Bangla Translations of the *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita*: A General Review
Introduction

The Bangla literature has been enriched by the *Gita* translations along with the glosses and commentaries on it since the time period of Shri Chaitanya (1486-1534), the founder of the Achintya Bheda Abhed school of Vedanta tradition. As a part of his rendering of the *Mahabharat* into Bangla titled as the *Kashidas Mahabharata*, Kashiram Das wrote something on the *Gita* portion of the “Bhishma Parva”, not the essential content of the gita. A very few wrote about the “Bhishma Parva” as per available manuscripts. Most of the works done on the *Gita* in medieval Bengal were in Sanskrit. In this regard, among the Bengali translators cum commentators of the *Gita*, Madhusudan Saraswati of the sixteenth century is well-acclaimed. The teacher-student duo of seventeenth century, Vishwanath Chakravarti and Baladeva Vidyabhushan are also noteworthy. Scholars of later period like Hitalal Mishra, Kedarnath Dutta, Bhudhar Chandra Chattopadhyay, Swami Krishnananda and others followed older tradition, i.e. writing commentaries and glosses on the *Gita* in Sanskrit, while translating\(^{108}\).

It is claimed by Satya Praksha Agarwal\(^ {109}\) that Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the social reformer of the nineteenth century, translated the whole *Gita*. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee\(^ {110}\) (1838-1894) is the first one to translate the *Gita* with a new perspective into Bangla, though he could not complete translating all the eighteen chapters. The first two chapters got published during his lifetime. The incomplete translation of the third and fourth chapters remained unpublished for a long period of time. Later in

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\(^{109}\) Agarwal, Satya Praksha, *The Social Role of the Gita*

\(^{110}\) He was highly influenced by the philosophy and the teachings of the *Gita*. Two of his writings, *Krishna Charitra* and *Dharmatattva* were based upon the essence of the *Gita*. 
1902, these two chapters were published as a part of *Hindushastra*, a collection of the Bangla translations of the Hindu sacred texts, edited by the renowned historian Shri Rameshchandra Dutta\(^{111}\) (1848-1909).

The *Gita* literature has been enriched by most of the eminent men of letters of Bengal in different ways. Along with the translations done directly from the source language Sanskrit, retranslations from the other Indian languages also have been made into Bangla. Persons like Jyotirindranath Tagore\(^{112}\) (1849-1925), Anath Bandhu Basu\(^{113}\) and Satish Chandra Dashgupta\(^{114}\) translated the *Gita* from the other vernacular translations of the text into Bangla, especially from Marathi and Gujarati. Anilbaran Ray\(^{115}\) (1890-1974) made a translation following *Essays on the Gita*, Shri Aurobindo’s interpretations of the *Gita*. Among the translations of the *Gita* done by the disciples of Aurobindo, his work is very close to the essence of *Essays on the Gita*. Hence, it can be treated as the most accurate one done in the light of Shri Aurobindo.

Though, Rabindranath Tagore did not translate the book or write any commentary or gloss on it, his literary works contain explanations of several verses of the *Gita*. A few of his articles like *Bhaaratvarsher Itihaaser Dhaaraa*, *Jaavaayaatrir Patra* and *Paarasye* include discussions on important concepts\(^{116}\) like *na hanyate*

\(^{111}\) Often spelled as Romesh Chunder Dutt.

\(^{112}\) Jyotirindranath Tagore, a playwright, a musician, an editor and a painter, the secretary of the Adi Brahmo Samaj from 1869 to 1888, translated Tilak’s *Gitarahasyam* into Bangla from Marathi.

\(^{113}\) His translation of Gandhi’s *Anasakti Yoga* into Bangla is titled as *Gitabodha*.

\(^{114}\) An eminent chemist and a Gandhian by ideology, Satish Chandra Dashgupta, was one of the noteworthy leaders of Indian National Congress. He translated Gandhi’s *Anasakti Yoga* into Bangla titled as *Gitar Gandhibhashya* (the commentaries on the *Gita* by Gandhi).

\(^{115}\) Well known as a firebrand political figure of Bengal, one of the most vocal critics of Swadeshi Movement, Anilbaran Roy was a scholar of Hinduism. This veteran leader served as a secretary of Bengal Provincial Congress. Being influenced by Shri Aurobindo and the philosophy of the *Gita*, he chose to follow the path of Internal Yoga rather than political career.

Again, many of his writings are to be read in the context of Gita verses. He was very critical about the theory of Nishkama Karma (desire-less action) and the concept of Sthitaprajna (the man of steady wisdom), but he did not deny the perennial character of the philosophy presented in the Bhagavad Gita.

In the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century Bengal, it became a trend to translate the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita. People from different walks of life contributed to the Gita literature in Bangla in various forms like translations, explanations, interpretations etc. Not only philosophers and religious preachers cum teachers, but academicians and literary persons, even political leaders cum ideologues also have been paying serious attention to this very text and therefore, working on it till date. All the socio-political-cultural changes/reforms/movements, witnessed by Bengal and Bengalis, have influenced the discourse of the Gita translation in Bangla and came up with new translations of this particular text. Later on, post independence since mid twentieth century this tradition has been continuing in a slightly different way. Many scholars from different backgrounds, especially scientists and sociologists have started translating this text.

Although Marxist theorists worked on this, among them Dilip Bose is the one and only Bengali and he did not write in Bangla. Interestingly, celebrated radical Marxist poet of Hungry Generation, also known as one of the _Hungryalist_

\[117\] hanyamane sharire  
\[118\] This topic is discussed in details in the book Bharatiya Sanskriti: Rabindranath O Tar Uttaradhikar by Pampa Majumder.  
\[120\] The author of Bhagavad-Gita and our National Movement and 1942 August Struggle and The Communist Party of India.  
\[121\] A radical literary movement happened in Bengal during 1960s.
Quartet\textsuperscript{122}, Shakti Chattopadhyay (1933-1995) started translating the \textit{Gita}. Like Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, he also could not complete it. This translation of six chapters got published as a part of \textit{Agranthito Shakti}, a posthumous collection of the unpublished works of Shakti Chattopadhyay.

The \textit{Gita} translation in Bangla is a vast and continuous occurrence. This specific text has been translated again and again till date when already several translations of that particular text exist and the process is continuing.

Unfortunately, in most of the cases translators did not mention the source. None of the translators have referred to anything about the source text they used except the name of the source text as the \textit{Shrimad Bhagavad Gita}. Moreover, they have not stated anything about the version of the text i.e. whether they translated from manuscript or printed version. Except the translators who retranslated the \textit{Gita} into Bangla from other vernaculars, none of the translators of the \textit{Gita} after the advent of printing press in Bengal cited any publication details of the source text they used. On the whole none of the translators of the \textit{Gita} have mentioned anything about the manuscripts of the \textit{Gita} in Bangla.

\textsuperscript{122} The four, who launched the Hungry generation movement, are known as Hungryalist Quartet. They are Shakti Chattopadhyay, Malay Roy Choudhuri, Samir Roy Choudhuri and Debi Roy.
The Manuscripts of the Translations of the *Gita* into Bangla

Up to 1978 only forty two printed lists of Bengali manuscripts had been traced. Of these, six had been published from London, Paris and the USA. The first printed list, worthy of mention, is the list of thirty-seven Bengali manuscripts forming part of the *Catalogue of Printed Books and Manuscripts Belonging to the Oriental Library of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, compiled by Pandit Kunjabihari Kavyatirtha and published in 1901. More inclusive is the list published in London in 1905 which gives brief introductory information about the manuscripts also. The first such list to be published in India was compiled by Munshi Abdul Karim, Sahitya Visharad and was published from Calcutta in 1913. Bangiyo Sahityo Parishad, Calcutta published circa 1900 an earlier list compiled by the aforementioned scholar. The Parishad published in its journal during 1898-1900 several articles on Bengali manuscripts. The authors of these articles were Nagendranath Basu, Ambika Charan Gupta, Ramendra Sundar Trivedi, and Mrinal Kanti Ghosh. The last important list of Bengali manuscript was the *Catalogue of Bengali Manuscripts* compiled and edited by Jatindra Mohan Bhattacharya and published by Asiatic Society, Calcutta in 1978.

The dating of Bengali manuscripts has not been an easy process. In the first instance, the manuscripts show the dates of copying in several ways. Those are - (i) indication of the year in figure only, (ii) showing the year both in figure and word, (iii) mention of the month and the date but not of the year, (iv) indication of the date through verse at the end, (v) indication of the date in an oblique fashion. Moreover, copyists of the Bengali manuscripts show dates in terms of different eras. The eras that are mentioned are the following: Amlı, English, Christian, Zamindari,
Tripurabda, Danishabda, Nusrat Shahi, Nepal Samvat, Nripashak, Parghanatiti, Bangabda, Vishwa Singha Shaka, Vishnupuri, Maghi, Mandaran San, Mallabda, Yavan Nripati Shakabda, Ratnapithasya Nripati Shakabda, Rajrha San, Raj San, Shakabda, Samvat and Hijri. Of these the frequently used eras are the following: Amli Era, which is practically another name for Bangabda, the Christian Era and the English Era, just two different names for the same era, and Bangabda, which is just five ninety three/four years behind the Christian Era. The other eras have been used only locally and they indicate the royal patronage under which the copyists worked.

