

## Taste Terms in Bangla: A Cognitive Semantic Study

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### Abstract

This paper explores the metaphorical usage of taste-terms in Bangla. It discusses how Bangla speakers perceive taste-terms and conceptualise them in our everyday life. The paper is divided into three main sections. The first section provides an introduction to the subject of discussion, the second section talks about the prototypical usage of taste-terms in Bangla, in which the taste-terms are divided in terms of natural food and man-made food. Edible substances such as fruits, vegetables, etc. are natural food items, whereas food prepared by the combination of natural food is man-made food. The third section analyses the data using Lakoff and Johnson's Conceptual Metaphor Theory, with respect to the metaphorical usage of taste terms in Bangla. The fourth section provides a conclusion. This is the first attempt to work on Bangla since there isn't any work on Bangla in the Cognitive Semantic framework.

**Keywords:** Bangla, taste-terms, conceptual metaphors, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, prototypicality

### 1. Introduction

Taste is one of the five main senses. All humans perceive taste through taste cells that are located on the surface of our tongue, and some in the sensitive parts of the mouth, including the pharynx and soft palate (Backhouse, 1994:1). The terms, mainly adjectives and nouns, that are used to describe these various tastes of food items are called taste-terms. Different languages have different numbers of basic taste-terms. English has four main taste-terms namely, sweet, sour, bitter, and salty. Gujarati has seven main taste-terms namely, *mithu* [miṭʰũ] "sweet" (also *galyu* [gəljũ] and

*madhur* [məḍʰur]), *kadvu* [kəḍvũ] “bitter”, *tikhu* [tikʰũ] “spicy”, *туру* [tʌrũ] “astringent”, *khaatu* [kʰaʈũ] “sour”, *moru* [moũ] “tasteless”, and *khaaru* [kʰarũ] “salty” (Wakhale and Sarvaiya, 2021). Hindi has five main taste-terms namely, *meethaa* [miʰa] “sweet”, *kadvaa* [kəʈva] “bitter”, *tikhaa* [tikʰa] “spicy/hot”, *khataa* [kʰəʈ:a] “sour”, and *phika* [pʰika] “tasteless” (Kumari and Sarvaiya, 2021). This paper discusses the basic taste-terms in Bangla. The basic taste-terms in Bangla are *mishti* [miʃti] “sweet”, *teto* [tɛʈo] “bitter”, *jhaal* [dʒhal] “hot”, and *aaluni* [aluni] “tasteless/bland”. Wakhale and Sarvaiya, (2021) and Kumari and Sarvaiya (2021) use the term ‘spicy’ to describe both hot tastes, and the rich taste of Indian cuisine which results due to the use of many spices. In Bangla, there are two separate terms for each of these tastes. The first one is *jhaal* which refers to the hot taste, be it of natural food or man-made. The second one, which is used for any preparation that contains a lot of spices, is *karaa* [kəʈa] “spicy”. This kind of cuisine may or may not be *jhaal* in taste, but it does contain a lot of spices, giving it a flavourful, rich taste. Since it is not a basic taste-term, this paper refrains from including *karaa* in the discussion. The other term, *aaluni* refers to the absence of any taste whatsoever in the food. This taste comes about as a result of very little to no salt in the food which makes it very bland in taste. Since Indian cuisines are largely dependent on salt, the absence or presence of salt makes a huge difference, resulting in *aaluni* being one of the main taste-terms. Hence, Bangla has four main taste-terms – *mishti* [miʃti] “sweet”, *teto* [tɛʈo] “bitter”, *jhaal* [dʒhal] “hot”, and *aaluni* [aluni] “tasteless/bland”. Collection of data primarily includes consulting native Bangla speakers. Furthermore, A.T. Dev’s *Bangla to English dictionary*, and Rabindranath Tagore’s *Gitabitan* are also used for more data.

All of these terms have been analysed based on the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Kövecses 2010; Lakoff 1993; Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 1999). Metaphor, in its essence, involves comprehending and experiencing one idea by interpreting it through another idea (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003:6). In the cognitive linguistic view, metaphor is defined as understanding one conceptual domain in terms of another conceptual domain (Kövecses, 2010). The conceptual domain that is used to understand another conceptual domain is called the source domain. Metaphorical expressions are drawn out of the source domain to understand another conceptual domain which is called the target domain. So, in metaphorical lexical expressions such as “*raw* facts, *half-baked* ideas, and *warmed-over* theories”, *facts*, *ideas*, and *theories* are compared to the food terms *raw*, *half-baked*, and *warmed-over* (Kövecses 2010:6). In other words, ideas are explained through terms usually used to describe food. The metaphor that emerges from these

examples would be IDEAS ARE FOOD (Kövecses 2010:6). In this final metaphor, IDEA is the target domain, and FOOD is the source domain.

