

## **Journey to the Sunderbans: Indeterminate Negotiations between Modernity and Tradition**

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**Abstract**

Journeys indicate physical displacement of individuals; however, they are also marked with interactions between travellers and the locals concerned. A popular notion based on popular Indian imagination crudely associates city with modernity and village with tradition, and seems to believe that modernity, while operating through the urbanized travellers, would appear as an effective and ultimate resource for the transformation of village by curing it of the traditional or village specific problems. However, certain literary narratives, *The Hungry Tide* by Amitav Ghosh being one of them, raise questions about the assumptions implied in the popular notion. Such narratives tend to negate curative agency of modernity. By indicating the reciprocation of transformation between either city and village or modernity and tradition along with certain drawbacks of modernity and virtues of tradition, they tend to betray the pretensions of modernity and city regarding transformation.

Village faces many problems and it is seen partially successful in solving some of the problems on its own. Modernity has solutions, but the application of modernity is observed to be counterproductive. *The Hungry Tide* demonstrates that the boundaries between modernity and tradition get blurred and their definite roles, as resource and recipient respectively, as assumed by the popular notion could become reversible. Thus, the 'journey to village' undertaken by urbanized travellers gives rise to the indeterminate negotiations between modernity and tradition.

**Keywords:** Modernity, tradition, city, village, journey, transformation

A general tendency to rely upon modernity for transformation and getting rid of traditional afflictions may be observed in modern times. The terms city and village are actually coterminous with modernity and tradition respectively; but in the popular Indian imagination, they are associated with modernity and tradition. The journeys from city to village and from village to city have become

significant in popular Indian imagination for the same reason. Ashis Nandy argues that certain core concerns and anxieties of Indian civilization have come to be reflected in the journey from the village to the city, and from the city to the village (7). In the popular imagination, the journey from city to village is viewed as a transformative intervention into the village concerned in the hope that the urbanized traveller, who is considered as a ‘modernized’ individual, would transform the village into a modern place by providing them with modern solutions and evacuating tradition. Ashis Nandy observes that in popular Indian imagination village is considered as a backward place which needs civilized intervention (23). The modern narratives depicting such journeys tend to ‘emplot’ some deficiency in village and then cast a city-based individual bringing about transformation. A popular notion, which crudely estimates and blatantly articulates the supremacy and desirability of modernity and city, and which views the journey of individuals between city and village as a similar metric of the transformation of the village, is often projected even in commercial cinema. In the Marathi film *Bhaucha Dhakka*, a Mumbai-based character named Bhausahab Deshmukh is represented as an ‘urbanized traveller’ who returns to his ancestral village. The film projects the determined efforts leading to the success of Bhausahab Deshmukh in bending the village on the path of progress which is by following the norms of modernity. In the Hindi film *Swades*, the hero Mohan Bhargava, a scientist working for NASA, returns to a village called Charanpur in India. He learns that the village faces multiple problems along with the inconsistency in the power supply. The film shows that the hero, by following the aspects of modernity, solves difficulties in all round progress of the villagers and builds up a hydroelectric power unit for them. If examined minutely, it may be observed that both of these films lack a nuanced account of the negotiations between modernity and tradition; instead, they attribute an absolute curative agency to modernity. They uncritically foreground the supremacy of modernity and project the villages and tradition as subservient. The government policies related to the development of villages also corroborate the desirability of modernity and urbanization. Some of the points in the Twenty Point Programme which was launched by the Government of India in 1975 reveal the fact: better use of irrigation water, clean drinking water, expansion of education, justice to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, equality for women, concern for the consumer, energy for the villages, a responsive administration, etc.(Web: wikipedia.org d. 2018/8)The schemes launched by the successive Union Governments such as ‘Kishore Vaigyanik Protsahan Yojana’, ‘Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana’ ‘Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana’ too display the same tendency (Web: mospi.gov.in d. 2018/8). All these schemes are related to the implementation of modern technology, science, education and infrastructure. Thus, the government policies, public discourses and literary discourse have all taken for granted that city, in its authority as a modern place, is undoubtedly desirable and that it can cure the village of its tradition-induced problems and thus perform a curative function. The popular notion thus formed, seems to strengthen and validate the growing confidence of the city, as pointed out by Nandy, in its capacity to interpret the village in its own terms (74). While Nandy observes that city arrogates itself the agency of modernity and thereby the responsibility of curing village of its ‘tradition’, literary discourses reveal that this ‘confidence’ of the city is less unequivocal, that modernity’s relation to tradition is far from one sided curative relationship, that it is fraught with ambiguity.