As is to be expected, most of the Bengali manuscripts are in the Bangla script. But a considerable number of Bangla manuscripts have been found in other scripts also, viz. Arabic, Oriya, Kaithi, Devnagari, Newari, Roman, and in the Nagari script of the Sylhet. Manuscripts in the Arabic script deserve special mention on two counts. First, they are not numerically insignificant; to give an instance, the private collection of the “Sahitya Visharad” Munshi Abdul Karim of Chittagong alone contains more than fifty manuscripts. Secondly, under the influence of the Arabic script, many Bengali manuscripts have followed from-the-right-to-the-left style both in the style of writing and in the pagination. As for manuscripts in other scripts, numerous manuscripts in the Oriya script are there in the State Museum of Bhubaneswar. In the collection of Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, two manuscripts of Kaithi script are available, which has great resemblance to Devnagari and Gujarati scripts. Manuscripts in Devnagari are preserved in the Asiatic Society, Kolkata, and in the Shri Krishna Library of Gulzarbagh, Patna, and in the collection of Shri Shiv Ratan Mitra in the Ratan Library, Siuri in the district of Birbhum, West Bengal. At least four Newari manuscripts are the basis of one compilation of Bengali Drama in Nepal published by Bangiyo Sahityo Parishad. Of the few Bengali manuscripts in the Roman script,
Brahmin-Catholic Samvad written by Don Antonio, the Prince of Bhushana must be mentioned. There are a few manuscripts in which Nagari, the Sylhet variety of script which has been much in use among the Muslims of Sylhet and Cachar districts of the former Assam province of the British India.

Though, this research project focuses primarily on the printed and published texts of the Bangla translations of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, a good number of work done in this particular area has been remained in the form of manuscripts. Since the early translations done during and after the time period of Shri Chaitanya to the emergence of printing culture in Bengal including medieval period, most of the works have remained unpublished. Among the earliest translators, only Madhusudan Saraswati and Baladeva Vidyabhushan got printed and published later. These manuscripts are preserved by mainly various religious cum spiritual institutional traditions and rarely individuals of the old flourishing towns of the above mentioned time period like Navadwip, Bishnupur, Bardhaman and a few other towns like these. Kolkata centric libraries like The Asiatic Society, the National Library, the Calcutta University Manuscripts Library and the Carey Library and Research Centre located in Serampore, twenty kilometers north from Kolkata have collected and archived a handful of manuscripts of Bangla Gita.

Below is the list of the available manuscripts on the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita in Bangla:

A) The Asiatic Society, Calcutta Collection—
   (i) Manuscript no. 46 (complete) – Bhagavadgita by Chandicharan

   (without copying year.)
(ii) Manuscript no. 4021 and 8021 (complete) – Bhagavadgita by Ratiram
(year 1194 Bangabda i.e. 1787-1888 AD.)

(iii) Manuscript no. 5683 (fragment) - Bhagavadgita by Nimai Pandit
(without copying year.)

B) Carey Library and Research Centre, Serampore Collection –

(i) Manuscript no. 3.3 (fragment) – Bhagavadgita (writer unknown and
without copying year.)

C) Calcutta University's Bangla Manuscript Collection –

(i) Manuscript no. 2094 (fragment) – Bhagavadgita by Rasik Dasa (year
1230 Bangabda i.e. 1823-1824 AD.)

(ii) Manuscript no 3516 (complete) – Gitapushpanjali by Manohar Dasa

(iii) Manuscript no 3597 (complete) – Bhagavadgita by Vidyavagish
Brahmachari

(iv) Manuscript no 5296 and 5321 (fragment) – Bhagavadgita by Vamshi
Dasa

(v) Manuscript no 4096 (fragment) – Bhagavadgita

D) Vishwabhrati University Collection, Shantiniketan -

(i) Manuscripts no. 1124 and 5335 (fragment) – Bhagavadgita

(ii) Manuscript no 3516 (complete) – Bhagavadgita by Sadananda Rasa
Sindhu

E) Bangiya Sahitya parishad Collection -

(i) Manuscript no 1960 – Gitabhushan by Vidyavagish Brahmachari

(ii) Manuscript no 898 and 2137 (fragment) – Bhagavadgita by
Vidyavagish Brahmachari.
(iii) Manuscript no 958 and 1237 (fragment) – *Bhagavadgita*

(iv) Manuscript no 45 (fragment) – *Bhagavadgita* by Vidyavagish Brahmachari (year 1246 Bangabda i.e. 1799-1800 A.D.)

F) Calcutta Sanskrit College Collection –

(i) Manuscript no 43 (complete) – *Gita*

(ii) Manuscript no 45 (fragment) – *Gita* by Baikunthanath Bandyopadhyay (year 1230 Bangabda i.e. 1823-1824 A.D.)

G) Mokshada Collection of Bangla Manuscripts –

(i) Manuscript no 666, 1271 and 1452 (fragment) – *Bhagavadgita*

(ii) Manuscript no 1063 (fragment) – *Bhagavadgita* by Sanjay

H) Benaras Hindu University Collection –

(i) Manuscript no 355 (fragment) – *Bhagavadgita* by Hitalal Mishra

I) Dhaka university Collection –

(ii) Manuscript no 21.a (complete) – *Bhagavadgita* by Gobinda Mishra (year 1232 Bangabda i.e. 1825-126 A.D.)

(iii) Manuscript no 486.b (fragment) – *Bhagavadgita*

(iv) Manuscript no 4762 (complete) – (year 1176 Bangabda i.e. 1760-1761 A.D.)

J) Rangpur Sahitya Parishat Collection –

(i) Manuscript no 11 (fragment) – *Gitatattvasar* (year 1212 Bangabda i.e. 1805-1806 A.D.)

(ii) Manuscript no 33 (fragment) – *Gitasar* by Gobinda Dasa (year 1212 Bangabda i.e. 1805-1806 A.D.)

(iii) Manuscript no 75 (fragment) – *Bhagavadgita* by Gobinda Mishra (year 1249 Bangabda i.e. 1842-1843 A.D.)
(iv) Manuscript no 106 (fragment) – Bhagavadgita by Gobinda Mishra.

K) Prachin Punthis Bibaran by Abdul Karim of Bangladesh –
   (i) Manuscript no 478 (complete) – Gitasar Mahayoga by Ratiram Das
       (year 1252 Bangabda i.e. 1845-1846 A.D.)
   (ii) Manuscript no 272 (complete) – Bhagavadgita by Sanjay
   (iii) Manuscript no 4 (fragment) – Bhagavadgita

L) Rammala Granthag, Comilla, Bangladesh –
   (i) Manuscript no 477 (fragment) – Bhagavadgita (year 1290 Bangabda
       i.e. 1883-1884 A.D.)

M) Mymensing Pradarshiani, Bangladesh –
   (i) Manuscript no 63 (fragment) – Bhagavadgita by Sanjay (year 1213
       Bangabda i.e. 1806-1807 A.D.)

N) Coach Bihar Sahitya Sabha Collection, West Bengal –
   (ii) Manuscript no 18 (complete) - Bhagavadgita by Gobinda Mishra (year
       1253 Bangabda i.e. 1846-1847 A.D.)

O) Sukumari Sahitya Mandir, Dhubri, Assam -
   (i) Manuscript no. 3A; 13, 3 (Complete) - Bhagavadgita by Gobinda
       Mishra (year 1186, 1235 and 1257 Bangabda i.e. 1779-80, 1828-
       1829 and 1850-51 A.D.)

P) Vishnupur Sahitya Parishad Collection –
   (i) Manuscript no 401 (fragment) – Bhagavadgita.

Q) Silchar Normal School Library, Kachar, Assam –
   (i) Manuscript no 222 (fragment) – Bhagavadgita.
The Bangla Translations of the *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita* as a Part of the *Mahabharata*

The period, from the beginning of the thirteenth century up to sixteenth century, more specifically, from the downfall of Sena Dynasty of Bengal to the arrival of Shri Chaitanya in Bengal scenario, is considered as the Medieval Age in the literature and the history of Bengal. This period is marked by different translation works including Vyasa’s *Mahabharata* which has got synchronicity with its translations in other vernaculars like Oriya and Assamese of the East. From one common source, the Magadhan Apabhramsha, Bangla, Oriya and Assamese emerged. This synchronicity might have got some significance. Moreover, as the *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita* has come to be an integral part of the *Mahabharata*, this significance in the perspective of Bengal should be noticed.

