on unsettling that determinate structuration of meaning.

Ray's hero, on a train journey to Delhi, confesses privately to a young lady, a journalist by profession, who refuses to swoon over him. After offering a sympathetic hearing, she prefers not to make those dark secrets public. The skeletons being safely placed in the cupboard, Arindam is able to maintain a semblance of equilibrium between his public and private self. He does come perilously close to a violent rupture, but the thunder remains distant, the confessions comfortably buried and the stasis carefully undisturbed.

Intriguingly enough, the rupture that only threatens to destabilize the hero (in the film) seems to have been picked up by Chatterjee. A few years after this particular film when he comes up with his version of the successful silver screen hero, the eponymous protagonist takes the self-subversive plunge, even at the cost of his booming career, and eventually his

life as well. Such an experiment pits Chatterjee's text in direct confrontation with the film made by his mentor Satyajit Ray. Taking a step further he even decides to re-configure the original text (by Odets) vis-à-vis a tumultuous phase that rocked the Bengali film industry during the fading years of the sixties of the past century. More importantly, it was a tumult that he himself was an active part of. Not just identifying with the character he creates – which actually is a common enough phenomenon in the long history of literature – Chatterjee lets the particular character move in a more dangerous terrain. It begins to get configured with the technologies of the personal self of the author.

Not in many cases, can a playwright be found sharing such unmistakable similarities with the protagonist of the play he's written. Both the playwright and the protagonist put their respective careers at risk, yet did not budge before the relentless pressure being mounted from different quarters. Much like his fictional counterpart (who was entangled into an even murkier turn of things), Chatterjee found himself under a panoptic control that tried to hegemonize the industry that he was, by that time, quite an eminent part of.

In Odets' play *Marion*, the wife of the protagonist, sums up the fissure that continues to wreak havoc on him (in effect, on all the three protagonists across texts) albeit at a subterranean level.

Marion: Your sin is living against your own nature. You're denatured—that's your sin. Aren't you the one who says he wants to live a certain way and do a certain kind of work?... you feel guilty and it makes you vicious. You've taken the cheap way out—your passion of the heart has become passion of the appetites! Despite your best intentions, you're a horror. (Odets: 1975)

The sense of guilt that Marion refers to leads to the traumatic core that, as Žižek has described, 'remains untold and around which all the variations and fragments circulate.' In Chatterjee's *Rajkumar* the hero is urged by his wife Jaya not to desert the protesting workers. Interestingly, Chatterjee himself

admitted being spoken to by his wife Deepa with exactly the same request. She, as Chatterjee himself recounted later in his autobiographical journal, threatened to move out had he chosen to leave the bunch of hapless workers in the lurch. So, *Rajkumar* tends to get a distinct autobiographical dimension, making the narratorial space more difficult to deal with. Also, the way these protagonists engage with this hidden point of trauma is what formulates their destiny. This is what turns things even trickier for Chatterjee since he decides to make his personal voice interchangeable with that of the protagonist he has created. Still, he does not refrain from locating the trauma deep in the most dazzling exploit of his achievements: stardom.

Just like Arindam Chatterjee, the protagonist of Ray's *Nayak*, Rajkumar Mukherjee, in Chatterjee's adapted version of *The Big Knife*, is the *numero uno* actor in the Bengali film industry. However, Rajkumar at a crucial juncture of his life does the opposite to what Arindam did in a similar situation. Requested by one of his closest friends to express his solidarity publicly to striking workers Arindam simply refused to oblige. Sharing stage with a group of agitating workers, as he thought, would dent the spectacle of the hero. He secretly offered some cash instead, but bluntly rejected the idea of being seen on the makeshift roadside dais of a trade union movement. One (publicly) neutral, (politically) non-committal, hence supposedly *depoliticised* corporeal frame is what the Ray's hero aspired to maintain. This is what, as he thought, is needed to operate his spectacularity. However, this idea of a symbiotic bond between political neutrality and iconicity is what Chatterjee decides to negate. His hero Rajkumar, unlike that of Odets, gets entangled to a larger struggle that has clear ramifications of more than one layer. While the class disparity is what explicitly drives the struggle, Chatterjee has hints that discriminations in gender too inform the situation. So, Rajkumar decides to attend a meeting called by the agitating workers. Also, he refuses to betray a desperate woman, who happens to be an easy prey for the powerful industry operators. Such a decision helps him to be at peace with himself but

earned him the wrath of an enormously powerful clique in the film industry.