The contemporary debate on modernity do not show certainty about the curative potential of modernity. Dipankar Gupta observes that:

The abuse of women, the demonstration of family connections and the refusal to abide by norms are actually traditional attributes. But if these are manifest today in a bar, a hotel or in a university, chances are that people would shake their heads and lament on the curse that modernity has brought upon us (13).

Scholars are uncertain even about the nature of modernity, and sceptical about the allegedly undoubted desirability and supremacy of both modernity and city. Partha Chatterjee in an article “Our Modernity” writes:

...not all of the particular means we have adopted for becoming modern are suitable for us. Yet, by imitating uncritically the forms of English modernity, we are bringing upon us environmental degradation, food shortages, illnesses caused by excessive labour and an uncoordinated and undisciplined way of life (8).

In this way, seen in the light of contemporary debates on modernity, the ascription of absolute curative agency to city and modernity concerning the problems of village seems less than convincing. With reference to this discussion, some questions arise due to the journey to village undertaken by urbanized travellers: What is the nature of interactions between the travellers and the village? What are the outcomes of interactions? Who among them is affected by the journey; and, in what way? Can the urbanized travellers perform the ‘curative’ role for the village? Such questions need to be answered.

The journey between city and village may indeed be transformative; but it is argued here that it is indeterminate in that modernity, as symbolized by city and represented by the urbanized travellers according to the popular notion, would not emerge as the perfect and definite solution for the village related problems in every instance. The excessive popular perception of modernity that assumes transformation as the prerogative of modernity and accords the curative agency and an absolute responsibility to modernity – and for that reason to city – for the betterment of village would not come true. There emerges a possibility of negotiations between modernity and tradition during the journey. With reference to this, the journey from city to village would remain indeterminate.

The study intends to discover the outcomes of the negotiations between modernity and tradition and examine the viability of the said popular notion by analysing the novel *The Hungry Tide* written by Amitav Ghosh. In this novel, the characters Kanai and Piya travel to Sunderbans from Delhi and USA respectively. They are considered as the ‘urbanized travellers’ in this paper. Sunderbans, an area comprising mangrove forests in the eastern part of India, is considered as a ‘village’ for this study. Here, the term ‘village’ represents both the villagers and the physical setup of the village. Certain interactions among characters which are conspicuous for the confrontation of

modernity and tradition are selected and analysed. The analysis of the text is based on contemporary debate on modernity as developed by the scholars Partha Chatterjee, Dilip Gaonkar, Dipankar Gupta, Ashis Nandy, etc.

The novel under study has been applauded by many for its eco-cosmopolitanism and the life in the tide country as vividly depicted by the writer. Alexa Weik von Mossner in her article about the novel admits that the novel confronts groups of ‘place-bound characters’, and ‘worldly characters’ who move across cultures. She further points out that the gaps in understanding between the two groups are an important theme in the novel. Alexa Weik also shows that neither local nor cosmopolitan knowledge is in all cases superior over the other (1). However, she does not sufficiently relate the indeterminacy of negotiations between the two groups of characters to the duality of modernity and tradition. A study of the novel with the perspective of modernity-tradition / city-village dichotomy is necessary for a fuller and systematic understanding.