In this paper, metaphorical linguistic expressions concerning tastes are explored and analysed.

## 2. Prototypical Usage

This section deals with the prototypical usage of the taste-terms in Bangla. This is explained using the examples of food items which are natural and those which are man-made.

The first taste term is *mishti* [miʃti] “sweet”. This term has another variant – *madhur* [modʱur] “sweet”, which has a more ornamental usage since it is a word borrowed from Sanskrit. Natural edible substances that have *mishti* “sweet” taste are fruits like mango, apple, banana, etc. This is used for naturally sweet substances, for example, *mishti aapel* [miʃti apel] is “sweet apple”, *mishti kolaa* [miʃti kɔla] is “sweet banana”, and *mishti aam* [miʃti a:m] is “sweet mango”.

The next taste-term, *teto* [tɛtɔ] “bitter” has two variants – *katu* [koʈu] “bitter” and *tikta* [tikʈɔ] “bitter”. This taste is found in natural food items like bitter gourd, neem leaves, coffee beans, citrus peel, and so on.

*Jhaal* [dʒʱal], as mentioned previously, refers to food items that are hot in taste, not necessarily having spices in them. Natural food items that are *jhaal* in taste are hot chilli peppers, black pepper, clove, etc. Any dish that is prepared using these ingredients can be considered *jhaal* in taste. For example, *maachher jhol* [maʃʱer dʒʱol] “fish curry”, which doesn’t have many spices in it, but if made with extra chilies or black peppers, a burning sensation can be felt in the mouth which refers to the *jhaal* taste.

The last taste-term that this paper discusses is *aaluni* [aluni] “tasteless/bland”. This is a taste-term that is based on the absence of salt in the cuisine. In some cases, though, the presence of negligible amounts of salt also gives out *aaluni* taste. There are natural food items that have *aaluni* or bland taste, such as chia seeds, raw broccoli, raw cauliflower, raw potato, etc. Man-made food

items that have *aaluni* taste are oats, steamed rice, boiled eggs, or simply any cooked or baked food item that does not have any salt in it.

An interesting point to note here is that the term *aaluni* sounds similar to *aaloo* [alu], the Bangla word for ‘potato’, which might lead to a false conclusion that *aaluni* is derived from the taste for *aaloo*, but that is merely a coincidence. In a variety of Bangla, *lun* [lun] refers to ‘salt’. Adding a negation marking prefix to *lun*, it becomes *aalun* [alun], meaning ‘no salt’. Finally, to make it an adjective, the adjectival suffix ‘-i’ is added at the end of the word.

### 3. Non-prototypical or Metaphorical Usage

Taste-terms are typically used to describe various tastes of different food items, but there is an extended meaning that these terms hold. This meaning is the metaphorical or non-prototypical meaning. This section discusses the taste-terms according to their metaphorical meaning.

#### I. PERSONALITY IS TASTE

A person's personality is a collection of psychological characteristics and mechanisms that influence how an individual interacts with and adapts to his or her internal, physical, and social surroundings (Larsen & Buss, 2010:4). These traits and mechanisms are referred to as attributes that every human being possesses. Each individual's personality/demeanour makes them stand out amongst the others around them. This attribute is described using terms of taste in many languages; Bangla is the language-in-focus of this paper.

Personality includes a number of traits, such as a person's nature, their speech, their behaviour or body language, and so on. To describe someone's personality, Bangla often uses different taste-terms, providing a flavour to the description of the personality.

The taste term *mishti* [miṣṭi] is used to describe a “sweet” or pleasant demeanour of a person. It can be used to describe someone's demeanour as a whole or an aspect of their demeanour, like their smile, voice, speech, etc. This way of describing someone's demeanour represents folk model of personality:

1. *mishti bhaashi* [miʃti bʰaʃi] “sweet speaker/one who speaks sweetly”
2. *madhur bhaashi* [moɖʰur bʰaʃi] “sweet speaker/one who speaks sweetly”
3. *katu bhaashi* [koʈu bʰaʃi] “bitter speaker/one who speaks sweetly”

In the noun phrases above, the taste (*mishti/madhur* and *katu*) is the SOURCE and the personality (or disposition) of someone is the TARGET. The first two expressions refer to a person who speaks in a very eloquent manner, is polite and respectful. These expressions have a variation, *mishti baadi* [miʃti baɖi] and *madhur baadi* [moɖʰur baɖi] “sweet speaker”. *Mishti* and *madhur*, both mean “sweet”, *madhur* holding a more literary sense to it. It comes from the word *madhu* [moɖʰu] “honey”, and it literally means “honey-like”. Like *bhaashi*, *baadi* also means “speaker/one who speaks”. In many cases, *mishti* and *madhur* can be used interchangeably, but it is important to note that this is not always the case. In the third expression, someone who always seems to be less polite in their speech is considered to have a bitter tongue. This refers to the harsh way of talking and thus compared with the bitter taste which is usually disliked.