From the second half of the fifteenth century, with the appearance of Shri Chaitanya (1486-1534) and Allah-Ud-Din Hussain Shah as ruler (1494-1519), many Bangla translations of the Sanskrit texts like the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and the *Bhagavata Purana* took place, and Bengal saw the silver-lining in the sky of its socio-cultural life. Even many Islamic texts were translated from Arabic, Persian and Hindi also. Some rulers were even interested in the stories of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabahrata*. Some rulers even encouraged the poets and the pundits of their courts, like Kavindra Parameshwara and Srikara Nandi, to translate those texts into Bangla by awarding sizable rewards and titles. Under the Brahminical order and Shastras, the
reading of the eighteen Maha Puranas and other Sanskrit texts was restricted by the fear of _Raurava Naraka_. Under the patronage of the Islamic rulers, these restrictions crumbled down and various translations took place. The Vernacular language of the common people, Bangla got some dignity in the field of literature.

Medieval Bengali Literature can be classified into four categories- Mangala Kavyas, Padavalis, and biographical literature and translated literature. Among these categories, the best expression of the Bangla Literature before Chaitanya period was the translated literature. In this category, translations of the *Mahabharata* are no less important.

Keeping aside the *Mahabharata* translations of Ramasaraswati Aniruddha under the patronage of King Naranarayan of Kamta and the creation based on the *Mahabharata* by Oriya poet Sarala Dasa of fifteenth century, the *Mahabharata* began to be translated into Bangla in the truest sense during the second half of the

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123 The most important eighteen Puranas are Agni, Bhagavat, Brahma, Brahmanda, Brahmbaibarta, Garuda, Harivamsha, Kurma, Linga, Markandeya, Matsya, Narada, Shiva, Skanda, Vamana, Varaha, Vayu and Vishnu.

124 One category of Hell, as it is described in the Hindu scriptures.

125 Mangal Kavya, which means auspicious poem, is a type of encomiastic verse to honour the indigenous deities of rural Bengal and sometimes it was written to make an indigenous deity honoured and popular among masses, especially upper caste people in medieval Bengal. These deities are chiefly Manasa, the goddess of snakes, Shitala, the goddess of small pox, and the folk-god Dharma Thakur. It takes an intermediate stand between Vedic and Puranic tradition. These Kavyas are not single-authored. Many poets contributed to this genre over centuries. Mostly the poets of Mangal Kavyas got the patronage of local kings and jamindars.

126 Padavali means lyrical literature contains the works done on the basis of the story of Radha and Krishna. Vaishnav Padavalis are mainly composed in Brajabuli, one of the literary dialects of the then Bengal. Notable poets of this genre are Chandidas, Jnanadas, Lochandas, Govindadas, Narahari Das and Radhamohan Thakur etc.

127 The literature based upon the life of Shri Chaitanya was the first biographical literature in Bengal. Krishna Das Kaviraj’s *Chaitnya Charitamrita* (1615) documented the life and philosophy of Shri Chaitanya and Vrindaban Das Thakur’s *Chaitanya Bhagavat* is the first full length biography in Bangla.

128 Various Sanskrit texts specially the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and the *Shrimad Bhagavatam* got rewritten cum translated into Bangla by a lot of poets. Among them Maladhar Basu’s *Shrikrishnavijay*, Krittibas Ojha’s *Krittibasi Ramayana* and Kashiram Das’s *Kashidasi Mahabharata* are worth mentioning.

129 Today’s Cooch Bihar

130 Interestingly, the first poet of Oriya Literature, Sarala Dasa did not translate the section of the *Gita* in his translation of the *Mahabharata*. 
fifteenth century, sometime after the translation of the Ramayana by Krittibas Ojha\textsuperscript{131} (1381-1461) in Bangla. Either for the vastness of the Mahabharata or for the hurdles of Sanskrit language, we find almost not a single Bangla Mahabharata in full in the medieval period of Bengal. Of the eighteen parvas of the Mahabharata, the poet-translators were exhausted in translating one or two parvas. They were not much interested in the philosophical, ethical, and other theoretical discussions. But, stories relating to Dushyanta-Shakuntala, Nala-Damayanti, Savitri-Satyavan, elopement of Subhadra and the story of Niladhvaja were much popular among the translators as well as the masses. The Mahabharata had not crept into the Bengali mindset to that extent as the Ramayana and its translations. Further, like Vyasa's Mahabharata, undergoing various changes, decline in meaning and significance owing to the interpolations, in different spaces and times, its Bangla translations were also full of many faults and contradictions reducing the grandeur and significance of the Mahabharata, the story of Suryavamshiyas\textsuperscript{132}. In the period of second half of the fifteenth century and early sixteenth century, before the popular translation of the Mahabharata by Kashiram Das (sixteenth century)\textsuperscript{133}, efforts were taken to translate this great epic. From the available manuscripts scholars have come up with three names as the earliest poet translators of the text. They are Kavindra Parameshwar, Srikar Nandi, and Sanjay. However, regarding the very existence of them and their time, there arose many discordances and disputes.

Supposedly, in between the beginning of Hussain Shahi Rule and the end of Nusrat Shah rule (1493 to 1532), Kavindra Parameshwar, on the direction and the encouragement of Laskar Paragal Khan, the army commander and the administrator

\textsuperscript{131} The medieval Bengali poet Krittibas’s translation is known as Krittibasi Ramayana. It was edited by Jayagopal Tarkalankar and published by Serampore Mission Press in 1803.

\textsuperscript{132} The solar dynasty of ancient India.

\textsuperscript{133} His translation composed in the style of Mangal Kavya, is known as Kashidasi Mahabharata.
of Chittagong, wrote cum translated the *Mahabharata as Pandava-Panchalika*. It's also known as *Paragali Mahabharata*. His creation was followed by the creation of Srikar Nandi, under the patronage of the same dynasty. Srikar Nandi’s work was based on the Ashwamedha Parva of Jaimini’s *Mahabharata*. According to Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay, Srikar Nandi's work, known as *Chhutikhani Mahabharata*, as it was patronized by the Laskar Chhutikhan, is a rewriting of *Jaimini Sanhita* in Bangla rather than the translation of the *Mahabharata*. Dinesh Chandra Sen (1866-1939), in his *History of Bengali Language and Literature* (1911), mentions about a poet-translator named Sanjay, who translated for people’s assembly. There are debates about his time. Dinesh Chandra Sen placed him before Kavindra Parameshwar. But in the opinion of Sukhamay Mukhopadhyay, his translation dates back to the early eighteenth century. His translation was edited by Dr. Manindrakumar Ghosh and got published in 1969 as *Kavi Sanjaya Virachita Mahabharata*. Along with these three, a few more poet-translators also worked on this epic. However, none of their works is complete. In most of the cases, a few parvas of the epic has been translated, rather say re-written. Ramachandra Khan (1532-1533), Dvija Raghunath (1567) and Nityananda Ghosh are a few of those poet-translators. Medieval Bengal witnessed two parallel streams of creations in the field of Mahabharata Translations. One was of royal patronage and the other, necessitated by the common people’s desire in their cultural assemblage. The first type was

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136 Dinesh Chandra Sen, one of the founder members of the Bangla Department in the University Of Calcutta, was the pioneer researcher in Bengali folklore and literature.
137 *History of Bengali Language and Literature* is actually a series of lectures delivered by Dinesh Chandra Sen as a reader in the University of Calcutta.
represented and initiated by Kavindra Parameshwar while Sanjay represented the other type. However, this later type was more popular.

In the area of the Bangla translations of the *Mahabharata*, from the medieval period up to the eighteenth century, Kashiram Das has occupied the foremost position. During 1801-1803, Kashiram Das’s creation was published by the Missionaries of Serampore Baptist Mission in four volumes. After thirty three years of this pioneering effort, the second edition with correction was published in two volumes in 1836 under the supervision of Pandit Jayagopal Tarkalankar of the Sanskrit College of Kolkata. His translation was in the form of verses and not literal. Based on the main plot, he only upheld the very essence of the epic, in his own style, by omission, addition and alteration to the main epic. But the language used by him confirms that he knew Sanskrit and was a talented poet and conversant with Vyasa’s *Mahabharata*. In spite of his derivations from the original and other non-literal lapses, it was highly creditable for Kashirama Dasa to translate and write his verses in his lowly rural life of the then Bengal without the patronage of any king or zamindar.

Around 1849, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820-1891) started translating parts of the *Mahabharata*, which was published in *Tattvabodhini Patrika*. The credit of the translation of the complete text of Vyasa’s *Mahabharata* on individual effort goes to Kaliprasanna Singha (1841-1870). He started the translation work of the *Mahabharata* by the middle 1858 with the help of seven Sanskrit pundits. It took eight long years of strenuous hard labor to complete the translation of the great epic in

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139 Born as Ishwar Chandra Bandyopadhyay, this Bengali polymath, social reformer and one of the key figures of Bengali Renaissance got the title ‘Vidyasagar’, meaning the ocean of knowledge, from the Sanskrit College of Kolkata. He put significant effort to simplify and modernize Bangla prose. Bangla alphabet and typography were reconstructed by him.