Dilip Gaonkar, in his article “On Alternative Modernities”, provides us with a set of characteristics of cognitive and social transformations for determining modernity. The characteristics include scientific consciousness, secular outlook, the doctrine of progress, individualistic understanding of the self, market-driven industrial economy, bureaucratically administered states, rule of law, increased mobility, literacy, urbanization etc. (Gaonkar 2). On the other hand, tradition values interpersonal harmony and sacrificing the small self to accomplish the Great self, thereby giving importance to collectivism and interdependence (Luo Lu 47). Olivier Galland and Yannick Lemel show that tradition places belief in god, religion and life after death, stability, hierarchy and familial roles (166). According to D. D. Vadekar, tradition in Indian context comprises mutual tolerance, ‘Swadharma’ (one’s own duty), accommodation and assimilation (120, 123). M. K. Gandhi, in his book *Hind Swaraj*, highlights some of the elements of tradition in Indian context such as the growth of the soul(7), importance to manual labour (57), simplicity and renunciation (14), observance of limits to indulgences, neglect of luxuries and pleasures, and importance to ethics (57), the performance of duty (56) etc.

While travelling to village, an urbanized traveller could fail in maintaining effective communication with the villagers. Once, while getting down to a shore from the boat, Fokir, a local boatman, wades easily through the muddy water; while Kanai tumbles in the mud. As Fokir laughs at him, Kanai gets angry and piles invectives on Fokir while Fokir remains calm. Kanai and Fokir display fury and tolerance respectively. It seems that the anger of Kanai issues from the ruthless form of self-indulgent, unrestrained, asocial individualism along with autonomous ego (Nandy viii) acquired by him. Instead of asserting his own individuality; Fokir displays traits such as tolerance and forgiveness. Ultimately, though Fokir forgives Kanai, the assertion of ‘extreme individuality’ harms the effective communication between the two. Actually, the tolerance displayed by Fokir saves both of them from fighting with each other and pacifies the situation. Here, as Fokir represents ‘village’, the writer makes the curative character of village evident. City is complicit in Kanai’s violent assertion of individuality. Ashis Nandy mentions the same as follows:

This dream of the city usually comes with a cultivated forgetfulness about the violent record of the last hundred years, a record which shows the complicity of the secular city of citizenship, civility, and civic virtues with a particularly ruthless form of self-indulgent, unrestrained, asocial individualism (viii).

The inappropriateness of the violent assertion of individuality makes the role of city dubious in the process of transformation. Moreover, Kanai also fails to instil 'individualistic' attitude pertaining to modernity into Fokir's personality. Thus, Kanai is not effective in performing the role of an 'urbanized traveller' as implied in the popular notion.

In the same incident, Kanai's act of insulting Fokir with abuse indicates his failure in maintaining basic dignity of others. Actually, individualistic understanding of the self (Gaonkar 2), being one of the traits of modernity, involves understanding of others in certain way. Dipankar Gupta gives importance to the 'relations among people':

I argue that true modernity is about how people relate to other people, and likewise, true ethics is all about a concern with "others" as equal citizens. Modernity is an attitude which represents universalistic norms, where the dignity of an individual as a citizen is inviolable and where one's achievement counts for more than family background and connections (8).

However, Kanai displays hierarchy based, hence traditional outlook while reacting against Fokir as his anger arises from the sources, "...the master's suspicion of the menial; the pride of caste; the townsman's mistrust of the rustic; the city's antagonism to the village" (Ghosh 326). Thus, Kanai displays a simultaneous inclination toward modernity and tradition through assertion of individuality and assimilation of caste-based social hierarchy respectively. The novel tends to betray the partial acquisition of modernity by individuals. It tends to show that the assertion of seemingly modern traits may resemble the occurrence of traditional patterns in another form. Here, the excessive assertion of individuality gives rise to such a response that it resembles the expression of caste-based social hierarchy.