4. *mishti galaa* [miʃti ɡola] “sweet throat”
5. *mishti aaoaaj* [miʃti awaɖʒ] “sweet sound/voice”
6. *madhur aaoaaj* [moɖʰur awaɖʒ] “sweet voice”
7. *madhur dhvani* [moɖʰur ɖʰoni] “sweet sound”

Sound of someone’s voice is described in terms of taste(s). This phrase is used to describe speech. For a clearer reference, a voice that is clear, soft for the ears to hear, has a consistent tone, flows smoothly, can be referred to as a sweet voice.

In the examples 5 and 6, *aaoaaj* is a borrowed term from the Hindi/Urdu word *aawaaz* “sound/voice” which is used as a term for both “sound” as well as “voice”, whereas *dhvani* only refers to “sound”. On the other hand, *galaa* refers to “throat”. This is used as a metonymy in a part-whole relationship where “throat” stands for (a person’s) voice. It is interesting how a metaphor can consist of a metonymy in it!

From example 4 through example 7, taste is the SOURCE and someone's disposition, portrayed through their way of speaking, is the TARGET.

8. *mishti meye* [miʃti me:] “sweet girl”

In Bangla, *mishti meye* is an adjective used to describe a girl who has a good demeanour, suggesting that she is polite, soft spoken, helps people in need, respects elders, and so forth. This phrase is only used for the feminine gender. An older person may use this phrase to describe someone younger than them. Note that for a male, a form like *mishti chhele* [miʃti ʃhele] “sweet boy” isn't used in Bangla. To describe a boy who has a sweet personality, the form *bhaalo chhele* [bʰalo ʃhele] “good boy” is used.

9. *mishti chhuri* [miʃti ʃhuri] “sweet knife”

Here, the sharp edge of a *chhuri* “knife” is used as a metaphor for the negative disposition of a person, which is the TARGET. One might be under the impression that since *mishti* is used here, it might refer to something positive or pleasant but that is not the case. This is an idiom. The employment of the SOURCE *mishti* here is mainly to show the irony between the delivery of speech and the implication of meaning behind it. Usually, when the delivery of speech consists of a lot of sweet-talk along with a negative intention, the person using such a manner of speech is described as a *mishti chhuri*. This negative aspect in the speech is compared with the sharp edge of a knife since it is known that a knife can hurt someone. This makes *mishti*, a taste, the source concept, and the negative demeanour or character, the target concept. This idiom in Bangla is borrowed from the Hindi form *mithi chhuri* [mi:ʰi ʃuri] with the same meaning.

10. *aaluni swabhaav* [aluni ʃɔbʰab] “tasteless/bland personality”

11. *mishti swabhaav* [miʃti ʃɔbʰab] “sweet nature/personality”

12. *madhur swabhaav* [moɖʰur ʃɔbʰab] “sweet nature/personality”

When describing a personality that is boring such that the person might not enjoy indulging into activities that are otherwise considered “fun” by the majority, *aaluni* is used to describe it. To

describe a person who is soft-spoken, respectful, and jolly, *mishti/madhur swabhaav* is used. Here, the tastes like, *mishti/madhur* and *aaluni* are the SOURCE and personality is the TARGET.

13. *tikta man* [tik̠to mon] “bitter mind”  
14. *tikta hriday* [tik̠to (h)ridɔj] “bitter heart”

In the examples above, taste is the SOURCE and *man* “mind”, *hriday* “heart”, or disposition is the TARGET. Here, “mind” and “heart” metonymically refer to the person whose personality is being described—a part for the whole. Both *tikta man* and *tikta hriday* are used when one has a grudge towards someone. When we eat bitter gourd, our tongue gets bitter and the taste lingers there for a long time even after having sweet food over it. This idea is applied in this metaphor to show how a grudge towards someone makes the person’s disposition bitter towards the others and the grudge lingers in their mind/heart for a long period of time, sometimes even forever.

15. *madhur drishti* [mod̠ur d̠riʃti] “sweet sight”

A “sweet sight” refers to the way of looking at a person affectionately, mostly used in a romantic sense. This way of looking at someone in a loving manner portrays the person’s positive disposition towards the other person. The example above is one of the exceptions where *mishti* cannot be used interchangeably with *madhur*, which means that a form like *mishti drishti* [miʃti d̠riʃti] is not used.

Thus, in the metaphor PERSONALITY IS TASTE, PERSONALITY is target domain, TASTE is source domain. This metaphor is also found in Hindi and Gujarati (Kumari and Sarvaiya 2021, Wakhale and Sarvaiya 2021) respectively.

## II. APPEARANCE IS TASTE

Bangla also conceptualises a person’s appearance as taste. This remains specific to pleasant appearance only. As discussed earlier, sweet taste is again used here for showing the pleasantness of appearance.