140 *Tattvabodhini Patrika* was the journal of *Tattvabodhini Sabha*, established by Devendranath Tagore in 1843. Even after the merger of the *Tattvabodhini Sabha* into the Brahmo Samaj, it got published till 1883. The journal began with the objectives to communicate the knowledge of the Brahmo sect and publish the works of Ram Mohan Ray. Later it started publishing various social and cultural issues.
Bangla in the form of prose. The entire project of this translation was supervised by Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar. Many Hindu political and social elites of the then Bengal like Radhakanta Dev, Raja Kamal Krishna Bahadur, Babu Rajakrishna Mitra and others came out in overt support for his translation project. As Romesh Chandra Dutta opined, his translation was simpler, more literal and more acceptable by people than other Bangla Mahabharatas.\(^{141}\)

Another contemporary endeavor was taken by the King Mahatab Chand Bahadur (-1879) of Burdwan in 1858. The kings of Burdwan took twenty-six years to publish their translation, if the Khil Harivamsha, an additional part is taken into account. _Adi parva_ of their Bangla translation got published in 1862 while _Swarga rohan Parva_ got published in 1882.

From humble walks of life, one Pratap Chandra Roy (1842-1895) turned out to be a translator of the Mahabharata. He took seven years to complete the task and his translation got published in 1876. Interestingly, at his request, arrangement and financial procurement, Kishori Mohan Ganguly translated the epic into English. This one, the first complete English translation of this epic, got published in between 1883 and 1896. This one titled as _The Mahabharata of Krishna-Dwaipayana Vyasa Translated into English Prose_ is still available in Munshiram Manoharlal Publication.

The poet and the copywright Rajkrishna Roy’s verse translation of the Mahabharata started getting published from 1886 in parts. In 1890, under the patronage of the King of Bhawal, a royal edition came out. The translation of the Mahabharata coming out of the Alfred press deserves attention because the translation was bilingual. Barring the _Adi Parva_ and the _Sabha Parva_, there are no traces of the other parvas.

In the nineteenth century, some of the translations of the *Mahabharata* in Bangla, were known and sold as of certain printing houses. The press authority usually did not give the names of the translators, barring a very few cases. With mentioning or without mentioning of anyone’s name as translator, the press authorities used to contact and engage several translators for translating so vast a work like the Mahabharata. From 1854 to 1898, at least twenty five complete translations of the epic in Bangla came out from different presses. Majority of them were published institutionally and a few were published in someone’s name. Some of the notable institutional publications are Serampore Baptist Mission Press’ publication of Kashiram Dasa’s *Mahabharata* during 1801 to 1803 and later in 1836, Sudhakar Yantra's publication in 1853, Chaitanya Chandrodaya Yantra’s publication during 1853 to 1857, Banglabasi Press publication during 1888 to 1889, New Pratrika Press publication during 18888 to 1890 and Hitavadi Press publication in 1898. The texts, published on the names of individuals are mentioned above.

Like medieval period, in the nineteenth century also, there were two parallel streams in the translation works of the *Mahabharata*. On one side, there were some moneyed people of the Elite sections, who with the help of Sanskrit Pandits took the endeavor of translating the epic. Love for the language Bangla and Hinduism was their source for inspirations. On the other hand, there were institutional efforts where the translation works rested on the Sanskrit Pandits. Of both the sides, a very few were successful in their mission of translating such vast an epic but their efforts were appreciable.

Among the Bangla translations of the *Mahabharata*, happened in the medieval periods, the work of Kashirama Dasa is the lone complete one. In this regard, some more points should be noted here. Firstly, not a single work of this period can be seen
as the way ‘translation’ is defined today. It can be said that the poet-translators of the medieval Bengal adapted the storyline of the great epic or same parvas of the epic and rewrote it in the vernacular in the form of verses. Secondly, except Kashidasi Mahabharata, no other works include the ‘Bhishma Parva’. Therefore, the section of the epic, the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, which exists as a separate text today, is not available in these translations.

The nineteenth century translations can be called as translation as most of them are literal and the translators tried their level best to retain the epic as it is. These translations are mostly in prose format and containing the section of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita. Although, they mentioned it as the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, none of them focused or emphasized on this particular section. With the objective and intention to maintain uniformity throughout the text, they translated the Gita along with the rest of the Mahabharata.
Focusing on the Kolkata Centric Southern Bengal: “Baanglaar Pancho Bhubaner Ek Bhubaner Kathaa”

The modern phase of Bengali literature dates undoubtedly from the early decades of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, it cannot be said that there has been no twists or unfortunate turns in its continuous development. To refer to just one important trend one must mention the radical change that Bengali literature has to undergo as a result of the political and economic changes that overtook the Bengali race in this period.

Till 1947, i.e. the year the British Imperialism left India after breaking it into three fragments; modern Bengali literature had been largely unipolar in character. The Bengali speakers were a compact homogenous body spread over a vast tract of eastern India, and all Bengali writers and readers looked up to Calcutta for inspiration and guidance. It is true that Bengali writers of the eastern fringe i.e. Silchar and Sylhet districts of quondam Assam and the Bengali writers living in the provinces of U.P, Bihar and Orissa have their own characteristic trends. But they all considered themselves to be part of the same body of Bengali letters which had its Mecca in

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142 The account of the one world among the five worlds of Bengal.
143 This phase is featured by the rise and development of prose writings, periodicals, new poetic genres and the influence of Sanskrit scholars and western literatures.
144 The time of the foundation of Fort William College and the emergence of the Bengali Renaissance.
145 Though, there are many, mainly the partition of undivided Bengal in 1947 during Indian Independence, Naxal Movement of 1960s and 70s in West Bengal and the liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971 left great impact on Bengal and Bengalis.
146 Undivided Bengal was consisted of twenty eight districts (erstwhile Midnapore, Bankura, Burdwan, Birbhum, Hooghly, Howrah, 24 Parganas, Khulna, Murshidabad, Nadiya, Malda, Jessore, Rajshahi, Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, Rongpur, Bogra, Mymensingh, Pabna, Dacca, Faridpur, Bakhargunj, Noakhali, Tippera, Sylhet, Chittagong and Chittagong Hill Tracts) from Bihar and Orissa in the West to Assam in the East and Tripura and Cooch Bihari as separate state.
Calcutta. Pravasi Banga Sahitya Sammelan\(^\text{147}\) which had its conclave every year at different centers held aloft the banner of this literature.

The year 1947 dealt a shattering blow to this compact body of Bengali speakers spread over a huge contiguous territory. The Bengali speakers were trifurcated as it were, the broken parts being West Bengal, East Pakistan and the Bengali speaking area of Assam, specially the Silchar, Karimgunj and Hailakandi districts and Tripura. In practice it meant that walls were erected as it were between these physically contiguous but politically and administratively insulated fragments.

As a consequence, the Bengali literature lost its unipolar character. Calcutta lost its unchallenged supremacy. Dhaka\(^\text{148}\) soon raised its head as leading centre of Bengali letters and Silchar among the above mentioned three districts falling within Assam became an area which had to fend for itself\(^\text{149}\). Another development that slowly came to play a decisive role was the immigration of thousands of academics, doctors, engineers and other kinds of technically equipped people from West Bengal, Bangladesh\(^\text{150}\), and other parts of India to different parts of the world, specially Great Britain, the U.S.A., the European Continent, Canada, Australia etc.

Thanks for internet and other modern technology that became available around the turn of the century in 2000; people of this Bengali Diaspora came to realize their importance and strength. They have now their own printed magazines and on-line

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147 The first annual Prabasi Banga Sahitya Sammelan was held in Beneras in 1922 and presided over by Rabindranath Tagore. Post independence, the name was changed to Nikhil Bharat Bango Sahitya Sammelan.

148 Erstwhile Dacca.

149 In 1961, the Bengali speaking population of Barak Valley (Silchar, Karimgunj and Hailakandi) protested against government’s decision of making Assamese as the one and only official language in Assam. Eleven people became martyrs in the movement. As a result of it, Bangla got the official status in Barak Valley. This movement is known as Bengali Language Movement of the Barak Valley and Barak Valley remembers 19\(^\text{th}\) May as the Bengali Language Martyr Day.

150 Erstwhile East Pakistan.
journals\textsuperscript{151}, which do not seem to care much for advice and encouragement from their homelands, i.e. west Bengal, Bangladesh, Assam, and Tripura etc.

So Bengali speakers now have five ‘worlds’ as it were with distinct identities. These five worlds, frequently referred as ‘Pancha Bhuvan’ by Kalim Khan\textsuperscript{152} (1950- ) and Ravi Chakrabarti\textsuperscript{153} (1929- ) in their lexicons\textsuperscript{154} and other writings\textsuperscript{155}, are (i) West Bengal, (ii) Bangladesh, (iii) Barak Valley of Assam and Tripura, (iv) other states of India and (v) the Bengali Diaspora spread out over this globe.

It is too early as yet to make a pronouncement as to whether it will mean greater glories for the Bengali language and literature or its opposite in a kind of gradual disintegration, decay and demise.