The difference in physical aspects of city and those of village may have stake in the interactions among people concerned. Kanai lacks a skill that of wading through muddy water and the village lacks facilities to get down from the boat. It seems that the villagers are proficient in operating in village and the city dwellers, in cities. It may be observed that the sufficient urban infrastructure leads to human efficiency, but it also keeps some of the human skills/strengths – in this case, maintaining physical balance in water – underdeveloped. In order to resolve this problem, either the village shall be provided with facilities or Kanai shall acquire village specific skills. This situation, which is equivocal due to the difficulty in blaming any one of the two sides 'more legitimately' than the other, makes it imperative to improve both of the sides; where, the improvement in any one of them is sufficient. This gives rise to the indeterminacy in the nature and effects of the journey from city to village. The urbanized traveller's discomfort while operating in the

village would develop the feelings of ‘otherness’ about the village in his mind. The difficulty of the urbanized traveller in developing familiarity with the village deters the journey from taking place on the psycho-geographical (Nandy x) level. The novel shows that both Kanai and Piya are often fumbling for urban facilities and grappling with the prevailing natural conditions in Sunderbans. The village seems to defeat and reject the urbanized travellers during the journey. Thus, it seems to raise a question: Does modernity essentially need urbanization or infrastructure for its appearance and progress? The writer also sheds light on the formation of ‘subject’ in that, while city forms a subject that remains dependent on infrastructure, village develops its efficiency by strengthening intrinsic human abilities. Hence, the claim of modernity to emancipation becomes dubious, for it entangles the individual in the trap of infrastructure.

In the afterthought, Kanai finds himself in the position of Fokir while thinking about his work as a translator, who has to deal with foreign clients, in Delhi.

There had been occasions in the past – too many of them – when Kanai had seen his clients losing their temper in the like fashion ... He had survived these outbursts by telling himself that these episodes were merely a professional hazard ... Yet, despite his knowledge of the phenomenon, he was powerless to stop the torrent of obscenities that were pouring out of his mouth now (Ghosh 326).

In this way Kanai experiences an exchange of his self with that of Fokir. In Nandy’s terms, Kanai mirrored Fokir’s self and Fokir mirrored Kanai’s self. This image of the self in the mirror of the ‘other’ (Nandy x) extends the borders of Kanai’s self. Kanai witnesses many retrogressive values suppressed deep within him which surface while piling invectives upon Fokir. The village now acquires the position of a ‘resource’ for city / modernity by providing Kanai with a ‘mirror’. Kanai meets with a strange or unknown and ‘other’, less accessible parts of his self (Nandy 8). Thus, his journey proves to be a kind of self-exploration. Kanai’s city-based experience of insult gets repeated in another form in the village. Thus, the novel tends to hint at the uncertainty and blurring of boundaries between city and village, and between modernity and tradition. By revealing the reciprocation of transformation between village and city, the novel seems to debunk the belief in modernity or city’s privilege for unilateral transformation of village; and strongly refutes the notion that transformation is the prerogative of city / modernity.

Kanai experiences an extraordinary encounter with a tiger. In the attempt to run away from the animal, his clothes and skin get torn due to the branches and thorns. His companions Piya, Fokir and Horen operate ‘interdependence’ to save him by taking him into the boat for safety. Kanai decides to leave Sunderbans immediately after this experience. Kanai’s decision indicates not only his depression but also the growth of his aloofness from the village; because, the related experience might have badly affected the image of village in Kanai’s mind. Thus, the village is seen chasing away the agent of modernity. The novel constantly highlights the urbanized travellers’ feelings of discomfort and insecurity, and their lack of confidence in operating in Sunderbans. The tiger incident also emphasises the need for interdependence in village. An urbanized traveller may have to

participate in the practice of interdependence in village; though he/she is used to relying rather on individual agency. Ashis Nandy in his *An Ambiguous Journey to the City* takes an account of freedom and autonomy obtained by an individual in city as follows: “Such a city vends a dream of total freedom for the individual and the reasoning self, both organized around an ego so autonomous that it yields agency to nothing outside itself” (Nandy 5). In this incident, interdependence seems appropriate rather than the individual agency. Here, the village seems assertive in providing worthwhile solution and curing city by using traditional norms, and also in humbling the non-conforming ones.