16. *mishti mukh* [miʃti muk<sup>h</sup>] “sweet face”

17. *madhur roop* [moḍʰur ru:p] “sweet appearance”  
 18. *mishti roop* [miṣʈi ru:p] “sweet appearance”

In example 16, taste is the SOURCE from which the features of sweetness are attributed to the appearance of a person, the TARGET. An innocent face or a pretty face is referred to as *mishti mukh* in Bangla. This form is also used more commonly for females rather than males, except for very young boys. Just like *mishti meye*, this form is also used by the older people for the younger ones. There is an idiom that has a similar form but totally unrelated meaning – *mishtimukh karaa* [miṣʈimukʰ kəra] “to eat something sweet” (Lit. sweet-mouth to-do), which is used on special occasions, since in Indian culture, any auspicious occasion is celebrated by eating sweets.

In examples 17 and 18, *madhur* and *mishti*, i.e. taste is the SOURCE and appearance is the TARGET. Similar to *mishti meye* in example 8, *mishti/madhur roop* refers to a person’s pleasant appearance.

### III. ACTION IS TASTE

In Bangla, ACTIONS are perceived to be either positive or negative. Taste-terms like *mishti* [miṣʈi] or *madhur* [moḍʰur] “sweet” are used to describe actions that have a positive connotation while *tikta* [ʈikʈo] or *katu* [koʈu] “bitter” are used to describe actions that have a more negative connotation. Bangla compares different ACTIONS to various TASTES according to the level of positivity in the actions.

19. *mishti byaabohaar* [miṣʈi bæbohar] “sweet behaviour”  
 20. *madhur byaabohaar* [moḍʰur bæbohar] “sweet behaviour”  
 21. *katu byaabohaar* [koʈu bæbohar] “bitter behaviour”

Here, the TARGET is action, and the SOURCE is taste—*mishti* “sweet” and *katu* “bitter”. *Mishti* marks the sweet or positive behaviour, while *katu* stands for the bitter or unfavourable behaviour or intention. The mapping between them is based on how the behaviour is. When one’s actions are unpleasant in a way that they cause hurt or pain to someone else, or they are rude, it draws upon the characteristics of the bitter taste since it isn’t a taste that is generally much enjoyed. On the other



hand, pleasant actions or actions that are done in someone’s favour, to help them, draw upon the characteristics of the sweet taste since it is a taste that is enjoyed and considered auspicious by the majority.

22. *katu uttar* [koʈu uʈ:or] “bitter reply”

In the above example, giving a bitter reply means giving a harsh or rude reply, often without any plausible reason. Evidently, taste is the SOURCE, and the action of answering is the TARGET.

23. *mishti kathaa* [miʃʈi koʈʰa] “sweet words/speech”

24. *madhur vaakya* [moʈʰur bak:o] “sweet sentence”

25. *tikta kathaa* [ʈikʈo koʈʰa] “bitter words/speech”

26. *katu kathaa* [koʈu koʈʰa] “bitter words/speech”

27. *katu vachan* [koʈu boʈʃon] “bitter words/speech”

28. *katu bhaashan* [koʈu bʰaʃon] “bitter speech”

The examples above show how Bangla conceptualises WORDS and TALKING through taste-terms. *Kathaa* [koʈʰa] and *vachan* [boʈʃon], both refer to “speech/words”, while *vaakya* [bak:o] means “sentence” and *bhaashan* [bʰaʃon] stands for “speech”. Thus, the action of speaking is the TARGET whereas the taste terms, *tikta* [ʈikʈo]/*katu* [koʈu] “bitter” and *mishti* [miʃʈi]/*madhur* [moʈʰur] “sweet” are the SOURCE. According to Bangla, someone’s speech or way of talking can be sweet (or polite) or bitter (or rude). “Sweet” refers to a pleasant way of talking and “bitter” refers to an unpleasant way of talking. It is interesting to note here that in Bangla, *mishti kathaa* [miʃʈi koʈʰa] “sweet words/speech” has a positive connotation, but a simple reduplication of *mishti* “sweet” would assign a negative connotation. So, *mishti mishti kathaa* “sweet, sweet words” takes the meaning of sweet-talk as a result of the reduplicated form. This can be compared with the case of *mishti chhuri* discussed in example 9 under PERSONALITY IS TASTE section. Wakhale and Sarvaiya (2021), under their discussion of this metaphor, give a similar example of *mithi vaato* [miʈʰi vaʈo] “sweet talks” which is an equivalent of *mishti kathaa* [miʃʈi koʈʰa] “sweet words/speech” in Bangla.

Again, the employment of *madhur* is much less in regular conversation than is the use of *mishti*. Of course, this does not imply that *madhur* is not used at all in speech. Its usage is more prominent in the ornamental way of speaking or writing.

