Human Connection in the Light of the Writings of Karl Marx and Amartya Sen

An Investigation Using Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis* and Manik Bandyopadhyay's *Ekannoborti*

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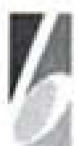
Abstract

This article uses Karl Marx's notions of alienation and antagonism to understand human connection, defined as the interrelationship between human beings that helps transcend self-interest and fosters the sense of solidarity. The Marxian notions are revisited using the works of Amartya Sen, particularly those on identity and violence. Sen's critique of rationality is discussed, invoking his notions of sympathy, antipathy, and commitment. The article uses two texts, Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis* and Manik Bandyopadhyay's *Ekannoborti*, as vantage points to understand the key concepts of Marx and Sen. It then discusses the backgrounds of the authors and the political interpretations of their work and shows how the overriding importance ascribed to a particular identity may convolute the literary motivation of an author.

Keywords: alienation, antagonism, commitment, Franz Kafka, human connection, Manik Bandyopadhyay, sympathy

Human Connection as the Transcendence of Self-Interest

Amartya Sen (1987, 2009) has lamented in several writings that a "smallness" was thrust upon Adam Smith in most later representations of his thinking, which he did not deserve. Proponents of "self-interest theories" have often proclaimed their views to be "Smithian," but Smith considered human self-interest as the motivation behind the specific economic activity of exchange, and not as an overarching attribute of human nature. Indeed, in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Smith ([1759] 2002: 11) considers "sympathy" one of the "original passions of human nature," which even the "greatest ruffian" is not bereft of. Smith's notion of "natural sympathy" explains how an individual is led to undertake actions that are beneficial to others. In most cases, such actions require "no self-denial, no self-command, no great exertion of the sense



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of propriety" (171), since people naturally sympathize with each other. Eamonn Butler (2012: 79) has argued this marks the crucial departure of Smith from earlier (and even many later) philosophers, who opine that moral action "is a matter of calculation," since the individual or the society finds it beneficial.

John Stuart Mill too observed, somewhat optimistically, that "the social feelings of mankind" were the foundations of utilitarian morality, and that "the desire to be in unity with our fellow creatures" was a "powerful principle in human nature," which was further cultivated with the progress of civilizations. A basis of utilitarian "greatest happiness morality" was the understanding that "few but those whose mind is a moral blank, could bear to lay out their course of life on the plan of paying no regard to others except so far as their own private interest compels" ([1863] 2001: 34–35). In *Mathematical Psychics*, Francis Ysidro Edgeworth formulated a "coefficient of effective sympathy" for each individual, based on his understanding of nineteenth-century man as an "impure egoist" for whom "the happiness of his neighbor . . . neither counts for nothing, nor yet counts for one, but counts for a fraction" (1881: 102–104). As the coefficients of sympathy rise, utilitarianism becomes "more pure" (53). Alfred Marshall wished similarly to imbed in economics "the faculty of sympathy, and especially that rare sympathy which enables people to put themselves in the place, not only of their comrades, but also of other classes" ([1890] 1948: 45).

Albert Hirschman (1985: 28) accused most economists of an excessive focus on only the first of the two elements in the fundamental tension of existence in a human society, namely, that between "self and others." While economists have "concentrated overwhelmingly" on the self, their approach toward how people relate to others has been "simplistic" and even "contradictory." The question of human connection and collective action has continued to haunt economists, even in recent times. Elinor Ostrom's (1990) work, for instance, challenged the dominant idea in natural resource management regarding the "tragedy of the commons" and showed that even in the absence of centralized control or privatization, human beings are capable of connecting with each other successfully to prevent the overuse of common property resources, something that is of benefit to all.

Karl Marx's approach to the question of transcending human self-interest is distinctive in the sense that the scope of fruitful human connection is seen as limited to one's class affiliation, except in a communist society, which, by definition, is classless. The possibility of what Marshall called "the rare sympathy" that transcends class is ruled out in Marx's writings. However, Marxist scholars have put forth various different readings of Marx's depiction of class. Amartya Sen, who has perhaps been the best-known contemporary economist to study the problem of transcending self-interest, draws on Marx's idea of human freedom as the ultimate end but rejects any idea of antagonism as the driver of societal change.