Kanai’s encounter with tidal surge during a storm leaves him in a state of discomfiture and deprivation. He collapses in the water and loses his uncle’s notebook in the tidal wave; which, for certain reasons, is very important historical and emotional asset for Kanai and Nilima. He plans to retrieve the content of the notebook by recalling the same. Kanai’s dependence on memory for retrieving the content of the notebook resembles the ‘oral’ tradition of transmitting literature and history through generations. In this respect, Kanai’s position becomes subject to tradition. He does not emerge as a confident representative of modernity who could perform a parental role for Sunderbans; instead, being unable to protect the notebook, he seems a pathetic figure that has undergone a role of helpless child. Thus, village can betray or destroy the authority of both modernity and city. Actually, Sunderbans is familiar to Kanai, but still it is not trustworthy. The element of ‘loss’ has been further confirmed by the loss of Fokir’s life and that of Piya’s documents in the novel. The novel seems to suggest that city is not immune to loss during its interactions with village.

Piya approaches the administration of Sunderbans for getting the permit for survey of dolphins with an application along with necessary documents. Piya has become achievement oriented due to her acquisition of modern traits. Although the administration is avowedly modern, hence ‘rational’; it is unresponsive because of the corrupt and lazy officers. So, it is Piya’s practical or precautionary decision to involve her politician uncle in the process. Finally, she gets the permit within a single day only due to her uncle’s intervention in the official process. Such use of strong individual or family connections is a characteristic of traditional society. Piya’s tactfulness for getting the permit is counterproductive because it leads to the violation of the autonomy of the administration and prevalence of traditional method. Dipankar Gupta in his *Mistaken Modernity* comments:

... connections matter more than universal principles of justice and fair play. There is nothing that money and good connections cannot fix. The patronage network thus tends to survive and do rather well even in the so-called advanced sectors of the economy (16).

Submitting the complete documents shows Piya’s adherence to modernity; but her use of ‘strong family connections’ indicates her adherence to the tradition of privilege. She goes ahead with recourse to the traditional practices. Actually, it is necessary to make the administrative office

responsive with the help of standard institutional measures. It would require time consuming efforts; hence, it seems that Piya takes a short route. In this instance of negotiations, both modernity and tradition prevail in their own way. The situation is complicated regarding the right choice of action. Through this incident, the novel foregrounds the complexity of the negotiations between modernity and tradition. It controverts the assumption related to the curative agency of any urbanized traveller.

Piya is granted the company of a forest guard on the launch for her safety who joins hands with a local boat man called Mej-da and pressurises her for hiring Mej-da's launch for the survey by paying extraordinary costs. Other boat men deny availing her a launch as they are threatened by the presence of the guard with Mej-da. The monopoly of Mej-da, thus supported by the guard, deprives Piya of her rights to bargain and to have an appropriate deal. Once she thinks of lodging a complaint against the guard for his interference in the deal. However, she declines; and accepts the costly deal out of fatigue and the need to start the survey quickly. At this point she knows that she is faced with a choice (Ghosh 32). Anyhow, her action is destined to be counterproductive; because, lodging a complaint would contribute in implementation of modernity by protecting her right to fair deal, but that would spoil her valuable time. On the other hand, compromising with these conditions would save her time, but that would deprive her of the free choice and fair deal of a boat. In this way, either of the choices would deter modernity from its implementation. Piya has to prefer productive use of time only by sacrificing her rights and helplessly witnessing the existence of social evils such as exploitation, corruption and monopoly. Although she has been deprived of the exertion of her free choice in the deal of the boat, she exerts her right to free choice for commencing her work quickly. She prefers her narrow self-interest in the place of collective well-being of the village. Here, modernity is not only confronted with tradition, but it is confronted with its own elements.

