

Lost Meanings and New Stories: *Candimangal* after British Dominance

This essay is about changes in *Candimangal* texts which can be observed near the end of their period of textual production, a period that had endured for over three centuries. It is an attempt to discover the contexts of textual innovation. It deals with two authors, Ramananda Yati, who wrote in 1766, and Lala Jay'narayan Sen, whose only securely datable text was written in 1772. Both authors thus wrote after the events of 1757, when Col. Robert Clive conspired with disaffected officials in the provincial government of Bengal and Bihar to overthrow and replace Nawab Siraj-uddaula; both wrote after the Battle of Baksar in December, 1764, when the English East India Company (EEIC) established themselves as the dominant military power in north and northeast India.

Only Jay'narayan Sen suggests the experience of a period of misgovernment, during which merchant officials of the EEIC both contested the authority of Indian officers of the provincial government, and expanded the scope of their own power and authority. By increasing their power English officials of the EEIC claimed they would increase the

revenues of the Company, but they also served their private enrichment, as individual officials, together with private Englishmen, established coercive trading monopolies in the furthest reaches of the Ganga and Brahmaputra valleys.¹ There seems no reason to doubt that over-taxation and coercive trade contributed to the very high mortality of the famine of 1769-70.² Only with the intervention of Parliament in the Regulating Acts of 1773 did the EEIC begin to separate its mercantile functions from its governmental responsibilities. We will see that in his work of 1772 Jay'narayan depicts Bengal as a land without a king.

Ramananda Yati and Jay'narayan Sen are two authors among a number of others who wrote *Candimangal* in the second half of the eighteenth century.³ I have chosen Ramananda Yati because he explicitly criticized and 'corrected' Mukunda's *Candimangal*. His version,⁴ although idiosyncratic in some respects, also reflects changes in the tradition which had become broadly accepted in the eighteenth century. I will consider four such changes. First, he ceased to be interested in the specifically 'economic' problems and solutions of Mukunda's great text. Second, he emphasized divine action on the one hand, and human devotion of the other, and reduced the scope for human agency allowed his

characters, by giving them a child-like character in times of crisis. Third and paradoxically, he used an economic metaphor for devotional relations between devotees and the deity.

This metaphor describes the power of the devotee in terms of the 'indebtedness' of the deity for his or her worship, and a corresponding divine obligation to repay the devotee. In

the bulk of his *Candikamangal*, apparently his earliest writing, Jay'narayan Sen also reproduced these same features. By comparing different stories from the two authors'

Candimangal I hope to show relations among these three features of their texts. None of them seems to be a response to the novel experience of British dominance in Bengal.

On the other hand, Jay'narayan Sen is more interesting for two radical innovations to the stories of *Candimangal*, innovations produced by associating them with the more fluid eighteenth century tradition of texts devoted to Satya Narayan or Satya Pir. In one case he incorporated references to *Candimangal* stories in his version of a Satya Narayan text, his *Harilila* of 1772.⁵ Although this text remains focused on divine action and human devotion, it also develops an analysis of 'present time' in Bengal as separated from the past by a profound rupture. In his last work, the story of Madhab and Sulocana,

Jay'narayan re-examined human agency, and represented morally neutral qualities of successful human action. These qualities include staking ones life on success, courage and boldness, intelligence, and cheating, trickery and beguilement. Through the figure of a remarkable heroine he provided an alternative to the child-like character of ideal devotees, but his plot also carefully confined success by these radical means to high *jati* actors, by portraying a usurping servant and his exemplary and brutal punishment.⁶

I will argue that both Jay'narayan's analysis of 'present time' and his re-examination of human agency are related to the novel challenges of British rule, challenges more apparent in the 1770s than they had been half a decade earlier to Ramananda Yati. I argue that he began to recognize and to develop a set of means for dealing with these circumstances. This chapter suggests, therefore, that textual production of *mangal-kabya* remained engaged with both devotional and this-worldly problems after the beginning of British dominance, but that one author could respond to this-worldly problems of his own time only by means of new stories.

Ramanada Yati

Just after the establishment of British rule in Bengal, Ramananda Yati explicitly criticized Mukunda and his poem, and altered some important features of the traditional plot. His text gives us no biographical information, but fortunately appended to one manuscript copy is a short biography of the poet, written by his disciple, Dvija Krsnakanta.⁷

According to this biography Ramananda at the age of seven was adopted by a band of renouncers, and at the age of twelve he began to study first *Agama* and then *Vedanta*.

After completing his study of the latter he was initiated as a *sannyasi*, and spent some time visiting sacred places in India.⁸ When he returned to Bengal, he observed that

Mukunda's *Candimangal* unfortunately was very popular: 'By its heaps and heaps of vulgar stories (*gramya katha*) the simple are drowned and the whole land enchanted'. He

decided to compose his own *Candimangal* for the sake of popular moral improvement

(*lok'hit hetu*), by eliminating Mukunda's 'faults' and his 'taste for the debased (*nic'ras*)'.⁹

Ramananda himself did not write anything about the place where he composed, or give

any description of events leading to its composition, nor did he mention receiving support

from any patron. He did include a chronogram for the year when his composition was

completed, the equivalent of 1766 C.E.¹⁰ This was less than two years after the battle of Baksar, where the British had established themselves beyond doubt as the dominant power in Bengal and Bihar. Ramananda also mentioned Bharat'candra and his *Annadamangal*, written in 1752, and his patron Maharaja Krsnacandra Ray of Nadiya,¹¹ and although as a *sannyasi* he would have had no fixed residence, these asides may suggest a peripatetic location somewhere near Nadiya, and therefore near the Hugli river and its 'contact zone' with Europeans.¹² There is no evidence that his text ever found an audience beyond a very narrow circle of Ramananda's disciples.¹³

Ramananda's text is a learned product, but not a product of elite, courtly culture. It contains verses in Sanskrit which he composed, and explicitly refers to many *puranas*, as well as to other Sanskrit texts.¹⁴ It also freely quotes from Mukunda's text, most often without attribution; probably he had this text before him as he composed.¹⁵ Many of his 'corrections' to Mukunda's narrative reveal both his literalism and an idiosyncratic and rather prudish sense of propriety. For example, in one place he corrects Mukunda on the following points. First, Kalketu's kingdom of 'Gujarat' evidently is not in Orissa, and the

'fifty-six clans' of Rarhi Bengali Brahmans whom Mukunda describes in 'Gujarat' could not have lived there. Second, there are no thorns in heaven, so the heavenly figure Nilambar could not have been pricked by a thorn while gathering flowers for Siva's worship. Third, Visvakarma never would have offended Candi's modesty by embroidering pictures of heroes on her bodice. Fourth, since she is beneficent, she would not have laughed loudly when ships of her human opponent Dhanapati sank in the ocean.¹⁶ In the process of criticizing and correcting Mukunda's version, Ramananda altered the traditional plot of *Candimangal* in ways that obscure its fundamental architecture, and so erase much of its meaning. This is especially true in his version of Kalketu's story, which receives a very condensed treatment.

The Meanings of Hunting

Ramananda's story of Kalketu is remarkable for a number of omissions and alterations to the traditional plot. Ramananda chooses not to tell Mukunda's fabulous story about the 'kingdom of the animals' and their successive reactions to Kalketu's

overwhelming prowess in hunting. Of course, to Ramananda the animals literally could not have had a 'kingdom'; therefore, in his version they do not appeal to their lion 'king' to protect them; nor do they gather together to worship Candi and to pray for her intervention after their king has been defeated by Kalketu. As in the traditional plot, so also in Ramananda's account, Kalketu's success at hunting does bring about Candi's intervention.

Ramananda, however, complicates her motivation by making her simultaneously feel 'sorrow' both for Kalketu's own condition, and for the hunted animals, who were 'weeping ceaselessly'.¹⁷ At the same time he omits the story that Candi became a golden deer that Kalketu could not catch or kill, with its rich mythic associations, and he also omits the story of her hiding all the animals of the forest from Kalketu.¹⁸ Her liminal relation between being hunted and being unhuntable is erased. She simply comes to the forest and assumes the form of a golden iguana, and Kalketu finds her, ties her up, and brings her to his hut.¹⁹

Eliminating the fabulous and mythic elements from the story's opening does not just miss the way Mukunda 'revealed with deep sympathy a picture of oppression of the weak

by the strong in the society of his own age',²⁰ although this certainly is one consequence, revealed in the diffusion of the goddess's sympathy for hunter and hunted alike.

Ramananda also makes the meaning of 'hunting' strictly literal. The problem which elicits Candi's intervention is hunting animals, not a metaphor which also can refer to predatory exploitation within human society. In Mukunda's version 'hunting' continually reappears in human society despite efforts to create peaceful relations based immediately upon buying and selling rather than hunting, and based ultimately upon generous gifts from superiors. In Ramananda's version, eliminating hunting, understood literally, is relatively easy. We can see the contrast immediately. In Mukunda's story Kalketu had to violate his own oath to the goddess to give up hunting, in order to kill a tigress that was terrifying his laborers hired to clear the forest. In Ramananda's version both these same laborers and Kalketu himself add to their own merit (*punya*) by saving and nurturing animals of the forest they are clearing: deer, rhinoceros, and even tiger cubs.²¹

Like most authors of *Candimangal* other than Mukunda, Ramananda does not develop 'buying and selling' as the middle term between hunting on the one hand, and

giving and receiving gifts on the other. In fact, Ramananda omits some of the stories about buying and selling found in the traditional plot. Thus, when we turn to Kalketu's founding a kingdom by clearing the forest of Gujarat, we find that although Kalketu does exchange Candi's ring for money in Ramananda's version,²² he does not acquire settlers because they have become dissatisfied with their own king's policies of taxation, and there is only the briefest indication that Kalketu has offered his settlers better terms.²³ More startling is the fact that in his version Bharu Datta does not insert himself as 'chief minister' and re-establish oppression by collecting supererogatory taxes from the traders in Kalketu's central market. Therefore there also is no punishment of Bharu Datta by expulsion. Consequently, war between Kalketu and the established king of Kalinga cannot be caused by Bharu's warning to that king that his kingdom is threatened with depopulation. In fact, in Ramananda's narrative, the established king of Kalinga, Kesari Simha Ray, does not attack Kalketu because his subjects have departed and his land has become depopulated. Without the 'kingdom of the animals', without the development of 'hunting' as a metaphor for human exploitation, and without 'buying and selling' as a

potential site for predatory exploitation, the war between Kalketu and the king cannot be seen as an effect for which 'hunting' is the cause. Instead Ramananda must find another way to motivate this war.²⁴ Mukunda had used 'hunting' as a metaphor to suggest that expropriation of material resources motivates violent conflict, but Ramananda's revisions eliminate this 'economic' motivation.