In this article, human connection is defined as the interrelationship or interconnection between human beings that helps transcend self-interest and fosters the

sense of relatedness and solidarity. The article compares and contrasts Marx's and Sen's approaches to human connection and suggests class in the Marxian scheme may be interpreted as what Sen calls a "belligerent" or "bellicose" identity. While Marx restricts the freedom to choose one's plural identities only to a communist society, Sen (2006), a Nobel Prize–winning economist but also a prominent socioeconomic critic in India, vouches for increasing the freedom of individuals to choose, combine, and rank the importance of particular available identities in actually existing, contemporary societies. To understand Sen's approach to human connection, the article introduces his critique of the view of rationality as unalloyed pursuit of self-interest, invoking his notions of sympathy, antipathy, and commitment.

First, I will use Marx's notions of alienation and antagonism to construct his idea of human connection. I will then present Sen's ideas, brought together in *The Idea of Justice*. I also translate Marx's notions of alienation and antagonism into Sen's vocabulary, drawing on Amiya Kumar Bagchi (2000), to discuss how Sen diverges from Marx. It should be understood that the article does not essay a full discussion of Marx's ideas in this area but instead explores the contrast with Sen and progressive liberalism—a theme that has been of special interest in Sen's homeland, Bengal, and in other places, not least in Eastern Europe.

Next, I will use two literary texts, namely Franz Kafka's ([1915] 2020) *Metamorphosis* and Manik Bandyopadhyay's ([1946] 1998) *Ekannoborti*, one from Europe and one from India, to better understand and reflect on the concepts described thus far. Important works in moral philosophy have emphasized the relevance of using literary texts, not merely as illustrations. Martha Nussbaum (1990: 148) has shown how the argumentative style of academic prose often fails to portray certain aspects of life whereas certain works of literature are "irreplaceably works of moral philosophy." The two texts used in this article serve as vantage points for reflecting on the Marxian notions of alienation and antagonism and Sen's concepts of sympathy, antipathy, and commitment. The texts complement and sometimes transcend the theorization of the concepts. *Metamorphosis* needs little introduction; *Ekannoborti* is set in mid-twentieth-century, undivided Bengal, where Marxism and leftist politics had great resonance in literature, art, music, and theater. Bengali literature in particular has been an historical site of rich debate between Marxists and liberals, and within the Marxist tradition, authors debated fiercely about the ideal form and content of literature and its role in society (Das 2003). While *Metamorphosis* deeply engages with the idea of alienation as a loss of human connection, *Ekannoborti* proposes how human connection and choice of affiliation can bolster capabilities and end alienation.

Finally, I will discuss the personal and social backgrounds of Kafka and Bandyopadhyay, as well as the political interpretations of their work, and show how the overriding importance given to a particular identity may influence the literary motivations of an author. I will review and conclude the discussion with a suggestion that social theorizing needs to pay further attention to the insights from great literature.

Human Connection Viewed through the Marxist Lens: The Notions of Alienation and Antagonism

Marx's notion of alienation can be understood as a loss of human connection, in several objective senses. Antagonism can be understood as a negative variant of human connection in the sense of subjective relations; in Marx's writings, antagonism between classes is rooted in the basic contradiction of the society and is seen as a driving force for changing the existing societal order and ending alienation. Marx developed his idea of alienation by critiquing Hegel, particularly in his earlier works such as *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (1844) and *The German Ideology* (1845–1847). In this article, alienation is defined as "a relation of relationlessness," following Rahel Jaeggi (2014: 1). Marx's formulation of alienation connotes the complete loss of connection that an ordinary human being faces in a capitalist society: in relation to the product of their labor, the process of production, inanimate nature, their own "species-character,"[1] and other human beings (Marx [1844] 2010). Albeit one school of Marxist scholars, particularly following Louis Althusser (1965), argued Marx post the "epistemological break" in 1846 did not adhere to and even disowned his theory of alienation (Cowling 2006), many others have argued and shown how the ideas of human nature and alienation formed the basis of the mature Marx's analysis of capitalism (e.g., Geras 1983; Ollman 1971) and are still relevant (e.g., Dyer-Witheford 2008; Jaeggi 2014). Bagchi (1999) notes that Sen did not accept any such epistemological break and drew on the works of both early and late Marx.