Horen, Fokir, Kanai and Piya witness the incident of killing a tiger by the locals at night. Horen, Fokir and Kanai want to leave that place for having the premonition of legal action and the violent mob; while Piya wants to intervene for saving the tiger. Existence of tigers is indeed necessary for better environment; but it is fraught with insecurity for the locals. The tigers have killed several people along with their pets every year. Thus, the situation indicates the conflict between environmentalism and right to survival. Here, the locals are not committed opponents of environmentalism, but they cannot afford to follow it. Even Kanai, who understands the importance of tigers, has to behave in a practical way for avoiding any trouble. This episode results in anguish, anger and restlessness for all. Piya is anguished for the loss of the tiger and her inability to intervene. Active intervention would not be possible in every instance. Here, the novel makes explicit the inability of modernity for affording security to the locals.

Thus, the journey to village, being indeterminately transformative, gives rise to the negotiations between modernity and tradition. The analysis shows that the process of transformation of the village is necessarily determined by these negotiations. Village is likely to accept modernity in a partial manner. The committed adherence to the absolute form of modernity is not observed both in the village and in the urbanized travellers. This along with the subjugation of the urbanized travellers to tradition proves that either modernity or tradition would not exist exclusively. The hope that

modernity could be transferred as a package to any place after evacuation of tradition is unreasonable. The simultaneous assimilation of modern and traditional elements has been observed among the characters in the novel. The claim of both modernity and tradition to desirability and supremacy remains ambiguous during this journey because both of them show the simultaneous existence of attractive and repulsive characteristics. In his article, "On Alternative Modernities", Dilip Gaonkar is anxious about what is 'authentically' modern. He asserts that the versions of modernity have both a dark and a bright side (6-9). The analysis of the novel justifies it. The journey results in both gain and loss for the urbanized travellers and the village concerned. The gain of the journey in the form of learning, experience and ultimately transformation is not unilateral between either modernity and tradition or city and village. All the stakeholders in the transformative journey show reciprocation of transformation among them. These observations negate the determinacy of the journey.

The interactions between the urbanized travellers and the village also justify the observance of traditional elements such as interdependence. Sometimes, the urbanized travellers are obliged to be subservient to traditional methods. In such cases, the tradition is strengthened and perpetuated even by the urbanized travellers themselves. Incompetency of the urbanized traveller in adapting to the village specific setup may result in his/her helplessness thereby resisting the pace of modernity indirectly. The helpless or humbled condition of the urbanized travellers appears to depreciate his/her alleged role as an agent of modernity. The presence of certain inherent contradictions in modernity negates its claim for supremacy and authority regarding transformation. The experiences of loss and insecurity on the part of the urbanized travellers result in increasing their distance from the village and the decline in their imagination of the village. The village is seen to be selective while accepting the elements of modernity. The village could have administrative institutions, but that would remain unresponsive. The boatmen would buy motor boats in the place of rowing boats, but they would not observe fair play and justice while dealing with the customers. Dilip Gaonkar comments about the clumsy relation between societal modernization and modern outlook as follows:

The proposition that societal modernization, once activated, moves inexorably toward establishing a certain type of mental outlook (scientific rationalism, pragmatic instrumentalism, secularism) and a certain type of institutional order (popular government, bureaucratic administration, market-driven industrial economy) irrespective of the culture and politics of a given place is simply not true (14,15).

The present study justifies Gaonkar's observation about societal modernization, mental outlook and institutional order. The full-fledged assimilation of modernity is not observed.