Devotional Topics

We can see Ramananda's purposes more clearly by noting that where he provides new stories, and where his account is most elaborate his topic is devotion. One striking novelty occurs in the story about how Candi discloses herself to Kalketu and his wife. We must remember that in his previous, heavenly existence Kalketu had been Nilambar, son of Indra; Phullara his wife also had been an *apsari* in heaven. We may join the story as Phullara goes to the market, and complains to her husband about the presence of a new 'co-wife' (the goddess in disguise) whom he has brought to their home. Kalketu, of course, knows about the iguana, but nothing about a co-wife, and goes home himself to see whether Phullara is telling the truth. On the way, however, in Ramananda's version

people already are talking about the brilliant form of this strange woman who has just appeared among them. The poet continues:

When he heard this much, the hero fell to the earth. From time to time Kalketu recovered his wits. By the power of his earlier asceticism he remembered through meditation, and as he wept, he said: 'Woman, are you that virtuous one? Will I get to see the form of Mother whom Brahma and the other gods never saw in meditation?' But again and again he forgot because of *maya*, because excessive *maya* caused him to hold fast to his human body. Weeping, Kalu said, 'Tell me the truth, woman!'

Phullara saw him and cried, 'Mother, Mother!' Weeping, the anxious woman's heart was pierced. 'Alas, I have upbraided the hero so much, I didn't know the secret truth. I am most sinful and ignorant. And Mother also! How much ill I spoke of her. I called her unfaithful and caused much strife.'²⁵

The idea that Kalketu could recognize Candi through memory of his prior existence in heaven is completely original. It leads naturally to familiar topics related to devotion: the power of *maya* which obscures experience of the deity, consciousness of failings in relation to the deity, and the suffering experienced with love in separation (*biraha*) from the deity.

Immediately after his 'memory' Kalketu also rehearses his 'sins' and considers how much this beautiful woman must suffer in coming to his hut. The goddess tells him to close his eyes; then he will see everything.

When he heard this, hunter's son closed his eyes. He saw the whole marvelous prior story of his life, that by a curse of Siva Nilambar had come to the earth, and had been born as a hero in the house of a hunter, and that Mother had come to see him. Seeing this he arose and cried in a loud voice. 'You threw me away, Mother, how is it you now are in my house?'²⁶

In Ramananda's version Kalketu's memory of his prior, heavenly existence, and the devotional practices which follow that memory replace the traditional image of Kalketu taking up his bow and arrow in a futile attempt to drive away the goddess. In the traditional plot she appears to be a woman dangerous to him because of her tempting beauty, wealth, high *jati* status, and her apparent willingness to defy codes of moral behavior for a woman. In Ramananda's version she is Mother, and her sexual allure is replaced by Kalketu's filial longing for her, and the affective, devotional practices of remembering, expectant waiting, weeping, and confessing, and the interior 'sight' of meditating upon her.

Wealth and Weeping

While Candi reassures Kalketu that she eventually will take him back to heaven, she also gives him the following command:

Perform the customary conduct of your own *jati*. Chant prayers and make offerings (*jap puja karyo*) and I will be pleased. I do not judge *jati* and

lineage, I do not take [account of] customary conduct; I hold to *bhakti* only.²⁷

She then gives Kalketu the sacred sounds and symbols (*mantra-yantra*) of her worship, and her one-hundred names to chant as a prayer for his well-being (*mangal*). To be a devotee is the new dharma which the goddess gives to Kalketu, not to be a king.

Nevertheless, devotion has instrumental value and produces this-worldly benefits.

When she gives him the ring Candi promises Kalketu that in his wealthy kingdom there will be people 'worth tens of millions', and that 'many splendid things will be produced in your city, and all those things will go abroad'. Kalketu, however, replies that he 'wants no other wealth than the feet of Hara and Gauri' (Siva and the goddess). To counter this completely correct idea, Candi must 'give' him *maya* again, so that he 'suddenly forgets'.²⁸

Although at critical moments of the story Kalketu will remember that wealth is 'worthless' (*char*), and to the very end that 'enjoying' his kingdom means being 'trapped in the net of *maya*',²⁹ this-worldly benefits of devotion cannot be foresworn. Thus, after going a short

way, Candi turns and explains to Kalketu, ‘Take this wealth as the fruit of worshipping Siva. Take this wealth and make me free (*khalas*) concerning all the fruit and the *bilva* leaves which you gave to his feet’. She explicitly states that what she has given him is ‘repayment of a debt’ (*dhar sodh*). According to this striking image one can accumulate assets through devotion, assets which are liabilities to the deity and which must be repaid by this-worldly benefits.

In Mukunda’s version Kalketu immediately had taken up his new responsibilities to clear the land, to build a city, and to settle a new kingdom where he would rule like a father over his subjects. In Ramananda’s version, Kalketu reacts to Candi’s departure by falling unconscious, and then weeping day and night for three days.³⁰ Being overcome by weeping becomes the characteristic response to feeling love in separation; and consciousness of separation is the knowledge to which a devotee awakens when he is freed from the grip of *maya*. Devotional practices remove Kalketu from this-worldly concerns; indeed, the repeated images of weeping and losing consciousness infantilize the model for an ideal devotee’s conduct.

I have argued, first, that in the story of Kalketu Ramananda elided economic motives in favor of devotional ones, and thereby simplified the traditional story which Mukunda had drawn upon. Second, I have argued that in treating human agency Ramananda highlighted practices of devotion, and that the devotional relation of child and Mother produced child-like models for an ideal devotee. Third, I have suggested that, in some tension with these developments, Ramananda also used the economic metaphor of indebtedness to describe the instrumental value of devotion and an obligation to accept its this-worldly benefits.

Lala Jay'narayan Sen

Compared to Ramananda Yati, Lala Jay'narayan Sen was much more closely connected to the courtly culture of Hindu elites. He was born to a wealthy Vaidya (physician) family in Japsa village, in the ancient locality of Vikrampur south of Dhaka. His grandfather 'Dewan' Krsnaram was famous for his wealth, as was his father Lala Ram'prasad for his 'extensive charity'. His elder brother wrote a learned Bengali book about *yoga* called *Mayatimir Candrika* (Moonlight for the Darkness of Illusion), which

according to Dinesh Candra Sen is 'difficult for many readers to understand because of all its complexities', and a commentary in Sanskrit on the same subject, called *Yoga-kalpatika*. Jay'narayan's younger brother Raj'narayan wrote a book in Sanskrit on devotion to the goddess, called *Parvati-parinaya* (The Marriage of Parvati). Both his sister Ganga Devi and his niece Anandamayi were authors as well, and the latter also was an accomplished Sanskrit scholar.³¹ Moreover, his family were agnatic relations of Maharaja Raj'ballabh Sen, a man who in the 1740s and 1750s had used his positions in the Nawabat government of Dhaka to assemble the vast zamindari estate of Raj'nagar south of Dhaka. In events leading up to Clive's conspiracy of 1757 Raj'ballabh briefly and without success attempted to protect himself by means of a limited relationship with the English at Calcutta. After again being employed in very high offices by Nawab Mir Ja'far's son, Miran, and then by the Nawab himself, Raj'ballabh came under suspicion with Mir Jafar's successor Nawab Mir Qasim, and was executed together with his eldest son by Mir Qasim in 1763, for suspected support of the English.³²

After his death Raj'ballabh's estate was stripped of some of his more recent and legally more tenuous acquisitions, and the remainder, still vast, was managed by his son Gopal'krsna, until the latter's death in 1787. Records of the Board of Revenue suggest conflict between Gopal'krishna and large *talukdars* (subordinate landholders) after Raj'ballabh's death; some of the latter succeeded in separating their *taluks* from his zemindari, thereby obtaining direct possession under the British. Gopal'krishna, on the other hand, attempted to record at least some *taluks* as '*nij*', property directly managed by the family, ousting men who as *talukdars* previously had collected the land revenues for these properties by arrangement with Raj'ballabh. In both cases the conflict seems to have been primarily but not exclusively with Muslim *talukdars*.³³

Jay'narayan is the author of two works, *Candikamangal*, and *Harilila*. The latter, a Satya-Narayan text, includes a chronogram for its date of composition, the equivalent of 1772 C.E. Dinesh Chandra Sen suggested that the *Candikamangal* is an earlier work, and tentatively dated it c. 1763,³⁴ but the only surviving manuscript is incomplete and now has no chronogram. Inserted into this work, however, is a romantic comedy about Madhab and

Sulocana, told to illustrate the sacred power of Sagar-Sangam, the pilgrimage site of the confluence of Ganga with Ocean. This story mentions Jay'narayan's own *Harilila*,³⁵ and so must postdate 1772. It may have been composed separately from the rest of the *Candikamangal*, as a tradition noticed by Asutos Bhattacharya suggests.³⁶ Because the *Candikamangal's* argument does not seem to take into account events during the first years of British rule, as the *Harilila* does, it may be that the *Candikamangal*, except for the romance of Madhab and Sulocana, was composed sometime before the *Harilila*, but the date of its composition is not essential to my argument. We now can begin to analyze the story of Dhanapati as presented in Jay'narayan's *Candikamangal*. Again we will see that devotional themes replace the this-worldly problems and solutions of Mukunda's text, in part because Jay'narayan understood the business of merchants in a way that Mukunda had not.