Marx distinguishes between humans' "natural being" and "species-being," and the powers and needs within each. Our natural being is parallel to animal life in general. Here activities include animal functions like eating and procreation. Species-being, on the other hand, involves distinctive powers and needs, which nonhuman living beings do not possess. Since "man is not merely a natural being" but also "a human natural being" or "a being for himself" ([1844] 2010: 337), he has a species-being. The powers and needs of human beings and human nature in general differ across societies and across stages of history. However, the need to labor on nature never ceases to exist. Labor is central to human existence. Since human nature is to transform, develop, and change nature, human beings have a history, whereas animals do not, their activities being those of eternal repetition (Fischer 1996). Thus, Nick Dyer-Witheford (2008) argues Marx's "species-being" can be better termed as "species becoming." Achin Chakraborty (1995) notes this as the crucial departure of Marx from the standard approach to economic welfare, which treats human labor as pain and leisure as pleasure. Linked with the process of molding nature, modifications occur in human nature itself. Productive activity arouses and develops the latent powers of human beings so that they can alter the external world. Marx regards the product of labor as "the objectification of man's species-life," and production as a process of intellectual and active or real "duplication" of the human self "not only, as in consciousness, intel-

lectually, but also actively, in reality, and therefore he sees himself in a world that he has created" ([1844] 2010: 277).

Productive activity, however, acts on human powers both positively and negatively. Marx notes how the burden on human energy can become unbearable for alienated, estranged labor as production relations change with the advent of capitalism. Division of labor, specialization, and mechanized production in the factory system take a toll on the relationship between the laborer and the product of labor. Laborers can now only transact freely in the labor market and sell their labor services for wages. Labor is transformed into a salable commodity and an object separable from the laborer. Karl Polanyi ([1944] 2001) argues labor is a "fictitious commodity," since a real commodity is by definition produced for exchange in the market. Since economic theorizing ignores the fundamental differences between real and fictitious commodities, it has fatal consequences for the society. According to Marx ([1844] 2010: 281), under a capitalist mode of production, the "realization of labor"[2] appears as a loss of realization for the workers, objectification as loss of the object and bondage to it; appropriation as estrangement, as alienation, and private property as "the material, summary expression of alienated labor."

In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels note that division of labor in a capitalist society produces a rift between "the particular and the common interests" ([1845–1847] 2010: 46). Each man has an assigned task and is defined by the "exclusive sphere of activity," such that a man is reduced to an invariant label, such as "a hunter," "a fisherman," "a shepherd," or "a critical critic" (47). What he produces turns into an objective and independent power superior to him. In capitalism, division of labor determines how human beings connect and cooperate with each other. However, this connection is involuntary, "not as their own united power, but as an alien force existing outside them" (48). A man who is estranged from his product and from his own human self is incapable of connecting with others.

As human activities broaden to "world-historical activity," human beings are subject to increasing enslavement by powers such as the world market, which are alien to individuals in different nations. However, with the overthrow of the capitalist state by the communist revolution and thus the abolition of private property, "history becomes wholly transformed into world history." Communism liberates individuals from all barriers, local and national, and each individual is in a position to "acquire the capacity to enjoy this all-sided production of the whole earth (the creations of man)." While cooperation among individuals in a capitalist society is characterized by "all-round dependence," in a communist society, "action of men on one another" leads to "the control and conscious mastery" of human beings over the overbearing powers that controlled them and were alien to them (51). Communism abolishes societal division of labor and empowers people, "to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman,

shepherd or critic" (47). Lawrence Wilde (1998: 23) calls this the "promise of the ethical community."

Even in his later works, Marx notes the centrality of human connection in the realization of freedom, which is seen as the ultimate end of human existence. In the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Marx and Engels ([1847–1848] 2010: 506) consider the objective of the communists to be "an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all." Communism ends all forms of alienation and "as fully developed naturalism, equals humanism, and as fully developed humanism equals naturalism; it is the genuine resolution of the conflict between man and nature and between man and man—the true resolution of the strife between existence and essence, between objectification and self-confirmation, between freedom and necessity, between the individual and the species" (Marx [1844] 2010: 296).