Now, the findings of Ashis Nandy regarding the journey from 'village to city' have been summarized in this paragraph. Ashis Nandy finds this journey to be ambiguous. According to him, promise or dream of freedom and the glittering charm of the city vend a dream of the journey to city. However, the qualities such as secular outlook, citizenship, civility, civic virtue in city are combined

with ruthless form of self-indulgent, unrestrained, asocial individualism. The ego in city is not truly emancipated but it is newly buffeted by rationality and objectivity. Village has evils, but city is not satisfactory alternative either. The modern urban life is found to be a disloyal ally; because, it is as heartless as the abandoned village. The rural traveller is anguished because of the dehumanized, deadening impersonality of the civic life and his/her inability to handle the impersonal heartlessness of the city. Hence, the transition from 'village as self' to 'the city as self' becomes difficult, sometimes tragic for the traveller. While responding to the city some of the heroes submit themselves to the city, but some others engage themselves in resistance with physical and hyper masculine violence. Either resistance or submission makes this journey self-destructive and tragic. The hero's dream of returning to his original normal self is not fulfilled in the city. It is necessary to understand the nature of the 'reverse' journey, that is, from city to village on this background.

It seems that Ashis Nandy explores the journey from 'village to city' for verifying the authenticity of the position of city as an appropriate place for individual development. The exploration of the reverse journey in this paper is primarily meant for verifying the authenticity of the claim of city or modernity to curative agency as implied in the popular notion. The journey from city to village is also ambiguous. The findings of this paper do not validate the implications of the popular notion. The elements such as individual agency and assertion of ego which are valued in the city carry a little hope in the village. The 'urban self' cannot fully and easily own up the village as self; consequently, it fails to establish a rapport with the village. Coping with the village is difficult for the urban self for the village lacks modern outlook, infrastructure, urban facilities and modern institutional structure. The allegedly superior urban self is itself burdened by non-modern or even traditional traits and does not conform to the modern norms completely. Here, the urbanized traveller is anguished due to the impossibility of conforming to his/her original (urban) self. The village is committed neither to tradition nor to modernity, but it retains selective attitude about modernity. Thus, it is seen negotiating the elements of both modernity and tradition. Partha Chatterjee attempts to define universal modernity as follows:

...true modernity consists in determining the particular forms of modernity that are suitable in particular circumstances; that is, applying the methods of reason to identify or invent the specific technologies of modernity that are appropriate for our purposes (8,9).

Rationality consists in the careful selection of a suitable form of modernity. Is village then rational? It could be said that, village is not committed to or motivated by the fundamental values and the founding principles of modernity while responding to it in a partial manner. It seems that the response of the village is based on the appropriateness and convenience of the related modern traits, which does not necessarily exemplify the faithful exercise of reason. Resultantly, the dream of transformation of the village as implied in the popular notion is not fulfilled. It is evident that village faces many problems. It cannot solve many of its problems on its own; but modernity too is not able to provide it with appropriate solutions. The journey from city to village is replete with the recurrent element of loss; but the loss happens to be on both of the sides. Piya and Kanai lose their

documentation of survey and notebook respectively. Similarly, in a successful attempt to save Piya during a storm, Fokir loses his life. In this way, both village and city receive loss due to the journey. Any solution is not necessarily sourced from city. Daniel Hamilton's attempt in the past at establishing a place called Lusibari based on egalitarian principles and Nilima's determination in establishing and running the Badabon Trust, both of them involving the locals, along with Piya's final decision to work for the study and conservation of the dolphins in association with the locals prove that the village can stand on its own. By successfully combining Piya's possession of 'global' technology of GPS with Fokir's 'local' knowledge about the dolphins and the region, the writer hints at the alternative route to transformation. The ambiguity found by Nandy in the journey from village to city is primarily marked by the betrayal of the village-based hero by the city and failure of the hero in the absolute rejection of the village. The ambiguity of the reverse journey is primarily marked by its tendency to generate negotiations between modernity and tradition which remain uncertain.

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