Market Trade and Honest Merchants

I have argued that Mukunda's *Candimangal* makes sense if we assume his initial problem was not market trade, but what I have called 'tribute exchange' between rival

kings through the medium of a merchant's voyage. The liminality of a foreign merchant engaged in 'tribute exchange' in Mukunda's account had provoked two questions: did the merchant belong to the 'party of the king's house' or to the 'other party' of his enemies, and would the king use his position to confiscate the merchant's goods for some trivial 'crime'.³⁷ Perhaps Mukunda's concern with 'tribute exchange' already was anachronistic when he wrote; certainly it was in the eighteenth century. I will argue that Jay'narayan Sen had profoundly different understandings of the business of trade and of the nature of merchants' profits. This is reflected in the image of the goddess which Dhanapati and his son Srimanta see while crossing the Ocean to Sri Lanka. Although she alternately swallows and regurgitates a male elephant, her image is suddenly made both playful and maternal: 'One moment she throws him upwards, the next she catches him, and then, becoming still, as the enchanting woman on the lotus is swallowing the elephant—she kisses him as Mother kisses her elephant-faced son Ganes.'³⁸

Jay'narayan never suggests a barter of valuable goods between Dhanapati and the king of Sri Lanka. Rather, Dhanapati explicitly states that he has come 'hoping for profit',

and he describes something like arbitrage as the business of merchants: 'I have passed this birth in going to many lands, and I receive a cordial reception from all great kings. I give whatever materials (*upadan*) that do not occur in each country, and getting them, kings honor me'.³⁹ Bringing goods to lands where they do not occur naturally produces love and respect on the part of kings. Dhanapati tactfully does not say so, but such trade naturally produces profit for the merchant as well. For Jay'narayan buying and selling is not a zero-sum game. Although, as we will see later, a merchant may be tempted to cheat others, he has no need to do so to gain profits for himself. In his *Harillila* Jay'narayan suggests that a merchant does have to be knowledgeable about weights and measures, and about hidden flaws which alter the value of precious goods, so that he will not be cheated.⁴⁰

Merchants and kings are not involved automatically in a contest of honor.

Dhanapati's purpose is ordinary market trade, and market trade by itself does not involve conflicts of honor between the merchant and the king. In fact, Jay'narayan has some difficulty motivating conflict between Dhanapati and the king of Sri Lanka, partly because

he also represents the king as generally virtuous. Thus, without any provocation or challenge from the king or his minister, Dhanapati simply tells the court the story of the strange woman he has seen mid-Ocean, as he first introduces himself. The king listens to this story, and ‘when the honesty and purity of the merchant had been understood’, he dismisses Dhanapati with the words, ‘Go to the city; do that work for which you have come’. Dhanapati himself, ‘while the goddess is making him stupid (*bimatite*)’, insists that he will show the woman on the lotus to the king, and he repeatedly swears an oath to this effect, promising to forfeit his life and his wealth if he should fail. For the first time the king then openly questions his honesty. After failing at this self-imposed task, Dhanapati defends himself as an honest merchant. He tells the court how skilled he is at ascertaining the value of precious goods with hidden defects. As a skilled and successful merchant, he has no motive ever to be dishonest.⁴¹

Srimanta and Devotion

Dhanapati is only the foil for his twelve-year-old son, who is a proper devotee of Candi, and comes to Sri Lanka looking for his father. Srimanta re-enacts his father’s story

with very different results, seeing the same vision of the woman mid-Ocean, telling the king about her, offering forfeits, and failing to prove the truth of his account. Unlike his father, Srimanta is led to the cremation ground to be executed. Because Srimanta is a faithful devotee, Candi then appears as an aged Brahman woman, and saves him first from the executioner, and then also from the chief of the king's guard and the entire royal army.

For Mukunda restoring Srimanta's honor had required two congruent transformations which changed the nature of the relation between merchant and foreign king. The first was that Candi gave Srimanta the adamantine body of a yogic hero, invulnerable to attack, and at least some of the insignia of a *raja*, a 'little king'. Srimanta thus was prepared for the second transformation, marriage between Srimanta and the king's daughter. For Mukunda the inherently problematic relation between a merchant who was engaged in 'tribute exchange' and a foreign king was resolved by converting it to a relationship of affinal kin, and in turn, becoming kinglike was necessary for Srimanta to be eligible to marry the king's daughter. The king's wedding gifts to his new 'son-in-law' replaced the

goods both Dhanapati and Srimanta had hoped to acquire for their own *raja* of Ujain through barter in 'tribute exchange'. Srimanta in turn used some of these gifts to supply his own *raja* with the goods needed for royal worship for which Dhanapati long before had been sent on the mission of 'tribute exchange'.

Jay'narayan, as we have seen, understood that the business of merchants is market trade, not gift exchange in a kind of diplomacy. In market trade, both buyer and seller may expect to benefit. Therefore in his version of Srimanta's story, the logic is lost which had required a marriage and its gift relations to resolve the inherently problematic relation of diplomacy between merchant and foreign king. Shared expectations of his audiences required him to tell the story of this marriage, but it occurs as an afterthought, when the fundamental resolution of the plot already has occurred. We will see that in his *Harilila* he eliminates the marriage altogether.

Moreover, because market trade is not inherently problematic for Jay'narayan, he somewhat awkwardly must contrive to introduce conflict between Srimanta and the king, and small alterations of the plot are needed to carefully balance the responsibility of each

party. In the initial encounter with the king, when Srimanta describes his vision of the goddess, the king remembers Dhanapati, tells Srimanta how Dhanapati had been punished for lying, and suggests that Srimanta looks like the son of that earlier merchant.

Jay'narayan makes it clear that it was by Candi's own wish that Srimanta, instead of heeding this warning, replied with an adult's assurance (*praudhi*) which the king thought completely unsuitable for a mere boy. Again, it was by Candi's wish that Srimanta readily agreed to forfeit both his wealth and his life if he failed. In a speech that only can be called effrontery, Srimanta then asked whether the king would hide the elephant's tusks when he returned with them.⁴²

On the other hand, in Jay'narayan's version when Srimanta fails to show his vision of the woman to the king, the king alleges that Srimanta has plotted to bring him to the middle of the Ocean in order to kill him. This suspicion is completely mistaken. Srimanta is given no opportunity to say anything in his own defense; he simply is handed to the chief of the guard for execution.⁴³ The king's earlier innocence in treating Srimanta is replaced by an abrupt and unmotivated misjudgment.

Like Ramananda, Jay'narayan also introduces the motif of the child-like devotee.

When Candi appears on the cremation ground as an ancient Brahman woman, she tells Srimanta not to be afraid, and takes him on her lap; this image is repeated in the course of the battle, and we are told that she caresses his limbs and soothes his fear.⁴⁴ Thus Srimanta is protected from the surrounding battle through his relation as a child to the goddess, not by a hero's adamant body. The image is repeated again when the king himself comes to the cremation ground to do battle. Seeing the ancient Brahman woman holding Srimanta on her lap, and wiping his face with the end of her *sari*, the 'wise king' recognizes her as the goddess, and dismounts from his elephant, bows to her, and begins to offer her his worship.

Since the king already has recognized her, and offered his worship, the goddess offers to show the king the strange vision of herself at the same time that she commands him to give his daughter to Srimanta, 'without slighting [Srimanta] in your heart as a merchant by *jat'*. No further bargaining is needed; the king simply agrees. He regards her words as an obligatory (*sirodharyya*), and Srimanta as his lord (*thakur*) because Srimanta

is a child of the goddess, whom she has taken on her lap like her sons Ganapati (Ganesa) and Guha (Kartika).⁴⁵ Srimanta is a suitable groom for the king's daughter precisely because of his devotional relation of child to Mother.

Again like Ramananda, Jay'narayan uses language of indebtedness to describe the relations of devotion at the same time that he makes the ideal devotee child-like.

Immediately after the king submits, the goddess explains that she is indebted to Srimanta from his prior birth.⁴⁶ Candi also explains to Srimanta that she is very much indebted because of his mother Khullana's love and devotion (*bhab bhakti*); otherwise Srimanta never would have seen the vision of her mid-Ocean.

In their respective versions of *Candimangal* Ramananda and Jay'narayan treat economic motives very differently. For Ramananda wealth ultimately is worthless. Accepting it requires 'forgetting'; enjoying it means being caught in the net of *maya*. For Jay'narayan on the contrary accumulating wealth is a natural consequence of the proper business of merchants, bringing goods to places where they do not occur, but it also is a

blessing of the goddess. On the other hand, to secure her worship she also can arrange to strip a merchant of everything he possesses.

Nevertheless, we have found common features in the way these two poets treat devotional topics and the scope for human agency. Neither was interested in the this-worldly problems and solutions of Mukunda's text. Both poets instead stress devotional themes. At crucial points in their stories both motivate their characters' actions, and especially their mistakes, by referring to the inspiration or the moving presence of the goddess. Both also emphasize a child-like model of dependence on the goddess as Mother. Finally, both use the economic metaphor of 'debt' owed by the goddess to describe the possibility of accumulating devotional assets which become obligations for the deity.

Analysis of other eighteenth-century *Candimangal* texts is necessary, but perhaps we can suggest that by the mid-eighteenth century their textual and performative traditions had changed in a way that made it difficult to use *Candimangal* to think about this-worldly problems of the 'present'. Rather, the increased emphasis on devotional themes (which

always had been present in *Candimanga*) seems to have located their stories in the distant past when ideal devotees still could exist. In the next section we will turn to Jay'narayan's *Harilila* written in 1772. This text explicitly treats the 'present' as a condition of enduring chaos, and in this way it seems to respond to the novel conditions of British dominance when Jay'narayan wrote it.

The *Harilila* and the Kali Age

The *Harilila* opens by recounting the nine past *avatars* of Visnu. Switching to the future tense, it then refers to Kalki, whose 'nature' the Lord will 'become' in order to 'destroy the outcast barbarians' (*mlecchas*).⁴⁷ Between the ninth and the tenth *avatars*, it then inserts a new and paradoxical manifestation of Visnu, whom it calls Satya-Narayan: 'Afterward [following the ninth *avatar*], when an age passed, the Lord considered in his heart and came himself to release Kali; for an age of untruth Hari [Visnu] became Truthful (*satyaban*)'. Immediately the *Harilila* narrates the first act of this new manifestation of Visnu, which was to retrieve Yudhisthira from heaven, where apparently he had existed since his journey to heaven at the end of the Treta Age, and to take him to earth as a trick

(*chale*), to Bali's city, 'in order to free Kali and to make known [Satya-Narayan's] own name as Merciful'.⁴⁸ Satya Narayan's deeds thus are located in a more recent past, and the program for worship which those deeds reveal are effective for the present, when Kali has been 'released'. In this way the *Harilila* opens the 'present' as a duration of time between the ninth and tenth *avatars*, and between the ancient past and the distant future, a duration to be marked not by the Kali Age, which had begun long before, but by Kali's release and full development of the disorders of the Kali Age.

Yudhisthira, thus accompanying Narayan (Visnu), sees in Bali's city a ram bound as if for sacrifice at the gate of the palace. After hearing the ram's piteous lament that he has been bound for a long time, but that death never comes, Yudhisthira, always compassionate, asks Bali to set it free, and in a moment of forgetfulness Bali agrees, only to remember that the ram is Kali himself, now released upon the world with predictable, immediately visible, and chaotic consequences.⁴⁹ Speaking to Yudhisthira Narayan lists them: dharma and virtuous deeds will disappear, sin and evil customs will fill the earth, Brahmans will become ignorant, and by sacrifices the low-born (*hin*) will possess the earth.