Here, in this research project, titled as ‘the Socio-Cultural Perspective of the Bangla Translations of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita’, I am focusing on West Bengal, mainly Kolkata centric southern Bengal. Till independence, most of the works, done on the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita in the undivided Bengal, have been preserved and

\textsuperscript{151} In a few countries like Great Britain, a number of Bengali newspapers get published. Among them Bangla Mirror and Bangla Post are noteworthy.

\textsuperscript{152} Kalim Khan, an amateur linguist and lexicographer, researches on sociology and cultural history. In his insistence, that essentially all words have been formed from the verb roots and they are to be understood by references to these roots. Khan may be said to have taken his cue from Yaska, the ancient Indian theorist of languages. He first proclaimed his theory in his monogram Moulo Bibaad Theke Nikhlier Darshone (1995) and amplified it further in his book Paromaabhaashaar Bodhon Udbhodhon (2002). In addition to this, he published three collections of essays, all centering around these theories, on a wide range of topics.

\textsuperscript{153} Ravi Chakravarti, a polymath academic, and has scholarly works on socio-linguistics and verb-based semantics. His special concern is that ‘India – the restored through her linguistics moorings’. Among the works, produced solo by him, India Rediscovered: Kalim Khan and his Verb-Based Semantics (1999) and the bilingual Diganter Taane: The Lure of the Horizon (2012) are noteworthy.

\textsuperscript{154} Subsequent to Ravi Chakravarti’s espousal to his theories, Kalim Khan and Ravi Chakravarti have been close collaborators, and they have been jointly authored two Bangla lexicons. Their joint ventures have solitary effect on the development of new linguistic theories. Those lexicons are Bangiyo Shabdarthokosh Part I (2009), Bangiyo Shabdarthokosh Part II (2011) and Saral Shabdarthokosh (2013).

\textsuperscript{155} Khan and Chakravarti’s joint work includes the following collections of the essays Banglabhasha: Prachyer Sampad O Rabindranath (2006), Abikalpo Sandhaan: Bengla Theke Bishve (2008), Bangojana (2012), Sundaro, He Sundaro! (2011) and Bangotirthe Muktsan (2015). In the essays of Bangojana and Sundaro, He Sundaro!, they have discussed elaborately about the Concept of the ‘Pancha Bhuvan’ of Bengal.
archived in the libraries of Kolkata. Later on, also, the works, done in this particular area in today's West Bengal, have been kept in the libraries of Kolkata. Post-independence, several works have been done on the *Gita* by the Bengalis of Bangladesh, Tripura and other Bengali speaking areas. Nonetheless, keeping the vastness of the area under research and available resources in mind, I am not focusing on those texts and the other texts, related to this topic, kept in the libraries of these above mentioned places. For field work and library visit, I have emphasized on Kolkata and the Gangetic plane of Southern Bengal.
Repositories of the Bangla Translations of the *Gita*

To have an overall view of the Bangla translations of the *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita*, especially the printed and published texts on this area, I have visited the libraries and archives of Kolkata and the Gangetic plane of Southern Bengal. Among these aforementioned regions, a few particular places and some institutions of them deserve serious attention, because of several historical, cultural and religious reasons. Chronologically, the important and significant places, which are worth concentrating, are (i) the seat of learning in the medieval period of Bengal: Nabadwip and its surrounding, (ii) the first printing press (1805) of Bengal: Serampore, (iii) the sesqui-centenarian old town libraries of Gangetic Planes of Southern Bengal, mainly Howrah, Hooghly and the North 24 Parganas districts, (iv) the centre of the emergence of Bengal Renaissance-English educated middleclass Bengal: Calcutta and its surroundings, especially the libraries and the archives of North Kolkata and (v) the religious Institutions like Ramakrishna Mission, Goudiya Math etc.,
The Seat of Learning in the Medieval Period of Bengal: Nabadwip and its Surrounding:

Nabadwip\textsuperscript{156}, the Varansai of Bengal, positioned at the confluence of the Bhagirathi and Jalangi rivers, has been playing a vital role in the history of Bengal. Supposedly, it was founded in eleventh century by the Kings of the Sena Dynasty\textsuperscript{157}, the first Hindu dynasty of Bengal. King Ballal Sen\textsuperscript{158} (1159-1179), the first one among the kings ruled Bengal to follow the "four layer caste system" strictly, made Nabadwip his capital. After the attack of the Turkic army general, Bakhtiyar Khilji on Nabadwip, Lakshman Sena (1179-1206), the then ruler shifted his capital to Gauda\textsuperscript{159}.

Nabadwip, as a centre of learning and intellectual expertise, is celebrated for its traditional Sanskrit traditions, particularly the Nabadwip School of Navya Nyaya\textsuperscript{160}. Gangesh Upadhyay, Vasudev Sarvabhauma, Raghunath Shiromoni, Vishwanath, Jagadish tarkalankar and Gadadhar Bhattacharya are the notable scholars of this school. Nabadwip is also the workplace of the founder of the Achintya Bheda Abheda school of Vedanta tradition, Shri Chaitanya, who was born here in the late fifteenth century. The Bhakti movement of Bengal, Gaudiya Vaishnavism and late Vaishnava literature centered Nabadwip. H.E.A. Cotton, in his book \textit{Calcutta Old and New}, referred Nabadwip and its surroundings as the "Nuddea for five centuries Oxford of Bengal"\textsuperscript{161}.

\textsuperscript{156} The name "Nabadwip' means "nine islands". These nine islands are Antardwip, Simantadwip, Rudradwip, Madhyadwip, Godrumdwip, Ritudwip, Brahmdwip, Modadrumdwip and Koladwip.
\textsuperscript{157} After Pala dynasty, this dynasty ruled Bengal for more than century, from CE 1070 to CE 1230. The rulers of this dynasty traced their origin back in Karnatak.
\textsuperscript{158} He introduced the "Kulin Pratha" in Bengal.
\textsuperscript{159} It is also known as Lakshmanavatti, as named after the king Lakshman Sen.
\textsuperscript{160} It is one of the six orthodox schools of Indian philosophy.
Therefore, Nabadwip has been a treasure trove of the manuscripts of the literary works done in both Bangla and Sanskrit on Sanskrit scriptures and philosophical texts as well as the Bangla literature of medieval period. In his article, M. Siddiq Khan says, “the great missionary, William Carey, an eminent scholar of Bengali and Sanskrit, visited Nabadwip, the cultural and religious centre of Bengal, he could unearth after arduous search a mere forty handwritten Bengali works.”(53)

The First Printing Press of Bengal: Serampore

Though, the first Bangla book was printed in 1778 in Hooghly, the district-headquarter of Hooghly district of present day’s West Bengal, Serampore, located in the same district, is the place where the foundation stone of vernacular printing was laid by the British Baptist Missionary William Carey (1761-1834) and with the help of two other missionaries of same mission, William Ward (1769-1823) and Joshua Marshman (1767-1837).

In 1799, William Carey formed a mission settlement in Serampore with the permission of the Danish government, since the East India Company did not allow him to establish a mission in the British territory. He started the first Bengali printing press there with a second-hand English wooden press. Same year August, this press issued its first publication: Mathew’s Gospel translated by William Carey himself. Then, with the support of Fort William College, Calcutta it started to print and publish vernacular textbooks. Along with producing and distributing numerous tracts and pamphlets in Bangla, free of cost, among common people of Bengal to expound

163 The book is A Grammar of the Bengal Language by the renowned Indologist and Philologist, Nathaniel Brassey Halhed (1751–1830).
Christianity, this press contributed a lot to the vernacular literature\(^{164}\) including textbook literature. *Samachar Darpan*, the first Bangla newspaper and another informative magazine *Digdarshan* were issued from this press in 1818. These missionaries, together with the vernacular translations of *The Bible*, printed and published vernacular translations of some Sanskrit texts, like *the Ramayana* and *the Mahabharata* in Bangla.

Most of the manuscripts collected and the accounts of the then Bengal written and documented by the missionaries of Serampore Mission, and the copies of the early printed Bangla texts have been preserved in the Carey Library and Research centre of Serampore.

The Sesqui-centenarian Old Town Libraries of Gangetic Plains of Southern Bengal

The settlements of the southern Bengal, mainly the districts of Howrah, and Hooghly, are considered to be centuries-old. The towns of these districts, located on the Gangetic plains, were culturally flourished and enriched with the indigenous education systems. Generally, being the admirers of art and education, the local zamindars and the landlords of these regions used to patronize pedagogical activities and contribute large amount of money for the social welfare of the localities.

The execution of Maharaja Nanda Kumar\(^{165}\) (1705-1775), by the then governor-general of Bengal, Warren Hastings and the chief-justice Sir Elijah Impey in

\(^{164}\) This press produced books on various subjects like history, grammar, dictionary, legend and even moral tales

\(^{165}\) He was the tax collector or type of Diwan of some regions of today’s West Bengal, employed by the East India Company. Shsh Alam Khan II conferred him with the title “Maharaja”.
August, 1775 in Kolkata, which is later tagged as judicial murder by the historians, created panics among the Bengali Brahmins of Calcutta. It is said that, they started considering the city impious and the city witnessed a huge exodus of Bengali Brahmins. Though, majority of them migrated to Banaras, a good number of people shifted to Bally\textsuperscript{166}-Uttarpara\textsuperscript{167} region which changed the history of these areas.