Nevertheless, for all the three protagonists the situation was suffocating and called for a violent transgression. They know, albeit in their respective ways, that to transgress (the norms of the industry) or not to transgress is the question that looms large on the horizon.

Between the suffocating phase that drove them to this traumatic core and the decisive phase of transgressing (or, not transgressing) the codes of the industry there lies a space – the liminal space that unhinges *a priori*, brings in indeterminacy and release the rigidity of meaning into a dense ambivalence. This is the space that three fictional protagonists find themselves within.

So did Soumitra Chatterjee, at a certain point of time.

4.

For both these categories, fictional and real character, this liminality is in a sense liberating since it offers a transit. Since an offer is ontologically an option only, supposed to be taken or refused, the protagonists are given a choice to accept or turn it down. In the claustrophobic, heavily codified space of the glamour industry their trauma is directly proportional to the ruthless fixity of meaning encoded to their respective existences. What the successful hero is least supposed to do is to disrupt the (highly valorised) processes of making meaning that he owes his success to. His corporeal entity and the abstract iconic value (of the stardom) are coded with what the power-centre of the industry determines as the *normative*. Any act of transgressing the norms is tantamount to a supposed threat to the (closed and severely hierarchized) system. But, as the trajectories of these protagonists show, while chasing newer destinations of success, they hit the aporia, albeit in their respective ways.

While they cannot escape this ambivalence – the Janus-faced situation with the presence and absence of meaning intruding each other – all they can is to

transgress the codes, only if they choose. These protagonists know it for certain that violating the norms would disentitle them to privileges they have been enjoying as material acknowledgement to their iconic status. For them, paradoxically, such a radical step towards undoing their selves remain the only available way to be their inner selves.



Chatterjee uses such a claustrophobic setting to call on the *homo ethicus*, an ethically inclined being who unsettles the systematized network of meanings neatly arranged by its more worldly-wise counterpart, the *homo economicus*. The ontology of any invocation has a dimension of desire and clearly Chatterjee invokes the *homo ethicus* with a prior knowledge that invoking it – that too in such a situation – is an encounter with impossibility. By that time quite a veteran in the Bengali film industry, he knew that the operatives in the industry privilege the (performativity of) *homo economicus*. Considered to be invested with conscience (and hence, not in sync with the Machiavellian reality principles) the *homo ethicus* is always already put under erasure in the space of power. It is allowed to make a return, if at all, as a spectre of *absence* that haunts the spectacular *presence* of the powerful star.

Arindam: You know the voice of Conscience in the village dramas? That's the part for you.

Aditi: Is that a bad part?

Arindam: No, but a terrible nuisance. I wish I could sweep it away like all the rest.

Aditi: Conscience? But isn't that what makes you human? (Robinson: 2014; 179)

The *homo ethicus*, predominantly informed by conscience, is consisted of the gaping *absence*, simultaneously acknowledged and written off by *Arindam*. He struggles to align himself along the rationale of the *homo economicus*. *Aditi*, almost in vain, attempts to address the ethical core that *Arindam* seeks to erase but secretly remains vulnerable to. His confessional monologues and disturbing surreal dreamscapes tend to decenter the *presence* (of the normative) before the hero neatly reorganizes it neutralizing the threatening surge of *absence* (of the normative).

On the contrary, what Chatterjee actively encourages is an exercise in impossibility. First, he seeks to contest a seemingly inviolable logic of the glamour industry he himself was part of – the centrality of a materially identifiable success. Secondly, as was mentioned earlier, in a distinct self-reflexive turn, he posits the narrative in a space not far from the cartographies of his own self. There is reason to believe that, while making the adaptation, Chatterjee must have been conscious of the fact that aligning the fiction to the dark and fractured space of the then Bengali film industry would surely bring him right into the diegetic frame blurring the divide between the fact and fict. Still, he represents the much publicised (so, highly relatable) Bengali film industry as a dystopian space that seeks to erase the issue of ethics, traces of which, like inescapable ellipsis, manage to remain in the crevices within the text. In such a situation, making the voice of the protagonist directly interchangeable with that of the author is a dangerous choice. Choosing to be doubling up as an extension of the fictive protagonist, Chatterjee wants to be seen as performing the same *sacrilege* as his protagonist does – violating the normative codes of the industry. Intriguingly, one major deviation that he introduces in the adaptation also reinforces his awareness of being interchangeable with the protagonist. While the hero in the original text by Odets is explicitly