#### IV. EXPERIENCE IS TASTE

In daily life, one goes through numerous emotions based on their experiences. These experiences can be mental/emotional or physical. Be it feeling happy and excited while attending a favourite artist's concert for the first time or trying out bungee jumping for the first time, experiences can be of any kind that make us go through a range of different emotions. Based on which experience yields what emotion, Bangla employs various taste-terms to describe different experiences.

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|---|---------------------|
| 29. <i>mishti abhigyataa</i> [miʃti obʰig:ɔʈa]  | “sweet experience”  |
| 30. <i>madhur abhigyataa</i> [moɖʱur obʰig:ɔʈa] | “sweet experience”  |
| 31. <i>tikta abhigyataa</i> [ʈikʈo obʰig:ɔʈa]   | “bitter experience” |

Bangla conceptualises EXPERIENCE as either good or bad where a good experience is conceptualised as “sweet” and a bad experience is conceptualised as a “bitter” experience. *Mishti abhigyataa* [miʃti obʰig:ɔʈa] and *madhur abhigyataa* [moɖʱur obʰig:ɔʈa] refer to a pleasant experience and *tikta abhigyataa* [ʈikʈo obʰig:ɔʈa] refers to an unpleasant or bad experience. In the case of describing experience, unlike the interchangeability of *mishti* and *madhur* for “sweet”, for “bitter”, *katu* cannot be used interchangeably with *tikta*.

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| 32. <i>mishti rod</i> [miʃti roɖ]      | “sweet sunlight” |
| 33. <i>madhur rod</i> [moɖʱur roɖ]     | “sweet sunlight” |
| 34. <i>mishti sakaal</i> [miʃti ʃɔkal] | “sweet morning”  |
| 35. <i>madhur aalo</i> [moɖʱur alo]    | “sweet light”    |
| 36. <i>mishti aalo</i> [miʃti alo]     | “sweet light”    |

In the above examples, the experience of *rod* [roɖ] “sunlight”, *sakaal* [ʃɔkal] “morning”, and *aalo* [alo] “light” is the target domain and taste is the source domain.

There are two kinds of lights that human eyes can perceive – natural and artificial. Natural lights include the sunlight and the moonlight, and artificial lights include the light bulbs and tube lights that are human made. Despite these differences Bangla perceives them all in an equal manner where the light that is soft for the eyes to look at and for the skin to feel are perceived as sweet. In the examples given above, *rod* specifically refers to “sunlight” and *aalo* refers to “light” in general – man-made or natural. *Sakaal* “morning” is grouped with *rod* and *aalo* since *sakaal* is related to “light” and “brightness”.

*Mishti rod* “sweet sunlight” refers to the kind of sunlight that has very less intensity and doesn’t feel too hot when it falls on the skin. It can also be called ‘soft sunlight’ since it falls softly on the surface as the intensity is very low. Usually, the sunlight in the winter season and the evening sunlight can be described as *mishti rod* or *madhur rod*. The opposite of this in Bangla is not described using a taste-term yet for a reference, it is *karaa rod* [kəɽa roɽ] “strong sunlight” which refers to a rather intense sunlight, usually experienced in the noon or afternoon of summer season in the Western and Southern regions of India.

Experience of sleep is also conceptualised in terms of taste in the following examples:

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|---|---------------|
| 37. <i>mishti ghum</i> [miʃti gʱu:m]    | “sweet sleep” |
| 38. <i>madhur ghum</i> [moɽʱur gʱu:m]   | “sweet sleep” |
| 39. <i>mishti swapna</i> [miʃti ʃɔpno]  | “sweet dream” |
| 40. <i>madhur swapna</i> [moɽʱur ʃɔpno] | “sweet dream” |

Here, the experiences of *ghum* “sleep” and *swapna* “dream” are the target domains and taste terms like *mishti* and *madhur* are the source domains since the concepts of sleep and dream are compared with sweetness. “Sweet sleep” and “sweet dream” refer to good sleep and pleasant dream respectively. Since the sweet taste has generally been accepted as something very pleasant, it is used to describe pleasant experiences as well. However, in Bangla, there is no conceptualisation of a nightmare or a bad dream with a taste-term. It is simply referred to as *khaaraap swapna* [kʱarap ʃɔpno] “bad dream”. Same is for *khaaraap ghum* [kʱarap gʱu:m] “bad sleep” as well.

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|--|----------------|
| 41. <i>mishti baataash</i> [miʃti baɽaʃ] | “sweet breeze” |
|--|----------------|

42. *madhur baataash* [mod<sup>h</sup>ur baʔaʃ] “sweet breeze”

In Bangla, experiences based on the sensation of touch are expressed in terms of tastes. Thus, the experience of soft, slow, cool breeze is conceptualised as sweet, since such a breeze feels pleasant. Here, the experience of breeze is the target domain which is said to have a certain sweetness in it, a taste, which is the source domain. As mentioned in earlier sections, *madhur* is again an ornamental adjective but can be used in regular conversation as well.