In homes devotion will be given to women (as superiors), which will make people lose their reason, and mothers their faith. *Mantras* will have no effect, the earth will not bear fruit, and the gods will become comatose. Cows will give only a little milk, and will perfectly faithful women still remain or not? Brahmans carefully will make their daughters thrive, keeping them at home, while brothers will separate. Wives will scold their husbands and drive them away. In the midst of this vivid description Narayan suggests the reason he has tricked Yudhisthira into producing this disaster: ‘Cruel Kali will become strong, he will take away your kingship, and cause all to drown in their want of judgment’.⁵⁰

Unlike more traditional Bengali texts which describe the full appearance of the Kali Age as a prophetic warning to their characters before taking them up to heaven, the *Harilila* describes its chaos as present reality for its characters.⁵¹ Like later colonial narratives of the Kali Age, this is a story of ‘modernity’ in a sense, for the present can be related to the past only through a series of ruptures.⁵² As one would expect, the *Harilila* locates these ruptures in reversals of the disciplined and hierarchical relations of family and gender, of *jati*, and of ruler and subject. In the last of these reversals we expect that righteous

Ksatriya rulers should lose power; and low born Sudras, foreign Muslims (*yavana*) or outcast barbarians (*mleccha*) should take their place. There is, however, an important difference to be found between Narayan's description of the Kali Age as fully released, and descriptions in earlier Bengali and *puranic* texts. When we turn to the principal narrative of this text, we will see that a practical absence of kings, rather than Sudra, outcast, barbarian or foreign kings, marks Bengal in the Kali Age of the 'present'.

Understandably, Yudhisthira is distraught. Narayan assures him that Kali will be a blessing in one way.⁵³ As usually is the case with descriptions of Kali's release and ensuing chaos, the *Harilila* ties this break with the past to new forms of worship, forms of worship which are appropriate to the new, 'modern' present, and through which devotees may surmount the problems which newly confront them. The *Harilila* promises direct, tangible benefits to people who listen to its narratives and worship Hari in the form of Satya-Narayan by the simple rites it prescribes. Although birth of children and survival of husbands also are named as benefits of worship,⁵⁴ for men the overwhelming emphasis is on economic gain, and the material comforts and security of being wealthy.⁵⁵ A second

dimension of the 'modernity' of this text therefore is its focus on rewards of wealth. With wealth, however, comes the increased temptation to forget or ignore the divine source of wealth. The merchant hero of the text forgets to worship because he is 'drunk with the liquor of wealth'.⁵⁶ The poet's own comments are particularly pertinent:

In various ways [Satya-Narayan] causes distraction through the delights of wealth.

In the course of time you will be struck with a terrible calamity. Brother, do not cheat Hari after gaining the taste for wealth. It is not anyone's own; by devotion alone one has power.⁵⁷

If in a moment a rich man may suffer financial ruin and dishonour, it also is true that a poor man may be elevated to unimagined conditions of prosperity and respect.⁵⁸

Together with this theme of economic uncertainty there also is an unusual emphasis on the obligation of the rich to practice charity. For example, when the merchant's wife and daughter have been reduced to begging during the merchant's imprisonment in Sri Lanka,

the merchant's wife supposes that her husband must be punishing her by staying absent for so long. The only fault she can remember is her own harsh treatment of a begging woman during their earlier period of prosperity:

'When I was lying on the flower bed (of her wedding), remembering how carefully I had tasted all the flavors of love, I did not give heed to an unfortunate woman (*abhagini nari*). How there is the wealth of a husband, how there is each flavor of love, of this I had no knowledge at all, only the lassitude of sleep (*nidray alas*) and therefore I had spoken to her with great anger.'⁵⁹

Perhaps because of the ruptures of Kali's release there are opportunities as well as risks in the 'present'. In the *Harilila's* central story, which concerns a merchant and his family, Jay'narayan relates the theme of the present to economic motives and to human and divine agency.

A Second Dhanapati

The principal narrative of the text concerns another, later merchant who also is named Dhanapati, his daughter Sunetra, and his resident son-in-law Candrabhan. This merchant and his son-in-law undertake a trading voyage and are blown off course, by the design of Satya-Narayan, because after an initial period of faithful worship, Dhanapati had become neglectful. Unexpectedly and without intent, therefore, the merchant arrives at the kingdom of Sri Lanka.

Upon arrival the merchant hears from a resident merchant a description which portrays Sri Lanka as an ideal kingdom with an ideal king.⁶⁰ The kingdom is naturally blessed by sandal-scented breezes, singing birds, flowering forests, seers, sages, and musical *Vidyadhars*. Its women are beautiful, its army is invincible. It is filled with Brahmans who keep Vedic fires and are engaged in sacrifices. The king himself is described as a son of Dharma (so a second Yudhisthira), a worshiper of Siva, one who nurtures his own kingdom without acts of terror (*bhim kanda bine*), but is victorious over his Ksatriya enemies by the strength of his own arms (*ksatrikulodbhab ripu jai bahu bale*). The king's precept is performance each year of the *Agnistoma*, *Vajapeya*, and all other sacrifices

(evidently the full series of one-day *soma* sacrifices, the *sapta-samstha*, performed just once by Maharaja Raj'ballabh).⁶¹ Other kings of the south recognize his authority. In the *Harilila* Sri Lanka seems to represent at least some aspects of the past before Kali's release, for Dhanapati finds there none of the disordered features of the Kali Age with which the *Harilila* describes 'present' time in Bengal. Time, in another familiar trope of modernity, has been mapped onto space.

In Sri Lanka Dhanapati finds disaster because the merchant himself, 'drunk with the liquor of wealth', had forgotten to worship Satya-Narayan. To 'trick' and punish his lapsed devotee, Satya Narayan takes the form of a human thief, and in an act which is unheard of in Sri Lanka, the deity steals a jeweled necklace and a jeweled sword from the queen's own room in the palace. The next morning the king summons his court and takes a written agreement (*mocalaka*) from the chief of the guard that he either will find the thief within a week or he will have his head cut off. The king's harshness naturally introduces a flurry of activity among his guards, spies and messengers, and the poet produces a small storm of Persian words to describe the court, its officers and their actions.⁶² These Persian words

immediately bring Sri Lanka into the recent past, by placing it in relation to familiar offices and practices of the Nawabat government of Bengal which the British were replacing when Jay'narayan wrote.

The thief (appropriately disguised as the servant of a merchant who has been absent for long time on a trading voyage, and whose wife is in distress) then finds Dhanapati and his son-in-law, and offers to pawn the necklace and sword with them. Dhanapati's son-in-law calculates the value of the necklace at 330,000 silver rupees, and the deity/thief/servant agrees to a pawn of only 75,000, given the fact that one might argue about a lack of proof of ownership! The next morning Dhanapati and his son-in-law are caught with the goods and imprisoned by the chief of the guard. Jay'narayan carefully records the king's mercy in deciding not to execute the merchant. Indeed, as soon as he examines Dhanapati, the king easily sees that he has none of the visible characteristics of a thief, and all of those of great merchant.⁶³ Instead, he decides to imprison the merchant and to confiscate all his goods.

Meantime, in the long course of Dhanapati's imprisonment the merchant's wife and daughter, as we have seen, are reduced to begging. One day they happen to see a Brahman worshipping Satya-Narayan, and they themselves remember to eat as *prasad* the special left-over food which has been offered to him, and to pray for their husbands' return.

Satya-Narayan then appears to the 'clear-sighted' daughter Sunetra in a dream, and reassures her that her husband will return. The women faithfully continue to worship 'the lord who is strength of those who have no lord, wealth of those without wealth, and the resort (*sambal*) of the powerless (*nirbal*).'⁶⁴ In short order Narayan also appears to Dhanapati in prison with a similar reassurance, and to the king with a warning that he has imprisoned the merchant unjustly.

When Dhanapati is brought before the king of Sri Lanka, the king naturally asks for the merchant's name and place of residence. Informed that his name is Dhanapati, and his residence Gaur, the king remembers that once at an earlier time another Dhanapati had come to Sri Lanka.⁶⁵ The king retells the story of this earlier Dhanapati, the story which is narrated in *Candimangal*. This is the final device the *Harilila* uses to locate the 'present'.

The earlier Dhanapati and the forebear of the king provide a model enacted in the past for the present king of Sri Lanka, but a model which is altered in two crucial details. In retelling this story the king omits both Srimanta's first failure to show the king the vision he has seen, and his final wedding to the daughter of the king. In the still simpler re-enactment of this basic story in the *Harilila*, the second Dhanapati does not have to be rescued (and has no son to rescue him), and of course no marriage is arranged between the king's daughter and the either the second Dhanapati or his son-in-law. Instead, after receiving the warning from Satya-Narayan, the king easily can accept the merchant's explanation for how he came to possess the stolen goods, and he can clear the merchant of all guilt.⁶⁶ The king gives the merchant the very sword and necklace that Dhanapati had taken as a pawn, returns all his confiscated goods, and with these signs of honor and stores of wealth the merchant and his son-in-law return home to Bengal.

Returning to Bengal, perhaps Dhanapati returns to a more problematic 'present'.

Once again, there is a failure to worship. The daughter Sunetra, in her rush to meet her husband, drops the deity's *prasad* (left over food offerings) on the floor instead of carefully

eating it, and her husband's ship promptly sinks in a sudden storm just as it was coming to their own river-landing. This final disaster provides the poet with an opportunity to describe devotional practices of child-like emotional surrender and loss of consciousness on the part of the suddenly bereaved Sunetra. (Of course she runs back, finds the *prasad* and eats it, and her husband is raised from the Ocean with only an indistinct memory of great happiness.) Before this happy resolution, however, the poet also momentarily questions Satya-Narayan's mercy, and concludes that one cannot understand his *lila*.⁶⁷

In its conclusion the *Harilila* describes the position of the merchant, living in luxury by means of the great wealth obtained from his voyage to Sri Lanka, as king-like:

In this way each day's delight has many flavors, and the merchant's son daily does what he wishes. The lord (*bhagaban*) made him like a king (*raj'tulya*) in the world, and in accord with righteous precepts he enjoyed whatever happiness occurred to his heart. He served Narayan as prescribed each day. The quantity of his wealth was that of a second Kubera. His elephants, carriages, and the power of his four-limbed

army were fit for a king. Hari had given them all to Dhanapati for his devotion.