Along with the Bengal Renaissance, the English educated middle class Bengali emerged. The English educated residents of these areas concentrated on the developments of their localities. Consequently, with the monetary help from the local zamindars and affluent people, they started founding town libraries. Most of the town libraries of this belt, like Bally Public Library, Uttarpara Jayakrishna Library etc, are more than hundred years old and having huge and rare collection of the books.

**The Centre of the Emergence of Bengal Renaissance-English Educated Middleclass Bengal: Calcutta**

The city, consisted of three villages named Kalikata, Sutanati and Govindapur, founded in the late seventeenth century, served as the capital of British India till 1911. This city was the centre for Bengal Renaissance of nineteenth century. In the medieval period, Nabadwip was the religious and cultural centre of Bengal. Since, the late eighteenth century, the focus started shifting towards Calcutta. Foundation of the Asiatic Society and the Fort William College, materialisation of Bangla printing press, the emergence of Babu Culture etc. headed towards the centralization of art and

\textsuperscript{166} The city located on the river bank of Ganges, is the northern border of the Present days' Howrah district.

\textsuperscript{167} The town on the west bank of Ganges is the southern border of Hooghly district.
education in Bengal and Calcutta became the centre of Bengal Renaissance. Till the Indian Independence, Calcutta meant White Town, the British neighbourhood of Central Calcutta and Black Town, the Indian mainly Bengali neighbourhood of North Calcutta. North Calcutta is the location of colonial Bengali legacy including some good old libraries. The Bangiya Sahitya Parishad in North Calcutta was established in 1894 with the aim to promote Bangla Language and literature. This library is one of the best resources for the researchers working on Bengal Studies.

The Religious Institutions like Ramakrishna Mission, Goudiya Math etc.

The Hindu religious institutions irrespective of sects have been contributing to the Gita literature in Bangla since the beginning. The orderly monks and the household devotees of these organizations are working on the Gita in the forms of translations, explanations, catechism etc. The publication sections of the institutions like Ramakrishna Mission, Gaudiya Matha, Bharat Sevashram Sangha and ISKCON etc. focus on the works done on the Gita in the light of their respective ideologies and come up with the publication of numerous texts on the Gita.
Categorization of the Bangla Translations of the Gita

The literature of the Bangla translations of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, including all types of works done on this very text irrespective of the forms, is a vast area of literature. While categorizing the translations, firstly, it has to be parted into two different sections; one is the direct translations of the Gita from the Sanskrit version into Bangla, and other one is the retranslations of the text from the translations done in other vernaculars and English into Bangla.

Direct Translations from Sanskrit

Among the direct translations into Bangla, several types of translations done in various forms are available. Even, in case of the translators also, they hail from diverse backgrounds and their purposes are as well varied. Emphasizing on these points, the direct translations of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita into Bangla can be categorized in two sections- form wise and translators‘ background wise.

Based on the Form of the Text

The Gita has been translated into Bangla in different forms like prose, poetry, catechism etc. The early translations including the works done in the medieval period are in the poetry format mainly. Nineteenth century onwards Bangla translations in prose format started taking place. Nevertheless, the works of many poet-translators of
later period are poetical in form. Except these two formats, people followed many other forms also while translating. On the basis of the form of the translations, the Bangla translations of the Gita are categorized below:

- Many a translators have translated the text in the prose format. Most of the literal translations of the *Gita* in Bangla are in prose. Chronologically, the language of prose translation has been transforming from the highly Sanskritised ‘Sadhu’ Bangla to the standardized ‘Chaít’ Bangla of later period. Jagadish Chandra Ghosh’s *Shrimadbhagavad Gita* is notable as the prose translation of the text.

- There are a good number of translations of the *Gita*, which are poetical in form. Though not in the same style of verses as it is there in the Sanskrit *Gita*, majority of the Bengali poet-translators of the text attempt to retain the form of the original text in their translations. However, there is no uniformity in the styles of the Bengali poet-translators. Since Baladeva Vidyabhushan of medieval period to Shakti Chattiyopadhyay of late twentieth century, they followed either contemporary or their own style. Pashupati Sarkar’s *Padya-Gita* is one of them.

- Some scholars and intellectuals did not translate verse by verse while translating the *Gita*. They proceeded by explaining the eighteen chapters one by one or sometimes only the main philosophical concepts discussed in the chapters. Dwijendranath Tagore’s *Gitapath* is an ideal example for this type of translation. Instead of translating or explaining, some of the scholar-translators wrote articles centering the theories and ideas from the *Gita*. In addition, a number of translations of this type, like *Gitasar Sangraha* by Swami Premeshananda, are actually the abridged versions of the Gita in Bangla.
Some Bangla translations are there in the form of catechism also. In most of the cases of catechism, the sets of questions followed by the answers, on and about the doctrine of the Gita and its related issues, between the teachers and disciples are recorded. Gitanubachan by Shrimat Anirvan comes under this category.

Along with these aforementioned categories, a few more types of Bangla translations of the Gita are available. Conversations and debates, on the issues related to the Gita, among friends have been documented by some translators and got published. Basant Indu Mukhopadhyay’s Gitar Charcha (Bandhudwayer Kathopokathon) is a good attempt to showcase this kind of effort. Discussions between two friends on the Gita, in the form of the collections of letter, are also there, like, Gitayan (Sudhir-Satyendra Patrokabyo) by Satyendranath Mukhopadhyay.

Based on the Translators’ Background

Though, in Bengal, in the medieval period, mainly philosophers, pundits and religious leaders cum preachers translated the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita in the form of commentaries and glosses, since mid nineteenth century a lot of writers started working on this text. Later, in the late nineteenth century, it became a trend to talk about the Gita. Irrespective of socio-cultural-religious, every changes/reforms, witnessed by Bengal, produced a good number of works on this particular text. The noteworthy point is that these various translations have been done by people from different backgrounds, and everyone has done for their own peculiar purpose. Emphasizing the backgrounds of the translators, the Bangla translations of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita are categorized below:
Most of the translations are done by the people belonging to the different religious traditions of Hinduism. Certainly, almost all of the Hindu religious institutions of the nineteenth and the twentieth century have at least one of their own translations of the Gita, done by either the founder of that institution or the orderly monks belong to that institution. In a few cases, the monks, belonging to a particular order itself come out with the translations of the Gita again and again. In this regard, the Ramakrishna Mission is the noteworthy mention. The monks of the Ramakrishna Mission have minimum six to seven renowned translations of the Gita in their credit. Swami Jagadishwarananda’s Shrimad Bhagavad Gita is the most accurate and popular among them. Several followers of the religious leader Ramakrishna, leading separate ashrams since the late 19th century, have contributed to the Gita literature in Bangla. Similar is the case with scholars of Navadwipa who follow Shri Chaitanya and the path showed by him.

The lawyer turned into Vedanta scholar Hirendranath Dutta’s work titled Gitay Ishwarvad can be seen as an example of the translation done by the follower of a particular philosophical school. He is known as one of the followers of the nationalist author Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. It is said that, as Bankim Chandra could not complete his translation of the Gita in Bangla, he assigned Hirendranath Dutta to come up with a complete translation of the text following the ideology of Bankim Chandra.

Some translators worked with a pure academic approach. They tried to retain the translations literal and faithful to the original. Most of the translations of this type are not biased towards any particular ideology or tradition. Atul Chandra Sen is one of them. His translation was a prescribed text for the curriculum of the Masters degree in Sanskrit in the Calcutta University.
Since the last decades of the nineteenth century, the nationalist leaders and freedom fighters started using the Gita and its ideology. Through his work on the Gita titled as Gita Rahasya, Bal Gangadhar Tilak became the great inspirations for the armed extremist anti-British revolutionaries of Bengal. In this instance, Jugantar and Anushilan Samiti must be mentioned. The members of these associations and people inspired by this ideology started translating this text. Trailokyanath Chakraborty’s (1889-1970) Gitay Swaraj can be placed in this category.

Literary persons also tried their hand in Gita translation. Authors like Rajsekhar Basu (1880-1960) also translated the Gita, as a presentation of a different literary style. Much later, in the late twentieth century, radical progressive poet Shakti Chattopadhyay started translating the text in poetical format. Though, he could complete only six chapters of it, his incomplete translations got published posthumously.

Not only the scholars belonging to the Hindu community or working on Hindu religion, philosophy and culture, but also the scholars belonging to other religious communities, especially Buddhists and a very few Muslims also worked on the Gita. Most of the works done by them are mostly comparison of the Gita with the non-Hindu religious scriptures and philosophical texts like the Dhammapada.