43. *mishti chumban* [miʃʈi tʃumbɔn] “sweet kiss”

44. *madhur chumban* [mod<sup>h</sup>ur tʃumbɔn] “sweet kiss”

Just like many of the previously discussed experiences, Bangla also conceptualises the experience of kiss using the taste-term *mishti/madhur*. A sweet kiss, full of love and care, like that of a mother’s kiss to her child is what is referred to here. Experience of kiss is the TARGET and the taste *mishti/madhur* is the SOURCE.

Bangla also conceptualises the experience of memory as taste.

45. *mishti smriti* [miʃʈi sm.ɾiʈi] “sweet memory”

46. *madhur smriti* [mod<sup>h</sup>ur sm.ɾiʈi] “sweet memory”

47. *tikta smriti* [ʈikʈo sm.ɾiʈi] “bitter memory”

Memories may be good or bad, conceptualised by using the taste-terms *mishti/madhur* and *tikta*. It is evident that *mishti* or *madhur* are used to describe a pleasant memory and *tikta* is used to describe an unpleasant memory. Here, the experience of memory is the TARGET and taste terms like *mishti/madhur* and *tikta* are the SOURCE.

Thus, the metaphor EXPERIENCE IS TASTE is used where EXPERIENCE is the TARGET which is described by the source domain of TASTE. Kumari and Sarvaiya (2021) and Wakhale and Sarvaiya (2021) also provide an extensive discussion of EXPERIENCE IS TASTE in their papers.

## V. EVENT IS TASTE

Like actions, some events are also conceptualised by using taste terms in Bangla. The event of marriage, specifically, is conceptualised as a sweet taste.

48. *madhur milan* [mod<sup>h</sup>ur milon] “sweet meet”

In the example above, taste is the SOURCE and the event of marriage is the TARGET. *Madhur milan* is used in the context of marriage. It refers to the celebration of the union of two people in the wedlock. Generally, in a marriage, the participants involved are happy and content with the decision, even excited, thus making it a pleasant union, and hence the employment of *madhur* (“sweet”) for *milan*. It also refers to the good feeling after having a pleasant meeting with one’s friends or family members in a family gathering, and the like.

## VI. FILM IS TASTE

Bangla conceptualises films in terms of tastes. Bangla only conceptualises an uninteresting movie in terms of taste. Movies that are captivating are described simply as “good film/movie” instead of “sweet film/movie”.

49. *aaluni cinema* [aluni sinema] “tasteless/bland movie/film”

In the example above taste is the SOURCE and film is the TARGET. The phrase refers to a tasteless or uninteresting movie. Since *aaluni* refers to the absence of salt, the presence of which is the most important segment of Indian cuisine, it is also used to describe other domains when the most important aspect of that domain is missing. According to different genres of movies the essence that adds the flavour to the movies vary. For example, in a comic movie, the timing of the delivery of jokes and the body language of the actors is important. If these things fail to be present, it becomes uninteresting or boring and *aaluni* or tasteless. Thus, the phrase, *aaluni cinema*.

## VII. SITUATION IS TASTE

Various kinds of situations may also be described using taste terms in Bangla.

Similar to the case of films, Bangla conceptualises only a certain kind of situation – unfavourable situations. As the bitter taste is generally not liked by people, unfavourable situations are conceptualised as bitter situations as in the following example:

50. *tikta paribesh* [t̪ik̪t̪o poribeʃ] “bitter situation/context/environment”

In the example above, taste is the SOURCE and the situation one might be in is the TARGET. Bitter situation/environment refers to an unfavourable condition or an unfavourable environment. An example can be a child’s bringing up in a negative environment consisting of financial difficulty or issues in the family that hinder the child’s growth. Another example can be of a struggling artist who has to go through a lot of criticism on a daily basis while also struggling to survive alone in the industry. These situations are filled with difficulties which share the feature of unpleasantness with the taste-term, *tikta* “bitter”, thus the phrase, *tikta paribesh*.

### VIII. MUSIC IS TASTE

Bengali culture has always been deeply involved with music. There are many forms including *Baul* [baul], *Rabindra Sangeet* [robind̪ro ʃoŋgi:t̪], and *Nazrul Geeti* [nod̪zrul gi:t̪i:], which are some of the very integral parts of the culture.