Thousands and thousands of servants did his labor. In trade with various lands

(*nana desi byapare*) he was a 'great king' (*maharaj*).⁶⁸

The inflation of the last title, *maharaj*, seems deliberately ironic, given its qualifying delimitation to a merchant's business. Elsewhere there is only the briefest mention of the king of Gaur.⁶⁹ Unlike *mangal-kabya* narratives of other merchants who journeyed to southern ports and found some manifestation of divine power, this Dhanapati never interacts with a king in Bengal after his return. In the entire narrative of the merchant's story in the *Harilila*, the nearly complete absence of kings in Bengal, rather than the presence of foreign, outcaste, or barbarian kings, is the feature that most clearly distinguishes its 'present' from *puranic* descriptions of the Kali Age.

In the *Harilila* the merchant and his family suffer sudden dishonor and impoverishment because they have forgotten to worship Satya-Narayan, and punishment is withdrawn just as suddenly after they again remember to worship this manifestation of Visnu

in the Kali Age. The *Harilila* deals with problems which are created by the deity to obtain worship, and then resolved by the deity once he has been worshipped: 'Hari himself is the snake and Hari himself is the antidote'.⁷⁰

The function of the deity, Satya-Narayan, is to guide humans to worship him by manipulating them through their desires, but the deity is equally bound by the worship of his devotees. As Candi was described in Ramananda Yati's *Candimangal* and in Jay'narayan's *Candikamangal*, Satya-Narayan is made 'indebted' (*mi*) by worship, which indebtedness he 'repays (*sodhe*) a hundred-thousandfold'.⁷¹ Satya-Narayan is suited for the Kali Age because he understands human limitations, and materially rewards and punishes his devotees. In the stories of the *Harilila* these rewards and punishments are completely consistent with the record of worship by devotees. Therefore, the deity's punishments can be understood, and their cause rectified. Of course, in ordinary human life such a causal connection may be difficult or even impossible to discern, but again we see devotion described as the one effective human agency, and in Sunetra we meet an ideal devotion which includes child-like emotional surrender. Making a merchant's family the story's

central characters is appropriate to the limitations of the Kali Age. Without kings one must turn to merchants. Jay'narayan fully recognizes the economic motivations of his merchants and the connection between their desire for profit and desire more generally as a purpose of life. Indeed, rich descriptions of love-making frame the story, suggesting all a good life can be when Kali has been released and Yudhishira's kingship has been destroyed.

In Jay'narayan's last story, about Madhab and Sulocana, the poet considers kinds of agency which are human rather than divine, rational and independent rather than childlike, and morally ambiguous rather than righteous. This story's plot assumes that even when problems are caused by fate or by divine action, more than devotion will be required to solve them.

Madhab and Sulocana: The Plot

Sometime after writing the *Harilila* Jay'narayan composed the story of Madhab and Sulocana, and placed it within his *Candikamangal*. The story is told to Dhanapati by the merchant Cando (Manasa's antagonist in *Manasamangal*). Jay'narayan explains that after his encounters with Manasa, Cando has resettled at Sagar-Sangam, the confluence of

Ganga with the Ocean. Dhanapati meets Cando on his voyage to Sri Lanka, and hears from him the story of Madhab and Sulocana, as a proof of the exalted nature (*mahatma*) of this sacred site. Cando explains that when one forms a willed intention for worship (*kalpa*, *samkalpa*), and ritually offers himself as a sacrifice to the crocodile infested waters of the confluence, Ganga will give him in his next life whatever wish was expressed in and by that 'intention'. In fact, Cando adds, some people have submerged themselves in the waters of the confluence and obtained their wishes in the same life. One was Madhab, a prince. Because Jay'narayan's text exists only in manuscript and has not often been summarized by historians of Bengali literature, I briefly will outline its plot.

Once Madhab went hunting, became separated from his companions, and met a beautiful woman with whom he instantly fell in love, and whom he attempted first to seduce and then to ravish. The woman was Candrakala (Digit of the Moon), married to a *Gandharva*. She attempted to restrain him by reason, and when this failed, she told Madhab about Sulocana,⁷² a maiden on Plaksa Island, unmarried, a princess, one hundred times more excellent and beautiful than she. Candrakala also told him about a magical

horse in his father's stables with the ability to fly across the ocean, and she explained how he might contact Sulocana, once he had reached Plaksa Island, through a garland maker named Gandhini. Madhab vowed to 'get' Sulocana, or to renounce life and die. Again therefore we have a story centered on desire as a purpose of human life. We know from the Indo-Persian traditions within which this story is situated that it will be a 'romance of deferred desire', with a series of trials for the lovers which will be resolved comically by their wedding at the story's conclusion.⁷³

Madhab located the horse, and he and his servant Pracesta (Effort) flew to Plaksa Island. There, as Candrakala had predicted, he met Gandhini the garland maker, who was employed by the king to supply Sulocana with flowers. Gandhini, however, told him that that very day had been set for the prenuptial ritual of the *adhibas* for both the groom and bride, the ritual which 'begins the process of transforming their two bodies into one'.⁷⁴ Sulocana's wedding to the groom, a prince named Vidyadhar, would take place on the following day.

Madhab wrote a letter to the princess, introducing himself, and explaining his vow to 'get' her or to die, and he sent it to her by means of Gandhini. Sulocana, realizing that she must be a fatal disappointment either to Madhab or to her intended groom, and that there would be only one moment during the wedding when she herself would be free to decide between them, wrote a reply setting Madhab an apparently impossible condition. At the moment of the wedding ceremony just before the bride and groom first see each other's faces, she would raise her left hand. If Madhab could seize it and 'steal' her from the sky, then 'certainly I will welcome you as my groom'. To her great surprise, Madhab accepted her challenge.

Sulocana began to doubt that he was a human. She decided to see for herself, and on the pretext of bathing, went with her companions to a pond behind Gandhini's house.

Their eyes met, and Sulocana and Madhab fell in love. Madhab explained the powers of his flying horse, and then and there, Sulocana formally welcomed him as her groom despite having been promised by her father to Vidyadhar, and despite having had the latter's prenuptial *adhibas*.

The following day in a fateful error, Madhab fell into a deep sleep after keeping vigil all night. Pracesta, his servant, decided to take his place. He mounted the horse, seized Sulocana by her left arm, and flew away with her. Humiliated by his own failure and by the conduct of his servant, and bound by his vow to forfeit his own life, Madhab became a renouncer and departed.

Meantime Pracesta took Sulocana across the Ocean to the famous city of Kanci, where he rented a house, revealed his identity, bragged to her about his prowess, and asked her to have sex with him. Sulocana asked for a 'Vedic' wedding first (of course, without parents no such thing is possible), and sent him with her gold bracelet to the market to purchase goods needed at least for some kind of wedding.

In his absence, she recalled that once the sage Narada had given her a magic formula by which she could change her appearance. She became 'a handsome young man, though her own nature was feminine', dressed herself as a man, took up Pracesta's arms, mounted the flying horse, and decided not to return home to Plaksa Island and disgrace, but to go to Sagar Sangam, where Madhab must come to fulfill his vow of

suicide. There she introduced herself as Bir'bar (Best of Heroes), and was welcomed by the sonless King Susen and installed in his palace.

Soon a calamity befell King Susen's kingdom, in the form of a dangerous rhinoceros.

With the help of her flying horse Bir'bar killed the rhinoceros, cut off its horn, tongue and tail, and presented them to the king. King Susen in return insisted on marrying Bir'bar to his daughter Jayanti. While admitting to herself the utter strangeness of taking this step, Bir'bar consented, reasoning that if she did not, she would not be able to stay at Sagar Sangam, and so would never intercept Madhab. The wedding was celebrated, but the two women slept with Bir'bar's sword between them (Bir'bar explained the need for this restraint as a vow he had made as a valiant man). Bir'bar carefully hid anything that might reveal her true sex.

With his new authority as the king's son-in-law, Bir'bar then set guards upon the boat landings of Sagar Sangam, with the command that any foreigner who arrived with the intent of drowning himself should be arrested and brought to him. The first disappointed

lover to arrive was Pracesta. He intended to sacrifice himself and so get Sulocana in his next life. Bir'bar confined him in prison to await punishment by Madhab.

Next, her abandoned groom Vidyadhar arrived from Plaksa Island (having acquired the power of flight from the divine meddler Narada). His intent was the same. Bir'bar persuaded him that dying for a woman is completely improper conduct for a man; rather, women die for men (in the rite by which wives become *sati*). Disparaging the character of women in general, and of Sulocana in particular, Bir'bar persuaded Vidhyadhar to 'be at peace', to return home and to marry someone else.

Finally Madhab himself arrived (also having acquired the power of flight from Narada). He had taken the name Sulocan Giri, and was dressed as a Vaisnava renouncer, 'chanting the *mantra* of perfection, and recalling the name of Sri Hari'.⁷⁵ He also intended ritual suicide at Sagar Sangam. Unlike the others Madhab actually descended into the water before Bir'bar's guards seized him and brought him up to the shore, and then to Bir'bar. She recognized him at once but did not reveal herself. Instead, after arguing in

vain with him that it is improper for a renouncer to die for the sake of any desire, let alone for desire for a woman, Bir'bar insisted that he delay his suicide for a day.

Bir'bar then went to King Susen and confessed her true identity. She proposed a double wedding of herself and Jayanti to Madhab. The king readily agreed. She used her magic formula to return to her own natural form, and had Madhab brought to her. Madhab then could recognize her, and the two shared their stories of separation and grief, and Sulocana also revealed Pracesta's treachery. She then wed Madhab in the informal rite of *Gandharvas* by garlanding him as her groom, and the two made love.

The next morning King Susen made Madhab king in his place and gave him Sulocana and Jayanti in a double wedding. The following day Madhab decided Pracesta's punishment. His head would be cut off, his limbs severed, and care would be taken that no part of his body would fall into the sacred waters of the Ganga. The following day King Susen died. Madhab then ruled righteously for many years. Jayanti bore him a hundred sons, and Sulocana bore him ten. Eventually he and his two wives went to heaven. We may conclude, as Jay'narayan does, with the benefits of listening to this story:

Whoever listens to the account of Sulocana and Madhab is freed from sin and dwells in Vaikuntha (Visnu's heaven). Listen, everyone to the narrative (*itihās*).