libidinal, even gets into an on-stage sexual exchange with the flirtatious wife of his friend, Chatterjee does not show him as transgressing the socio-sexual code at will. Unlike his Hollywood counterpart, Rajkumar carefully avoids the erotic advancements made by his friend's wife. One obvious reason can well be the normative conservatism of the Bengali middleclass audience. Nevertheless, this single explanation does not exhaust the significance of under-privileging the sexual adventures of the hero. With Chatterjee's own persona getting collapsed onto the protagonist Rajkumar Mukherjee in more senses than one – he was conspicuous as the star actor siding with the protesters and also he was most likely to play and did play the protagonist on stage – Chatterjee was likely not to disrupt the ethico-sexual fabric of the character that was, in a large way, mirroring his personal and professional identity.

The course of events as it happened took some interesting turn thereafter. Chatterjee, along with his compatriots in *Abhinetri Sangha*, the group that came up few years before this fiasco cropped up, got himself blacklisted, informally yet quite damagingly, by a group of influential producers. However, he was by that time too imposing a presence to be dispensed with and kept delivering successful performances, both aesthetically and commercially. The verbal sanction on him eventually faded away but by that time the Bengali film industry had developed fissures that resulted in a vertical split.

The actors who supported the agitating film technicians remained in *Abhinetri Sangha*. Those who sided with the producers' lobby formed a counter-organisation named *Shilpi Sansad*. As opposed to the not-too-covert leftist political leaning of the former, the new association flaunted people discernibly closer to the ideological operatives of the anti-left lobby in the political space. Interestingly, this breakaway faction was spearheaded by the most popular hero Bengali film has produced till date – Uttam Kumar, the eponymous protagonist of Satyajit Ray's *Nayak* and widely considered to be the arch rival of Soumitra Chatterjee.

5.

The modalities of adaptation celebrate both the sameness and alterity vis-à-vis the source text, as articulated by Lhermitte:

“Adapted” (or free) translation, on the contrary, is an ambivalent activity that is given enough freedom to ensure what Walter Benjamin calls “the after-life of the original”... Inspired by literary works, but not quite equivalent to them, adaptations, whose main purpose is to bring across and modify, claim their “differing” status from the start. The flexible nature of adaptation, both viewed as a state and a process of transformation epitomizing a subtle blending of sameness and difference, stresses the dynamics at play between a receptor, a source text and its offspring. (Lhermitte: 2004)

Claiming both sameness and difference vis-à-vis the source, Chatterjee not just decides to place his adaptation in such an ambivalent space, but more interestingly chooses more than one text as his source, one of them being the apparently *official* mother-text. The present essay would like to argue that he *reconstructs* Odets' *The Big Knife* only to interrogate Ray's *Nayak*. While all the three texts deal in ethical investment, Chatterjee, as noted earlier, makes the conundrum a lot trickier for the protagonist (in *Rajkumar*) to negotiate with. The conundrum, at one level, lies in the secret scar in the text that, as described by Zizek, forms the traumatic point which remains untold. For Chatterjee, during the fading part of the sixties of the past century, the most severe (and often secret) trauma was the ethical commitment of the artist to the fraternity of people that he belonged to. In other words, it was to the group of scantily paid workers toiling in the Bengali film industry.

Notably, Ray has stripped the crisis of the star of larger collective dimension. For him, it has shrunk to a strictly interpersonal predicament. More interestingly, for each of the personal *fall* of the hero, Ray keeps, surreptitiously though, a piece of reason to justify the way he reacted. The hero was taken to the place of demonstration (where he refused to alight from the car) without any prior

knowledge of his destination. The senior actor whom he chose not to help is the yesteryear star who unnecessarily acted up with him in the budding phase of his career. The married woman he developed an extra-marital affair with is the one who offered herself letting him know that she would not be hesitating to compromise. Even, it was his friend-turned-assistant who drove him to alcohol, almost forcing him to have his first peg of whisky laden with guilt and afterwards pleasure.