Some of the examples in the discussion of the metaphor PERSONALITY IS TASTE like *mishti galaa* [miʃti g̪ola], *mishti aaoaaj* [miʃti awad̪z], *madhur galaa* [mod̪h̪ur g̪ola] can also be included here especially when they refer to music or are used in the context of music. Other examples are:

- |   |                |
|---|----------------|
| 51. <i>mishti sur</i> [miʃti ʃur]             | “sweet melody” |
| 52. <i>madhur sur</i> [mod̪h̪ur ʃur]          | “sweet melody” |
| 53. <i>madhur sangeet</i> [mod̪h̪ur ʃoŋgi:t̪] | “sweet song”   |
| 54. <i>mishti gaan</i> [miʃti gan]            | “sweet song”   |
| 55. <i>madhur kantha</i> [mod̪h̪ur k̪oŋt̪ho]  | “sweet throat” |

Since music holds an important place in Bengali culture, there are more positive connotations that are associated with it than negative. All of the examples that have been discussed in this section have made use of *mishti* and *madhur* only. It is found that in Bangla, particularly for criticism of a piece of music that doesn't sound pleasant to the ears, there is no use of taste-term. There is only literal use of words, for example, “bad lyrics”, “bad song”, “not good melody” and so on. Along with this, Bangla also uses the sweet taste to describe the melodious singing voice of a person. Example 55 shows the usage of *kantha* [kəŋtʰo] “throat”, which stands for a person's voice, specifically singing voice. Here again there is a metaphor that contains a metonymy inside it. This example can be compared with the example 4 of *mishti galaa* “sweet voice” under the section of PERSONALITY IS TASTE. Apart from Bangla, Gujarati and Hindi also conceptualise music in terms of taste. A discussion on this has been provided by Kumari and Sarvaiya (2021) and Wakhale and Sarvaiya (2021) in their papers on Hindi and Gujarati taste terms respectively.

In the examples above, music is the target domain that is explained by the source domain of taste. In this, “sweet” taste refers to the pleasantness of the melody or the song.

#### IX. RELATION IS TASTE

Relationships hold a very important place in any culture. It is evident that Indian culture values the give and take in all kinds of relationships and as a result, the Bengali culture values them too. Hence, Bangla employs some taste-terms to describe different relationships.

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|--|-----------------------|
| 56. <i>mishti samparka</i> [miʃti ʃəmporko]  | “sweet relationship”  |
| 57. <i>madhur samparka</i> [moḍʰur ʃəmporko] | “sweet relationship”  |
| 58. <i>tikta samparka</i> [tikʰo ʃəmporko]   | “bitter relationship” |

Bangla conceptualises relationships to be either positive or negative. A positive relationship or *mishti/madhur samparka* refers to a stable relationship, be it among a family or a parent and child or between friends or a married couple. A stable relationship where both the parties that are involved are understanding and accepting can be called a *mishti samparka*. On the other hand, a *tikta samparka* refers to an unstable relationship or a disturbed relationship where all or one of the

participants is unable to adjust with the others. This results in frequent unresolved conflicts, which is compared with the taste-term *tikta* “bitter” and makes a *samparka tikta*.

59. *madhur prem* [moḍʰur prem] “sweet love”  
60. *mishti prem* [miṣʰi prem] “sweet love”

In the above examples, taste is the target domain and the relation of love is the source domain. The concept of love has always been portrayed to be a very pleasant one, be it movies or reality. It may be parents’ love for their child/children or amongst friends or the love between a couple. Regardless of what kind of love it is, it is always considered to be something very pure in its true nature. This fact seems to account for the usage of only *mishti/madhur* for description of the concept of love in Bangla.

In these examples, RELATION IS TARGET and TASTE IS SOURCE, which gives the metaphor RELATION IS TASTE. This metaphor has also been discussed by Kumari and Sarvaiya (2021) and Wakhale and Sarvaiya (2021) in their papers on Hindi and Gujarati taste terms respectively.

#### X. SEASON IS TASTE

Bangla conceptualises SEASON, the target domain, as well, through TASTE, the source domain. Just like in English, the Spring season is considered to be the best season in Bangla as well. Many of the poems by Rabindranath Tagore (1961) and many other Bangla songs have been based on the theme of the celebration of Spring’s arrival.

61. *madhur basanta* [moḍʰur boʃonto] “sweet Spring”  
62. *madhu ritu* [moḍʰu riʈu] “sweet season”  
or  
*madhur ritu* [moḍʰur riʈu] “sweet season”

Here, season is the TARGET and taste is the SOURCE. It is important to note here that among all the other seasons, only the Spring season is described using a taste-term, particularly *madhur* “sweet”. This could be due to the known fact that Spring is widely accepted and favoured due to the



pleasantness of the environment that comes around with it and flower blossoms as well. In this case as well, *mishti* cannot be used interchangeably with *madhur*. Other seasons aren't specifically attributed to the traits of any of the taste-terms. If the need arises to describe a season, other than Spring, as a pleasant season, the general phrase *madhu/madhur ritu* "sweet season" will be used for it.