Regard it with hearts made firm [in faith]. Whoever hears the story of Madhab's crossing the Ocean never will be bound by the ocean of existence. Any woman who has suffered for a long time from separation from her husband quickly will obtain him, and she always will dwell in happiness, and join with him in intercourse.⁷⁶

Human Agency in the Story Of Madhab and Sulocana

As Dhanapati says, in an interruption to the telling, this is a 'wonderful story, jewels strung on a fine cord . . . gold joined with perfume, a story about dharma with much secret meaning (*marma*), ivory inlaid with gold.'⁷⁷ Unlike any of the other narratives considered in this essay, the story of Madhab and Sulocana also is a sustained comic action. Much of its pleasure derives from the uncertainties of its outcome, as Sulocana boldly solves each new problem facing her, and each solution brings with it a new and more complicated problem. Both as a comic action and as a romance, the story is related to Indo-Persian story-telling

traditions; indeed, the motifs of a flying horse, a princess disguised as a warrior, her conquest of a rampaging rhinoceros, her threatened marriage to the king's daughter, and a double marriage to resolve the plot all are found in at least one Satya-Narayan manuscript.⁷⁸ Unlike most of the comic stories taken from the Satya Narayan or Satya Pir texts which Tony K. Stewart has translated, however, Jay'narayan's comedy also develops its two main characters, so that both come to deserve their happy ending, after an equally deserved period of suffering. By the time he has become the Vaisnava renouncer Sulocan, Madhab has learned a clear purpose for his life, mental stability, composure, and patience (*dhairyya*), the very qualities he most had lacked in his encounter with Candrakala.⁷⁹ The poet also shows us that Sulocana must suffer for her decision to flout her father's purpose (when she welcomed Madhab as her groom after performing the *adhibas* with Vidhyadhar's materials).⁸⁰

Sulocana is the central character and true hero of this story, and most of the agency in its plot belongs to her. Sulocana's transformation is profound when she becomes Bir'bar and then negotiates a thoroughly ambiguously gendered role.⁸¹ Precisely the fabulous

character of her gender transformation may have been reassuring to conservative men. We can imagine different gradations of sympathy for her as a model for virtuous action. More important for our purposes than her gender transformation is her repeated change from an initial emotional and passive reaction to ‘mental firmness’ and the active choice of a bold solution. We can take as an example Sulocana’s response to Pracesta when he revealed his true identity and claimed his right to possess her:

Sulocana heard this, and her life came to her eyes—she was borne away, floating in their streams of water. At this astounding speech her mind trembled; the faithful woman was like a dove fallen into the talons of a hawk. Like a doe caught in the net of a hunter, her eyes rapidly looked about in all directions. Then the clever woman made her mind very firm. Knowing the *Sastras*, she became resolute (*sthir*) and endured time passing. Knowing that patience is the vessel in which to cross an ocean of danger, the young woman crossed it by her cleverness.⁸²

She then devised the ruse for sending Pracesta to the market-place with her golden bracelet. Moreover, Jay'narayan supplies authorial commentary so that we are sure to judge correctly how well she had understood Pracesta's character: 'She increased the greed of a greedy person when she put gold in his hands. The woman played a fine hand (*bhalo khela kheli*) and fooled him for the moment'.⁸³ As soon as he has departed we see her again succumb to emotion, and again she 'makes her heart firm' and uses her intelligence to contrive a means, this time by taking the much more radical step of transforming her body into a man's. In the absence of a protective deity, the transformation of Sulocana's body into a man's and her decisive actions as Bir'bar replace the child-like emotional surrender we have seen in ideal devotees, including Sunetra in the *Harillila*.

Throughout the story characters employ morally neutral 'agencies': skills, powers, or qualities of effective action. For example, both Madhab and Sulocana take vows which stake their lives upon the success of their actions⁸⁴; surely their singularity of purpose and determination are virtues. Note, however, that after failing to achieve success with Sulocana, both Pracesta and Vidyadhar also resolve to commit ritual suicide at Sagar

Sangam to ‘get’ her in a subsequent life. Similarly, throughout the story boldness and courage are recommended for success. Candrakala tells Madhab, ‘Laksmi worships the man with boldness (*sahas*), and the boldness of a woman finds fault with delay (in a man)’.⁸⁵ Madhab follows this advice when he proposes to Gandhini that Sulocana’s prenuptial ceremonies are for himself—an outrageous idea because she already has bathed with Vidyadhar’s left-over preparations. Gandhini says to Madhab: ‘You would make an *adhibas* for another into something else? Your courage is impossible for anyone else’.⁸⁶ Is not Pracesta equally bold in deciding to take the place of his comatose master? Consider his thoughts, and the author’s commentary: “Sleep is the ruin of action, no wise person who knows the dharma of the *Sastras* worships it.” He understood that because of Fate Madhab never would be a groom fit for this virgin. “For this reason he is sunk in sleep, while my fate is wakefulness. Plundering has become necessary”.⁸⁷ Of course, Pracesta’s ‘understanding’ proves false in the end.

An even more problematic agency is ‘cheating, trickery, beguilement’ (*chal, chalana*), words that also are used to mean ‘cheating’ a woman of her virtue by having sex with her,

even by force.⁸⁸ Both virtuous and wicked actions are described as *chal*.⁸⁹ In an age of moral chaos even virtue must be armed with deception.

Throughout one must be impressed by Sulocana's intelligence. She agrees to be abducted from the sky only in the one moment of the wedding ceremony when a girl no longer belongs to her father, and has not yet been seen by her groom, when she therefore is independent.⁹⁰ Having taken control of the flying horse, she chooses not to go home, where she would meet with certain disgrace, but to Sagar Sangam, where Madhab must come to carry out his vow of suicide. Her speech to Vidyadhar, persuading him to forget her, to return home, and to marry is a brilliant and tricky piece of rhetoric, and the comic irony developed in this scene depends on our consciousness of difference between its explicit moral lessons of the worthlessness of women, and the implicit lessons of her own story and of Madhab's demonstration of faithfulness to her:

'No man gives up his life because of a woman. A woman dies for her husband; the

husband doesn't die. Look over the entire world and judge in your own heart.

Grasp patience, listen to what is eternal, make your heart steady--*which* valiant man,
which hero has died for a woman?'⁹¹

As agencies, can knowledge and intelligence be used for both good and evil purposes?

Candrakala's final advice to Madhab had been, 'All learn knowledge for the sake of wisdom. If someone does not, everything (he does) is futile; (although) he may speak like a learned Brahman with his mouth, for him everything in his conduct is otherwise, and he is the more at fault because of his learning'.⁹² According to her, even learning and intelligence can be used for purposes other than wisdom, but in Sulocana's wonderful example the three gradually become united.

Finally, the sacred power of Sagar Sangam also seems to be morally neutral.

Apparently, if anyone forms his 'intention' properly, and dies in the waters of Ganga, in his next life he will acquire whatever he wished in that intention. Ganga equally could have granted Sulocana to Madhab, Pracesta, or Vidyadhar. Divine agency therefore offers no solution.

Pracesta's allegorical name, 'effort', suggests that we might read his role in the story in a way that looks beyond the requirements of a comic plot. By taking the place of his master Pracesta enacts the most familiar of the disruptive roles of Sudras in the Kali Age. We can imagine, but not quite supply, performative signs to give Pracesta a local, topical referent: a local upstart? The *talukdars* who we know were attempting to escape taxation by the Raj'nagar zamindar? Or the most prominent of all usurping servants, the English East India Company's officials themselves? Sulocana makes it clear that Pracesta's crime is usurpation: 'You attempted to do your lord's deed yourself. You stole that which was meant for your lord's enjoyment You murderer of trust, now it is right to behead you'.⁹³ In fact, severing his limbs at their joints suggests obliteration, and care is taken that no part of his body will transmit to his next life the saving power of Ganga's water. Jay'narayan seems to supply an excessive punishment to cathect anxieties provoked by this character. Unlike the familiar image of moral chaos resulting from Sudras' authority in most descriptions of the Kali Age, here one must ask, How exactly is Pracesta's theft different from Madhab's? Pracesta's 'effort' displays boldness and courage; he stakes his own life,

and he uses intelligence and trickery to achieve his ends. One might consider him a reflection of Madhab; in fact one might be tempted to blame Madhab as the inspiration for his boldness. The plot cannot restore the natural hierarchy of master and servant; rather, to preserve our sense of the virtue of the master the servant must be destroyed in rhetoric 'eulogistic of conflict'.⁹⁴

Although Sulocana might have been understood as a transgressive character as well, Jay'narayan's story does not cathect anxiety about her by providing her with an exemplary punishment. Instead, he allows her to restore herself to her 'own' nature and to her proper role as a wife. She does not enact the chaos of 'woman on top' in the Kali Age, a theme which a century later became prominent in colonial Bengal.⁹⁵ (Of course, as a comic romance, the story does not show us what happens to her heroism after her wedding.)

The conventions of a plot of deferred desire require a story ending with a wedding, and its rhetoric eulogistic of harmony allows the audience to take satisfaction in a couple who will reflect each other's heroic virtues within a proper patriarchal order. Men also may be reassured by the familiar fictional pattern of a hero with one wife who is (or at least was) a

heroine, and another who always is perfectly submissive.⁹⁶ Because of Sulocana's own return to femaleness and femininity, at the same time that Jay'narayan's audience could take delight in her marriage they also were allowed to approve everything masculine and heroic which she once had done as Bir'bar. Thus, by a double plot resolution, and a rhetoric which eulogizes both conflict and harmony, Jay'narayan erases his expansive inventory of human agency from low-*jati* characters, and limits readings subversive of patriarchal order while centering agency in a heroic woman.

Conclusion

In their stories of Kalketu and Dhanapati both Ramananda Yati and Lala Jay'narayan Sen ceased to be interested in the 'economic' problems and solutions of Mukunda's *Candimanga*. Ramananda erased the meaning of 'hunting' as a metaphor for predatory exploitation in human society. Without the 'kingdom of the animals', and without buying and selling as a potential site for exploitation that is like 'hunting', the war between Kalketu and the king Kesari Ray cannot be seen as an effect for which 'hunting' is the cause. Instead in Kalketu's story Ramananda emphasized relations of devotion. The new dharma

which Kalketu receives from Candi is that of a devotee, not that of a king. Candi's gift of wealth threatens a proper devotional relationship, and Kalketu must be made ignorant again in order for him to accept it. Kalketu's kingship is 'enjoyed' and this enjoyment means being trapped in *maya*. On the other hand, devotional relations make this-worldly concerns irrelevant. Descriptions of weeping and losing consciousness as a result of separation from the deity make Kalketu and Phullara child-like, further reducing the scope for human agency.