Some political scholars attempted to work on the Gita. Though Bengali Marxist scholar cum author Dilip Bose along with S. G. Sardeshai, wrote Marxism and the Bhagavad Gita in this context, the book is in English, not Bangla.

There have been women also among the translators and commentators on the Gita. Mostly, the follower devotees of the religious leaders translated this text,
like Sadhana Puri, the follower of Satyananda. Except this type of occurrences, Sarala Devi Chaudhurani\textsuperscript{168} (1872-1945) and Sulumari Bhattacharya\textsuperscript{169} (1921-2014) are notable among women who worked on the *Gita*.

- The priests of the temples and the priests performing in temples and daily rituals in households have used the anonymous translations of the *Gita* published by the Popular Press.

**Based on Source Language**

Since the late nineteenth century till the middle of the twentieth century, the literature of the Bangla translations of the *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita* had been enriched by the retranslations of the text. Chiefly, the distinguished and reputed personalities of Bengal translated the *Gita* into Bangla from already existing translations done into other vernaculars and English also. They translated largely Mahatma Gandhi’s *Anasakti Yoga* from Gujarati, Bal Gangadhar Tilak’s *Gita Rahasya* and Vinoba Bhave *Gita Pravachane* from Marathi and Shri Aurobindo’s *Essays on the Gita* from English. In this context, Anath Bandhu Basu, Satish Chandra Dashgupta, Jyotirindranath Tagore and Anilbaran Roy must be mentioned. The propagation of the ideologies of the respective persons was the main reason behind the retranslations of this particular text. In most of the retranslated texts, the Bengali translators did not add anything of their own while translating. They simply explained in Bangla and sometimes elaborated also.

\textsuperscript{168} The first woman leader from Bengal in Indian independence movement who was the first one to found a women organization in India named ‘Bharat Stree Mahamandal’ in Allahabad in 1910.

\textsuperscript{169} She is the renowned Indologist who worked on the Sanskrit scriptures with a rational and scientific approach.
In later period, some devout followers also translated the works on *Gita* done by their respective gurus, from English into Bangla. Swami Ranganathananda’s *The Universal Message of the Gita* and A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada’s *Bhagavad-Gita as it is* are notable two of them. Along with the translations, both the texts include the commentaries given by the translators.
Catalogues Referred along with Libraries and Archives

Visited as Part of the Field Work

As a part of the field Work I have visited the town libraries and other libraries of the centuries old towns of the Gangetic plains of southern Bengal, since these are the culturally flourished and enriched places. I have focussed one the towns like Bally, Belur, and Howrah etc. of the Howrah District and Uttarpara, Konnagar, Rishra, Serampore, Chandannagar and Banshberia etc. of the Hooghly District. I also visited some important libraries of the North Kolkata as it is being the location of colonial Bengali legacy. Those libraries are chiefly the Rammohan Library and the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad. Apart from the catalogue of the libraries mentioned below I have looked at the catalogues named the 33rd Kolkata Book Fair 2008 and 37th Kolkata Book Fair, 2012 published by the Publishers and Book Sellers Guild, which are having the lists of the printed books in Bangla till 2012. In the book Gita Kale Kalantare, Barun Kumar Chakrabarti has extensively mentioned a lot of books that were published on the Gita.

Enlisted is the name of the libraries visited as part of the Field Work and the catalogues consulted along with the abbreviations used in the dissertation.

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<td>Bagbazar Reading Library, Kolkata.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Library Name</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bally Public Library, Bally, Howrah.</td>
<td>BPL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bangiya Shaitya Parishad, Kolkata.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Banshberia Public Library, Banshberia, Hooghly.</td>
<td>BANS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belur Public Library, Belur, Howrah.</td>
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<td>Bhadrakali Association, Uttarpara, Hooghly.</td>
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<td>Carey Library and Research Centre, Serampore, Hooghly.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chandannagar Pustakagar, Chandannagar, Hooghly.</td>
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<td>Howrah District Library, Howrah.</td>
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<td>Kolkata Book Fair, 2008.</td>
<td>KBF 08</td>
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<td>Kolkata Book Fair, 2012.</td>
<td>KBF 12</td>
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<td>Konnagar Public Library, Konnagar, Hooghly.</td>
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<td>Mahesh Shri Ramakrishna Library, Rishra, Hooghly.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mahiary Public Library (Andul-Mouri), Howrah</td>
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<td>Rammohan Library, Kolkata</td>
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<td>Rishra Bandhab Samity Sadharan Patha Mandir, Rishra, Hooghly.</td>
<td>RISP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Samar Smriti Pathagar, Bally, Howrah.</td>
<td>SSPB</td>
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<td>Serampore Public Library, Serampore, Hooghly.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shishir Bani Mandir Pathagar, Guptipara, Hooghly.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Santragachhi Public Library</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Asiatic Society, Kolkata</td>
<td>ASK</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uttarpara Public Library (Jayakrishna Library), Uttarpara, Hooghly.</td>
<td>UPL</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uttarpara Saraswata Pathagar, Uttarpara, Hooghly.</td>
<td>USP</td>
</tr>
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</table>
The list of the Bangla Translations of the *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita* Available

Below is the alphabetical list of the Bangla translations of the *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita*, available in the aforementioned catalogues, libraries and archives. Along with the texts, the name of the translators, publication details and availability in the catalogues, libraries and archives (in abbreviation) are also given. Among the listed texts, a good number of the texts, dating back to mid nineteenth century, have been archived. Except a few places, maintenance is not up to the mark and most of the old texts do not have front and back covers. Even, in some books, there is no introductory page at all. Therefore, the publication details are not available for every text listed below.

3. Anirban, Shrimat. *Gitanubachan*. KPL, MRL.
5. Aurobindo, Shri. *Gitar Bhumika*. KPL, BANS, CNP, BPL, YMA.
6. Aurobindo, Shri. *Shri Aurobinder Gita*. KPL.


10. Bandyopadhyay, Baikunthanath. *Shri Shri Bhagavad Gita*. 1830. KPL, USP, UPL, BSP, CNP.


27. Banerjee, Sudip Kumar. *Gita Shrivishnumoksha*. UPL.


29. Basu, Anathbandhu. *Gitabodh (Gandhibhashya)*. KPL.


34. Basu, Manoranjan. *Gitabahini*. RL.


42. Bharati, Bhaktivilash. *Gitar Tatparya*. BKC.


44. Bhattacharya, Amulyadhan. *Yogigita Ba Shrimad Bhagavad Gitar Anvay, Vakhya Samanvita Yougik Byakhya*. CNP.


60. Bhattacharya, Ramaratna. *Bhagavati Gita*. 1878-79. UPL, BSP.


64. Bhattacharya, Shyamaprasad O Rama Devi. *Gitaratnamrita*. Kolkata: Anirban Prakashani. MRL.
75. Bhave, Vinoba. *Gita Pravachan (Re-translation Birendranath Guha)*. Sarvaday Prakashan Samiti 1978 MRL, BANS, MPL.
77. Brahmachari, Abinash Prakash. *Shrimat Haranath Gita*. KPL, RL.
78. Brahmachari, Mahanambrata. *Gitadhyan*. SSPB, MRL.
81. Brahmachari, Sankhyaparakash. *Gitar Niti O Gitar Mat*. BSP.
82. Brahmarshibhai, Brahmananda. *Gitar Galod*. 1933. CNP.
86. Chakrabarti, Annadakumar. *Gitay Karmayoga*. BSP.
90. Chakrabarti, Thakkur Biswanath Goswami. *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita*. CNP.
91. Chakrabarti, Trailokyanath. Gitar Swarajya. BSP.
95. Chattopadhyay, Bankim Chandra. *Gita*. 1902. BSP, BSMP.
96. Chattopadhyay, Bhudhar Chandra. *Anugita, Mahabharatantargata*. BSP.
100. Chattopadhyay, Devendranath. *Gitamrita-Lahari*. BSP.


12.