So, the hero in Ray's *Nayak* secretly carries within him an unblemished self (as he, and the director-author reckon), as sinned upon as sinning. With each of his moves being counter-reaction to an external action, his purported confession gets morphed to a long and phasic statement perfectly validating his positions. While it does help him to reorganize his self, what it severely debilitates is the possibility of having an ethical conundrum. The perfect and irreducible presence of meaning does not allow any ambivalence to set in. The neatly arranged self, in congruity with whatever he did, has only little or no room for the rupture that, once let in, might have an unsettling impact. So, maintaining the stasis at the end comes as a comforting and linear destiny that does not have any tragic underlay.

In Chatterjee's adaptation of Odets, the protagonist treads into a more dangerous and ambivalent terrain. Apparently, a linear progression, the play posits the protagonist into a veritable time warp. The stability (or stasis) of the *present* that he enjoys is a simulation, since it is predicated on his (public) denial of a sordid and deceitful *past*, that is

committing an unintended murder by running somebody over while driving. Despite kept under careful wraps it is known to a few persons, placed strategically around him. Hence, the *past* keeps haunting his *present* as an apparition. Thus, the entire *future* becomes fatally susceptible to a single piece of secret. Also, he is repeatedly pressurized not to externalize his commitment to a movement that he remains principally in favour of.

In such a claustrophobic situation, as Rajkumar finds, the process of making meaning has entirely been hegemonized by the forces that control his future trajectories. It is the abyss – in other words, the unbearable fixity of meaning – that Chatterjee drags his protagonist into. The only way he thought he could reclaim the control over his own self was by doing away with it. While this is precisely what he does – demolishing the (simulation of) stability through the demolition of his own self – the gang of evil even seeks to capitalize on the body of the deceased trying to use it to their strategic gain.

Chatterjee just drops a hint that due to the timely intervention of Subrata, the conscientious friend of Rajkumar, the true course of events would finally be uncovered, letting the *present* (and the *future*, as well) to get unshackled off the suffocating regime of (a hushed up) *past*. The play ends with such a gesture towards conscience that Rajkumar, sadly, does not live to see. Or, put it differently, the liquidation of *self* is the ultimate investment Rajkumar could make to unsettle the stasis. The loci and foci of meaning being fixated onto a certain act of crime and deceit, it takes a radical move to destabilize it. More importantly, this act of destabilizing is a choice that *homo ethicus* might approve, but ways to negotiate the reality still remaining open, *homo economicus* would have searched for ways to bargain.

Both of them find themselves in a liminal space that helps to locate and unhinge the cartographical nodes of power. Both of them stumble on the aporia, too. Then Arindam decides to engage with the ethical disturbances in his fleeting nightmares and a buried conversation, but remaining in perfect sync with the

normative codes of the glamour industry has never been an issue. Rajkumar, on the contrary, chooses to embrace the radicality.

Nayak prefers to operate in a secure and closed network of the *possible*. *Rajkumar*, on the contrary, is configured with the aesthetics of the *impossible*. Chatterjee adapts Odets to submit his counter-narrative to the construct of a hero as proffered by Ray in his film. In other words, he conceptually adapts the film using a diegetic structure he found in the Clifford Odets play.

6.

In the very first book of poems by Chatterjee, titled '*Jalpropater Dhare Danrabo Bole*' (Because I wanted to stand beside a waterfall; first published 1975) there is a poem that reads like an autobiographical statement of Rajkumar Mukherjee. It starts with a sentence that reads: 'Had I not ruined

my future myself, maybe I'd have pointed my finger to somebody...' (Chattopadhyay: 2014; 20)

The foregrounding of the *self* is significant since this is what Rajkumar ultimately does but this is also the principle he deviated from in the only sin he committed. Transferring the onus of the crime (that he committed) to someone else has since been the spectre that kept stalking him relentlessly. Paradoxically, undoing the self remains the only way for Rajkumar to foreground the same. Accordingly, he has it undone.

The poem ends with a rather decisive statement that uncovers the *homo ethicus* in Rajkumar: 'There are a few deceitful pleasures that I preferred not to reveal in'. (Chattopadhyay: 2014; 20)

Given a choice, the protagonist with a difference would have chosen it as his fitting epitaph.

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