Jay'narayan's story of Dhanapati and Srimanta in his *Candikamangal* similarly de-emphasizes the problematic relations of honor between a merchant in a foreign port and its king. Dhanapati's only purpose is profitable trade; he does not represent his own king of Gaur. His initial description of the woman on the lotus, although disbelieved, is not interpreted as an attack upon the honor of the court, and Dhanapati at first is dismissed to complete his business in the city. Although Dhanapati himself pledges his life as a forfeit if he cannot show the woman to the king, when he fails, the king mercifully alters his punishment from death to imprisonment.⁹⁷ Similarly Jay'narayan's story of Srimanta

minimizes the issues of contested honor. The king recognizes Candi when she appears as the old Brahman woman holding Srimanta on her lap. He submits to Srimanta as a 'son' of the goddess, not as a potential king with royal regalia and an adamant body, impervious to his army's attacks. Without any negotiation he agrees to marry his daughter to Srimanta.

Although he is not interested in problems of honor, Jay'narayan is interested in economic motivations. In both his *Candikamangal* and his *Harilila* the business of a merchant is getting profit (*labh*), and the method is described in terms close to arbitrage: taking goods to places where they are not produced.

As for Ramananda, so also for Jay'narayan, the crux of the story is a devotional problem: how to recognize the goddess in her many appearances. Devotional problems require devotional solutions. Like Ramananda, Jay'narayan infantilizes Srimanta as the ideal devotee. Like Ramananda, he also describes devotional relations in terms of the trope of indebtedness, which paradoxically emphasizes the power over the deity of a devotee who completely subordinates his will and action to the deity.

If we had only Ramananda's *Candimangal* and Jay'narayan's *Candikamangal*, we would not be able to see any response to the chaotic conditions of the first decade and a half of British dominance in Bengal. In two separate innovations to the tradition of *Candimangal*, however, Jay'narayan made the nature of his 'present' time a theme, and found a story about human agency which completely escapes the constraints of a child-like devotionalism.

Jay'narayan's *Harilila* of 1772 carefully explores the meaning of the 'present' by means of the image of Kali released and the Kali Age fully manifest, and by the plot device of a second Dhanapati, one who enacts a simplified story for the peculiar risks and opportunities of the present. The *Harilila* creates an image of 'modernity' in Bengal as a land suffering a rupture with the past, in part through the practical absence of kings. It maps 'modernity' onto space by having its merchants return to a more ideal past in Sri Lanka, a kingdom still ruled by a mostly ideal king. For unprecedented economic uncertainties of the 'modern' age of the present it commends both acquiring and giving away wealth. Primarily through acquisition and loss of wealth Satya Narayan rewards

devotees for faithful worship and punishes them for lapses, but in the practical absence of kings, merchants replace kings as ideal devotees. Again we have the description of devotional relations in terms of the trope of indebtedness, but to this a proverbial statement is added giving agency to the deity: 'Hari is the snake, and Hari is the antidote'. Human agency still is a matter of maintaining regular worship, rather than becoming 'distracted through the delights of wealth'. Perhaps love-making resolves the plot because in the debased conditions of the present, fulfillment of desire is that goal to which most humans still can aspire.

Finally, Jay'narayan's story of Madhab and Sulocana takes up Indo-Persian story-telling traditions to completely re-examine the question of human agency, this time without a devotional problematic. We have noted that especially in the character of Sulocana Jay'narayan explicitly contrasts the reaction of becoming emotionally overwhelmed to making ones mind firm and steady, grasping patience, and then finding a creative solution. Jay'narayan's narrative emphasizes morally neutral agencies: skills, powers, and qualities of action which may be required for success. These agencies include clarity of purpose,

staking ones life, boldness, courage, and intelligence, and trickery, deception and beguilement as well. Sulocana demonstrates them when she becomes Bir'bar, and valiantly achieves reunion with her beloved. She negotiates an ambiguously gendered role, defined in part by acute emotional sensitivity on the one hand and by mental firmness and resolute action on the other. But on a reduced scale and for debased purposes, the same agencies are implicitly present in the actions of Pracesta, the wicked servant.

Because she accepts the need to return to her 'own true nature' as a woman, and because, after the informal *Gandharva* ceremony, she also is properly married to Madhab, in a rhetoric eulogizing order Sulocana can be taken back into the proper hierarchal relations between husband and wife. No such restoration is possible for Pracesta. His reflection of Madhab's own morally questionable agency is too similar, and his threat to hierarchical order too serious,. Pracesta's allegorical name 'effort' suggests a topical referent for this character which performance easily could have made clear. In any case, in rhetoric eulogistic of conflict, he must be obliterated.

One can imagine different kinds of responses to this comic romance. If the tradition is correct that Jay'narayan composed it at the instance of his niece and daughter, we may suppose that elite women could take pleasure in the transgressive exploits of Sulocana as Bir'bar, while precisely her fabulous character may have been reassuring to elite men.

Those in authority may have found Jay'narayan's morally neutral vision of human agency liberating, while his punishment of Pracesta at the same time cathected anxieties evoked by that same vision. Disaffected servants and subordinates may have heard this story with a rather different set of feelings.

By describing eighteenth century changes in the tradition of *Candimangal* I have tried to place both the *Harilila* and the story of Madhab and Sulocana in a narrative and performative context. By tracing development within Jay'narayan's works, I have tried to suggest his innovations, as he brought into relation with *Candimangal* both a new story, the *Harilila*, and a different kind of story, a comic romance. In both of these innovative texts Jay'narayan drew upon the more fluid narrative traditions of texts devoted to Satya Narayan and Satya Pir. Tony K. Stewart has made it possible for English readers to appreciate the

variety of comic tales from Indo-Persian story-telling traditions in these texts, but he has separated them from the contexts of the more ordinary, and more didactic stories also told in these texts. By attending to a changing tradition of didactic contexts in *Candimangal* I have tried to suggest that Jay'narayan used his narrative innovations to think about the nature of his 'present' and the new requirements for effective human agency, given the new problems and opportunities of that 'present'. I have tried to show how his new stories disrupt the eighteenth century textual and performative traditions of *Candimangal*. I hope that this essay suggests that with his innovations *mangal-kabya* continued at least for a time to be a genre through which one could think about this-worldly problems of the present, but that such thought required both new stories and a different kind of story, in order to escape the devotional constraints of eighteenth-century *Candimangal*.

¹Peter J. Marshall, *The New Cambridge History of India*, II.2, *Bengal: The British Bridgehead* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 70-136.

²Sushil Chaudhury, *From Prosperity to Decline: Eighteenth Century Bengal* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1995).

³Others include Muktaram Sen, c. 1741-59, Akincan Cakrabarti, c. 1770-1800, and Bhabanisankar Das, 1779. See Asutos Bhattacharya, *Bamla Mangalakabyer Itihas*, paribardhita sastha samskaran (Kalikata: A. Mukharji ayand Kom. Praibhet Limited, 1975), pp. 563-7, 571-82. [Hereafter this work is cited as BMKI].

⁴Ramananda Yati-biracita, *Candimangal*, Anilabaran Gangopadhyay sampadita (Kalikata: Kalikata Bisvabidyalay, 1969). [Hereafter this edition is cited as RYCM].

⁵Jayanarayan Sen pranita, *Harilila*, Dinesacandra Sen o Basantaranjan Ray sampadita (Kalikata: Kalikata Bisvabidyalay, 1928). [Hereafter this edition is cited as JNHL]. I am grateful to Professor Clint Seely for making a copy of this work available to

me.

⁶Lala Jay'narayan Sen, *Candikamangal*, Manuscript No. 4348, The Asiatic Society, Kolkata. [Hereafter this MS is cited as JNCM]. I am grateful to the Asiatic Society for permission to copy the second half of this manuscript

⁷BMKI, p. 557.

⁸Anilabaran Gangopadhyay, 'Bhumika', in RYCM, p. 30. He lists some of the *tirthas* visited: Gaya, Kasi, Prayog, Uttar'des, Pullaraparat, Kam'rup, and Urisya.

⁹Gangopadhyay, 'Bhumika', in RYCM, p. 36.

¹⁰BMKI, pp. 550, 556; Anilabaran Gangopadhyay, 'Bhumika', in RYCM, p. 27.

¹¹BMKI, p. 551.

¹²See 'Maharaja Krsnacandra, Hinduism, and Kingship in the Contact Zone of Bengal', in this volume.

¹³BMKI, p. 555.

¹⁴Gangopadhyay, 'Bhumika', in RYCM, pp. 29-30.

¹⁵BMKI, p. 551-2.

¹⁶The passage is quoted in BMKI, pp. 558-60; I have followed Asutos Bhattacharya's explanatory notes.

¹⁷RYCM, p. 155.

¹⁸Cf. 'Kings and Commerce on an Agrarian Frontier: Kalketu's Story in Mukunda's *Candimangal*, in this volume.

¹⁹RYCM, pp. 155-6.

²⁰BMKI, p. 554.

²¹RYCM, p. 178.

²²RYCM, pp. 176-7.

²³RYCM, p. 178: Kalketu would not take any tax for a year, and he gave settlers their houses (*ghar-bari*) outright.

²⁴Kesari Ray attacks because he has become worried about missing forest tribute, the deer and elephants he used to receive from the forest which Kalketu has cut; moreover,

this is represented by Ramananda as a foolish concern. The king's minister of revenue wisely counsels that a settled countryside will yield more taxes than a forest, so he should not be upset. RYCM, pp. 185-6.

²⁵RYCM, pp. 167-8.

²⁶RYCM, p. 170.

²⁷RYCM, p. 171.

²⁸RYCM, p. 174.

²⁹RYCM, pp. 202, 209.

³⁰RYCM, p. 175.

³¹Dinesh Candra Sen, *History of Bengali Language and Literature*, 2nd edition (Calcutta: Calcutta University, 1954), pp. 574, 699; Dinesacandra Sen, 'Bhumika', in JNHL, pp. 6-10.

³²The best biography is R[amesh] C[handra] Majumdar, *Maharaja Rajballabh: A Critical Study based on Contemporary Records* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1947).