110. Chowdhury, Bhujangadhar Ray. *Gita (Verse)*. 1936-37. BSP.


115. Chowdhury, Nibaran Chandra. *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita*. USP.


117. Chowdhury, Sushil Kumar Pal. *Gitarthabodhini*. BSP.

118. Chowdhury, Yogendralal. *Gitalahari*. BSP.


120. Das, Chandicharan. *Gouriya Gita: Gitamul O Bhasya*. BANS.


    *Sarbadaya Prakashan Samiti.* MRL.
125. Dasgupta, Satish Chandra. *Gita Praveshika.* YMA.
126. Dasgupta, Satish Chandra. *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita (Gandhi Bhashya).*
    BSP, BANS, MPL.
127. Dasgupta, Shailendra Bijay. *Gita Samalochana.* UPL.
128. Devi, Pushpa. *Amritagita.* MRL.
130. Devsharma, Amarakanta. *Gitay Muktivad.* 1923. BSP, CNP.
    Upanishad Rahasya Karyalaya. BSP.
133. Devsharma, Harendra. *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita.* YMA, CNP.
135. Dey, Jaigopal. *Bhagavad Gita-Samalochona.* 1895. CNP.
    Karuna Prakashani KPL, MRL, HDL.
139. Dutta, Bhaktivinod Kedarnath. *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita.* USP.
140. Dutta, Hirendranath. *Gitay Ishwarvad.* KPL, BPL, MRL, SBMP,
    YMA, MPL, BSP.
141. Dutta, Kedarnath. *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita.* RISP, BRL, BSP.
<table>
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<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>142</td>
<td>Gitar Katha</td>
<td>Dutta, Nandadulal</td>
<td>BSP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>143</td>
<td>Gitanushilan</td>
<td>Dutta, Shital</td>
<td>SRPL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>144</td>
<td>Shrimad Bhagavad Gita Yathayatha</td>
<td>Dvaipayan, Srikrishna</td>
<td>MPL</td>
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<td>145</td>
<td>Gitamadhukari</td>
<td>Ghosh, Ashutosh</td>
<td>BSP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>146</td>
<td>Gitar Bhumika</td>
<td>Ghosh, Aurobindo</td>
<td>BANS, MPL</td>
</tr>
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<td>147</td>
<td>Shrimad Bhagavad Gita</td>
<td>Ghosh, Dr. Kamalkumar</td>
<td>RL</td>
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<td>148</td>
<td>Janamanaser Drishtite Shrimad Bhagavad Gita</td>
<td>Ghosh, Haricharan</td>
<td>MRL, BANS, HDL</td>
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<td>1972</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Gita (Bangla Padya)</td>
<td>Ghosh, Haridas</td>
<td>KPL, RL</td>
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<tr>
<td>150</td>
<td>Shrimad Bhagavad Gita</td>
<td>Ghosh, Hemachandra</td>
<td>RL</td>
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<td>151</td>
<td>Gita. 1957.</td>
<td>Ghosh, Jagadishchandra</td>
<td>BSP, MPL</td>
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<td>152</td>
<td>Shrimad Bhagavad Gita (Sahajpath)</td>
<td>Ghosh, Kamal Kumar</td>
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<td>Shrimad Bhagavad Gita O Gitatattvasar: Kabita</td>
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<td>155</td>
<td>Shrimad Bhagavad Gita</td>
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<td>156</td>
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<td>Ghosh, Nripendranath</td>
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<td>158</td>
<td>Saralgita</td>
<td>Ghosh, Preeti Kumar</td>
<td>BSP</td>
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<td>159</td>
<td>Gitay Sadhana</td>
<td>Ghosh, Pritikumar</td>
<td>KBF 12</td>
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<td>160</td>
<td>Shrimad Bhagavad Gita</td>
<td>Ghosh, Rajendranath</td>
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<td>Git o Gitar Bhabartha</td>
<td>Ghosh, Yagneshwar</td>
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164. Ghoshal, Chittaranjan. *Gita Sangraha (Collection)*. MRL, CNP.

165. Ghoshal, Yogeshwar. *Gitay Hindudharma*. MPL.

166. Giri, Yukteshwar. *Gitar Tattva*. RL.


169. Goswami, Bihari Lal. *Gita Bindu*. BSP.


171. Goswami, Krishnagopal. *Gita Madhukar*. MPL.


175. Goswami, Shyamalal. *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita*. BRL, CNP.


190. Kumar, Partha Sudhakar. *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita*. YMA.


193. Majid, M.A. *Gitatattva Ratnamala*. RL.


197. Majumder, Bijaylal. *Gitayan*. BSP.


204. Majumder, Ramadayal. *Gita Parichay*. 1905. KPL, UPL, BPL, RL, CNP, MRL, MPL, BSP.


208. Mallik, Balai Chand. *Gitasar*. 1925. USP, BSP, CNP.

209. Mandal, Bipin Bihari. *Banglagita O Anugita*. RL.


222. Mukhopadhyay, Hemachandra. *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita (Bankimchandrer Tika O Bhashyo Abolambone)*. BSP.


227. Mukhopadhyay, Satyendranath. *Gitayan (Sudhir-Satyendra Patrokabyo)*. BSP


236. Omkarnath, Sitaramdas. *Shi Shri Udbhavgita*. KPL.
244. Purakayastha, Mahimchandra Sharma. *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita*. Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar. KBF 12, BEL.
251. Ray, Haraprasad. *Yogagita*. BKC.
263. Sanyal, Benoykumar. *Gita Praveshika (Amritavilash)*. 1929-30. BSP.
266. Saptatirth, Bhutanath. *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita*. Kolkata: Nababharat Publication. RL, MRL, MPL.
269. Saraswati, Shri Yogeshananda. *Gita Katha*. CNP.
270. Sarkar, Ajaychandra. *Gita Sadharani*. BANS.
272. Sarkar, Jyotishchandra. Gitabandhu. BSP.
274. Sarkar, Pashupati. *Padyagita*. KPL.
275. Sarvapalli, Radhakrishnan. *Shrimad Bhagabad Gita (Re-transelation)*. MRL, BANS, HDL, MPL.
276. Satyadev, Shri. *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita Rajguhyavaya*. BSP.
279. Sen, Binayendra Nath. *Gita Adhyayana*. BKC
281. Sen, Jatindramohan. *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita (Verse)*. CNP.
289. Shambhu. *Gitamrita*. YMA.
290. Sharanapuri. *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita*. Shri Shri Ramakrishna Sevayatan. MRL.

299. Sheth, Vadeshchandra. *Gitakoumudi Ba Padyagita*. 1902-03. BSP.

300. Shil, Narendra Kumar. *Gitaratna*. BSP.


305. Singha, Dibakar. *Sri Sri Gitamrita*. Sudpur, Burdwan. MRL.


308. Sinha, Harish Chandra. *Gitatattve Shri Ramakrishna*. KPL. YMA, HDL.


322. Swami, Jagadishwarananda. *Kishorgita*. USP.
323. Swami, Jagadishwarananda. *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita*. Sri Ramakrishna Dharmachakra, Belur. BEL, MPL, BPL.
324. Swami, Keshavananda. *Anandogita*. KPL, BRL.
331. Swami, Purushottamananda Avadhut. *Gitajayanti*. MRL.
338. Swami, Sacchidananda. *Gitapradip*. Kolkata: Nababharat. BPL, KBF 08, BSP.
352. Swami, Soham. *Soham Gita*. CNP, BPL.


357. Tarkachuramani, Shashadhar. *Shrimad Bhagavad Gita*. UPL, BSP.


360. Tarkavagish, Gourishankar. *Bhagavad Gita*. UPL, BRL.

361. Tattvadarshi, Brahmananda. *Gita Shantigita*. BSP.


363. Thakur, Dvijendranath. *Gita Sadharan*. UPL.


367. Thakur, Tekchand (Pyarichand Mitra). *Gitankur*. BSP.


374. Vidyaratna, Kaliprasanna. *Shri Shri Gurugita*. USP.


The above list of 375 Gita translations or works on the Gita may suffer from the fault of repetition, as each and every work has not been consulted with. In the following discussion, the re-translation work on Shri Aurobindo, Tilak, Gandhi, Radhakrishnan, Satyasai have been excluded. As such, the real Bangla translation may come to a lesser number around 350 and there rests the analysis on the residual.

Among the translators/writers on the Gita, about one third of the total are declaredly Brahmins, as known from their surnames and in some cases from the titles like Bhattacharya and Chakravarti.

There may be some other Brahmin representation in these translation works. They are those Brahmins who became Brahmacharis, Sannyasins and Swamijis and later worked on the Gita, either in translations or elucidations. Now Sannyasins, Swamijis and Brahmacharis constitute about one of the major chunk of the translators/writers. These Brahmacharis and Swamis are mostly of different shades of Vaishnavites, Ramakrishna cult followers and a few Shaivaites.
Kulin and non-Kulin Kayasthas’ participation in *Gita* translation is about one sixth of this list, however, if the number of Kayasthas turned into Brahmacharis and Swamis are excluded, which is not known from this list.

Many of the translators are Pundits and Sanskrit Title holders like Kavyatirtha, Kavyaratna, Vedantavagish, etc. Their representation in these translation-works is nearing about one tenth of total translators/ commentators. But from their titles nothing is known about their casts, however, they mostly belong to Brahmins and Kayastha.

The representations of the Vaidyas as translators are very less, but the representations of the land holding class (like Zamindars) or class having such remnants, e.g. Choudhurys, Rays, Majumdars and Sarkars (having administrative connections) contributed about one tenth in this translation works, as per this list. Others including one Muslim and a few women also participated in the translation.

On a whole from the rough analyses of the enlisted translation works, it can be concluded that this translation phenomenon is a clear manifestation of Hindu Brahaminical order and hegemony, if any, in the field of super-structural ideas governing Hindu existence, revivalism and nationalism. From the middle of the nineteenth century till the early twentieth century this trend developed and after independence it came down, to rise again as the bird –Phoenix” later on in the process of the translation of the *Gita* in Bangla, under the patronage of religious institution like the Ramakrishana Mission etc.