## XI. EXPRESSION IS TASTE

There are various types of expressions among which facial expressions are focused on in this section. Facial expressions are the looks on a person's face which show what emotion they might be feeling, with each of the expressions having their own specific characteristics that make them different from the rest. Expressions like happy, sad, angry, fearful, surprised, disgusted, and so on.

Despite the existence of so many expressions, Bangla conceptualises only the happy face as a taste, which includes smiling or laughing.

63. *mishti haashi* [miʃʈi haʃi] "sweet smile"

64. *madhur haashi/haasya* [moḍʰur haʃi/haʃ:o] "sweet smile"

The phrase "sweet smile" refers to a pretty smile. The attributes of the sweet taste are transferred to the beauty of a smile. A pretty smile is considered *mishti haashi*, whereas a smile that gives a kind of warm feeling to the one who looks at it is described as *madhur haashi* or *madhur haasya*. The smile of a baby or a mother's smile towards her baby is a good example for *madhur haashi/haasya*. *Haashi* and *haasya* both refer to "smile" but *haasya* has a more ornamental or decorative usage than *haashi* and is thus more frequently used with *madhur* than *mishti*. In this metaphor, EXPRESSION is the target domain and TASTE is the source domain.

## XII. TRUTH IS TASTE

Some truths and some facts are important to be told even though they might be really painful to hear and difficult to accept. Bangla conceptualises this kind of truth as a bitter taste.

Here, *tikta* is the target domain and *satya* is the source domain. The phrase used above is found in and is common across many languages. The concept of “bitter truth” or *tikta satya* is widely accepted and used in many languages including Gujarati (Wakhale and Sarvaiya, 2021) and Hindi (Kumari and Sarvaiya, 2021). The phrase *tikta satya* refers to the kind of truth that is difficult to accept yet remains a fact nevertheless or that is hard to believe and often said to be “indigestible” because of the hardship that comes with it.

### XIII. LIFE IS TASTE

In the following example, LIFE is the target domain while TASTE is the source domain. The metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY is commonly known across most of the languages. Bangla conceptualises some aspects of LIFE AS A TASTE.

It has already been mentioned that since salt is such an important component in Indian cuisine, its absence creates monotony. Similarly, if the most important element of life – new events and new experiences – are absent in life, it will be an uneventful life and thus boring, resulting in the metaphorical use of *aaluni* for LIFE. Salt is what gives the taste and flavour to a dish, likewise, new experiences and constant changes in life are those that provide the flavour to it. No matter how much one despises it, change is important and a constant in everyone’s life and without it, life would be *aaluni*.

## 4. Conclusion

With the help of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory, this paper serves to illustrate how Bangla conceptualises PERSONALITY, APPEARANCE, ACTION, EXPERIENCE, EVENT, FILM, SITUATION, MUSIC, RELATION, SEASON, EXPRESSION, TRUTH, and LIFE on the basis of its basic taste-terms. Clearly, there are a lot of similarities between Bangla and other languages in terms of using certain taste-terms for the

description of specific conceptual domains discussed in this paper. It is also distinctly visible that the term *mishti* [miʃʈi]/*madhur* [moɖʱur] “sweet” is broadly used to convey a positive meaning throughout the language, except for the ironical usage of *mishti* in the phrase *mishti chhuri* [miʃʈi tʃʱuri] “sweet knife”. In the same way, *tikta* [tikʈo]/*katu* [koʈu] (variations of *teto* [tɛʈo] “bitter”) are widely used to convey a negative meaning of the concepts in question, whereas *aaluni* [aluni] “tasteless/bland” takes on a more neutral approach towards the notions discussed in the paper. For the term *jhaal* [dʒʱal] “hot” there aren’t many metaphorical adjectives as there are idioms which restricts the discussion from including them in the paper, although one of the examples are *gaayer jhaal metano* [gaer dʒʱal meʈano] “satisfying one’s grudge” (Lit. “of-body spice satisfying”) where GRUDGE is compared to *jhaal*. Here, *jhaal* is used to describe a negative emotion and this metaphor conveys the idea of doing something against a person to satisfy one’s grudge, due to which it can be included under the metaphor of ACTION IS TASTE. In addition to this, Bangla makes use of the terms *mishti* [miʃʈi]/*madhur* [moɖʱur] “sweet” and *tikta* [tikʈo]/*katu* [koʈu] “bitter” the most since sweets, bitter gourd, and neem leaves are the food items that are consumed widely in the culture. It is also apparent that as frequently as *mishti* and *madhur* are used interchangeably, *tikta* and *katu* aren’t used so often. This is followed by the observation that for “bitter”, the term *teto* itself isn’t used in the language for describing concepts, instead, its variants (*tikta* and *katu*) are.

In view of the fact that there are no previous attempts made to discuss the various metaphorical extensions of taste-terms in Bangla, this paper takes the first step in this area with the hope to contribute further with similar works.

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