This should be supplemented by Rasikalal Gupta, *Maharaj Rajaballabh Sen o*

Tatsamakalabartti Bangalar Itihaser Sthula Sthula Bibaran, dvitiya samskaran (Kalikata: Ray

end Kompani [n.d., c. 1902]).

³³Dacca District Records, Miscellaneous letters received, Bundle 1, No. 1, Harrington, Subsecretary of the Board of Revenue to Day, Collector of Dacca, dated 17 July 1787, with enclosed proceedings of the Sudder Dewanny Adaulat, 21 December 1786; and Cowper et al., Board of Revenue to Day, Collector of Dacca, 3 August 1787; at National Archives of Bangladesh, Dhaka.

³⁴Dinesh Chandra Sen, *History*, p. 316.

³⁵JNCM, p.118a, the advice of Sulocana to Vidyadhar: ‘Call on Narayan, listen to the *Harililamrta*.’ The same passage also mentions as enlightening both the work of ‘Narayan’s elder brother’ the *Mayatimir Candrika*, and the work ‘by his younger brother’ the *Parbbatir* [sic.] *Parinay*.

³⁶BMKI, p. 571.

³⁷See “Tribute Exchange” and the Liminality of Foreign Merchants in Mukunda’s *Candimangal*, in this volume.

³⁸JNCM, p.136a.

³⁹JNCM, pp. 130b, 131a.

⁴⁰JNHL, pp. 109-10.

⁴¹JNCM, pp. 130a-130b.

⁴²JNCM, p. 138a.

⁴³JNCM, p. 138b.

⁴⁴JNCM, p. 140a, 140b, 142a.

⁴⁵JNCM, p. 143b.

⁴⁶JNCM, p. 143a. Candi then states the traditional accusation that the king has got a child (*sisu*), and after tricking him, would have cut off his head; but the narrative itself has not supported any evidence of trickery on the part of the king. Of course the king’s suspicion of a plot to murder him was completely mistaken.

⁴⁷JNHL, p. 4.

⁴⁸JNHL, pp. 4-5.

⁴⁹JNHL, pp. 6-9.

⁵⁰JNHL, p. 8.

⁵¹For example, the final ‘Sarga-arohan pala’ of *Dharmamangal* texts give such a prophetic warning to Lau Sen and his family and supporters.

⁵²Sumit Sarkar, ‘Colonial Times: Clocks and Kali-yuga’, in *Beyond Nationalist Frames: Relocating Postmodernism, Hindutva, History* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2002), pp. 28-32. See also his ‘Renaissance and Kaliyuga: Time, Myth and History in Colonial Bengal’, in Sarkar, *Writing Social History* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 203-210.

⁵³JNHL, p. 15.

⁵⁴The merchant first worships Satya-Narayan for a child, JNHL, p. 29; and the last act of worship is for the resurrection of his daughter’s husband, pp. 119-26.

⁵⁵See especially the short narratives of the poor Brahman and the woodcutter, narratives which precede that of the merchant, JNHL, pp. 19-27, and the list of benefits given the merchant when he first learns to worship after returning from a trading voyage to China, p. 29.

⁵⁶JNHL, p. 77.

⁵⁷JNHL, p. 61.

⁵⁸See especially the poet's prayer which concludes the first section of the poem, JNHL, pp. 75-6.

⁵⁹JNHL, p. 99.

⁶⁰JNHL, pp. 78-9.

⁶¹JNHL, p. 79; Rasikalal Gupta, *Maharaj Rajaballabh Sen*, pp. 184-92.

⁶²JNHL, pp. 83-4: *karar*, a promise, agreement or settlement; *dastakhat*, a signature; *harkara*, a messenger or courier; *tainat* [sic. for *tainat*], reproof, criticism; and *karnis*, a form of salutation introduced by the Mughal Emperor Akbar.

⁶³JNHL p. 96: The merchant has long arms, a long nose, fat shoulders and chest, straightforward and honest speech, and a pendulous belly. Compare a similar description of the merchants Dhanapati and Cando in JNCM, pp. 93a-93b.

⁶⁴JNHL, p. 102.

⁶⁵JNHL, pp. 111-12.

⁶⁶JNHL, pp. 108-112.

⁶⁷JNHL, p. 116: 'Who knows the lord's magic power? He is merciful and without mercy, this birth has passed in such thought'.

⁶⁸JNHL, pp. 142-43.

⁶⁹When Dhanapati introduces himself to the king of Sri Lanka after being released from prison: 'Dharmaraj (the king) in the kingdom of Gaur is a home to those who have no lord; listen excellent king, my name is Dhanapati'. JNHL, p. 109.

⁷⁰JNHL, p. 113.

⁷¹JNHL, p. 102.

⁷²The name suggests both beautiful eyes (and therefore a beautiful woman) and clear sight, and its similarity to Sunetra in the *Harilila* may be intentional.

⁷³Cf. Aditya Behl and Simon Weightman, 'Introduction', in Mir Sayyid Manjhan Shattari Rajgiri, *Madhumalati*, translated with introduction and notes by Aditya Behl and Simon Weightman, with Shyam Manohar Pandey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. xiv-xix.

⁷⁴This ritual begins the long process of making a bride into the 'half-body' of her husband. Inden and Nicholas describe it as follows: 'After bathing, the body of the groom . . . is anointed with a preparation of turmeric in oil. A portion of the preparation with which he has been anointed should then be sent to the bride . . . whose body is anointed with it after her bath. This action seals out undesirable substances from their bodies and begins the process of transforming their two bodies into one . . .'. Ronald B. Inden and Ralph W. Nicholas, *Kinship in Bengali Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), p. 41.

⁷⁵JNCM, pp. 118b, 119b, 120a.

⁷⁶JNCM, p. 127a. In its restricted meaning ‘Giri’ would refer to a Dasnami Saiva ascetic, but Madhab is clearly a Vaisnava, as we would expect from the author of a Satya Narayan text, and there is no indication of his having become a ‘soldier monk’, whether Saiva or Vaisnava. Cf. William R. Pinch, ‘Soldier Monks and Militant Sadhus’, in *Contesting the Nation: Religion, Community, and the Politics of Democracy in India*, ed. David Ludden (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), pp. 148-56.

⁷⁷JNCM, p. 119a.

⁷⁸The Erstwhile Bride and Her Winged Horse’, in *Fabulous Females and Peerless Pirs: Tales of Mad Adventure in Old Bengal*, trans. Tony K. Stewart (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 149-71. His translation is from *Manohar phasarar pala: satyanarayan pancali*, 10th ed. (Kathai, Midnapur: Nihar Press, 1313 BS [1906]). The ‘heavily edited printed edition’ in turn appears to derive from Rasamay, *Galakata phasyarar pala*, of which there is a manuscript dated 1857 in Dhaka University Library. See *ibid.*,

note, p. 244.

⁷⁹Compare JNCM, p. 96a: ‘Candrakala understood Madab’s character, that his heart would not be turned away by the elephant-goad of anyone’s speech; she advised him, “Sit, settle yourself, and listen; do not be agitated.”’ Compare p. 119b, the description of his arrival at Sagar-Sangam: ‘That day, fasting, staying on the shore, feeling happiness, Madhab had taken up the renouncer’s garments. He sat the whole night, thinking of the moon-like face of Sulocana, and at dawn he quickly arose. He abandoned all hope. In his heart was only the desire to wed Sulocana. Wearing a garland of *tulsi*, and recalling Hari with his lips, he composed the formal intention (for ritual suicide) in his heart.’

⁸⁰See Bir’bar’s reflections when she meets her erstwhile groom Vidyadhar, pp. 116b-117a: ‘He did the wedding rite of the First Sight (*mukh candrika*), but has not seen my face. I cannot forget this grief in my heart: being inclined to evil, I deceived him, and Fate has given me the fruit joined to that (action)’.

⁸¹As Stewart comments about a similar text, the ambiguity of Bir’bar’s gender is

more easily represented in Jay'narayan's text than in any English translation, because Bengali third person singular pronouns are not gendered; see *Fabulous Females and Peerless Pirs*, p. 245, note 8.

⁸²JNCM, p. 110b.

⁸³JNCM, p. 111a.

⁸⁴Sulocana does so just before she attacks the rhinoceros; JNCM, p. 114a.

⁸⁵JNCM, p. 97a: *sahasete laksmi bhaje puruse/ narir sahas dhirete dose.*

⁸⁶JNCM, p. 101b.

⁸⁷JNCM, p. 108b. Neither 'boldness' nor 'courage' is used in the description of Pracesta's 'plundering', which always is called 'wicked'.

⁸⁸For example, JNCM, p. 96b, Candrakala to Madhab: 'You are a god. I am a young woman, alone. By physical strength would you "cheat" one of the weaker sex?'

⁸⁹Candrakala's speech 'beguiles' Madhab, when she describes the beauty of Sulocana, and the sin of having sex with a married woman (p. 97b). Pracesta's abduction

of Sulocana 'cheats' Vidyadhar and by means of it Fate also 'cheats' Madhab (p. 110a).

Sulocana's disguise as a male 'tricks the horse with a fine trick' (p. 112a).

⁹⁰JNCM, p. 104b, Sulocana's letter to Madhab: 'I am not independent, what good does it do to think uselessly? There is no assembly for a bride's choice (of a groom), that I might become independent. My father and mother are the masters (*kartta*) now, so when and by whom is anything possible? You know it, when a girl becomes independent'.

⁹¹JNCM, p. 117b.

⁹²JNCM, p. 97a.

⁹³JNCM, p. 116a.

⁹⁴Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1952). See especially the sections contrasting Bentham, Marx and Carlyle, pp. 90-123, and 'A Metaphorical View of Hierarchy', pp. 137-42. Cf. 'A Historian's Introduction to Reading *Mangal-kabya*', in this volume.

⁹⁵Sumit Sarkar, 'Colonial Times: Clocks and Kali-yuga', p. 28.

⁹⁶Splitting the roles of a hero's wives, by giving a hero one wife who enacts a perfectly submissive and obedient role, and another who is or becomes a valiant heroine is a familiar pattern in oral epics; and in *Dharmamangal* compare the two wives of Lau Sen, Kalinga and Kanara. Cf. Lindsey Harlan, *The Goddesses' Henchmen: Gender in Indian Hero Worship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), and David L. Curley, 'Battle and Self-Sacrifice in a Bengali Warrior's Epic: Lau Sen's Quest to be a *Raja* in *Dharmamangal*, forthcoming.

⁹⁷JNCM, p. 138b.