Marx's focus on connection cannot be fully understood without referring to his notion of antagonism. Bertell Ollman (1968) says "Who is the enemy?" is a question that can be asked whenever Marx uses "class." A class is defined based on its antagonism vis-à-vis some other class or classes in the spheres of work, politics, and culture. In the unfinished volume of *Capital, Volume III*, Marx ([1894] 2010) mentioned that with the increasing divide between means of production and laborers, all classes would be soon reduced to a capitalist class and a proletarian class.[3] The former, comprising separate individuals, who are each a competitor of the others, fights a common battle against the proletariat. Of the latter, Marx says "the mass is already a class against capital, but not yet for itself" ([1847] 2010: 211), if it still lacks "class consciousness" (Ollman 1987).

However, in the materialist conception of history, the basic conflict is that between the societal relations of production and the development of productive forces. The antagonism between classes is rooted in this basic contradiction and is regarded as a driving force for change. According to the dialectical materialist theory, "dialectical contradiction" is "a species of the more general category of dialectical connections," defined as connections between distinct yet inseparable entities which together constitute a totality (Bhaskar 1993: 58). Dialectical contradictions require that "(at least) one of their aspects negates (at least) one of the other's, or their common ground or the whole, and perhaps vice versa, so that they are tendentially mutually exclusive, and potentially or actually tendentially transformative." Makineni Basavapunnaiah (1983) distinguishes between nonantagonistic and antagonistic contradictions. Antagonistic contradictions exist between the exploiting and the exploited classes and are irreconcilable. The final resolution of the conflict between the opposing poles of an antagonistic contradiction leads to an elimination of both the aspects and of the contradiction itself. The victory of the proletariat implies the abolition of both the proletariat and its opposite side, namely, private property.

In the preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Marx ([1859] 2010: 264) notes that "the productive forces developing within bourgeois society create also the material conditions for a solution of this antagonism." "Modern bour-

geois society, with its relations of production, of exchange and of property, a society that has conjured up such gigantic means of production and of exchange, is like the sorcerer who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells" (Marx and Engels [1847–1848] 2010: 489). It is the limitless expansion of production that makes possible an alternative "social order in which so much of all the necessities of life will be produced that every member of society will thereby be enabled to develop and exercise all his powers and abilities in perfect freedom" (Engels [1847] 2010: 347).

The working class does not remain merely the exploited class but becomes a revolutionary class. Though Marx and Engels explicitly spelled out in many writings that for the cases they were discussing, social revolution would imply overthrowing the system with a resort to violence, they also in more general theorizing elsewhere pointed out the need to disentangle the notion of "social revolution" from any one of the alternative paths that may be used to achieve it (Schaff 1973). Ollman (1987) rightly finds it strange that Marx did not posit workers' alienation as a hindrance to their becoming class conscious. Instead, in the closing paragraph of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Marx and Engels ([1847–1848] 2010) explicitly say "the revolutionary combination" of workers, brought about by their association, works to replace "the isolation of the labourers" fostered by interclass competition.

Understanding Human Connection in Sen's Writings: Revisiting the Notions of Alienation and Antagonism

Amartya Sen was born in Dhaka in undivided Bengal in 1933. He received his early education from Shantiniketan, the school founded by Rabindranath Tagore in 1901 to challenge the dominant methods of formal education in India. Sen witnessed in his childhood the huge war-induced Bengal famine of 1942–1944 and the vicious communal violence of 1946–1947. He studied economics at Presidency College, Calcutta (now Presidency University, Kolkata) and at the University of Cambridge and has made seminal contributions in social choice theory, economic theory, ethics and political philosophy, welfare economics, development economics, and several other areas of research, leading to Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences in 1998. Currently a professor of economics and philosophy at Harvard University, he has long questioned the centrality of self-interest in economic theory. To explore human connection, this article draws on Sen's critique of rationality as maximization of self-interest and some of his other ideas, particularly on identity and violence.

Sen's (1987, 1999) conception of advantage or well-being as capability to achieve valuable functionings is a development of ideas explored earlier by Aristotle, Smith, and Marx. Sen agrees with Marx on the status of reasoned human freedom as the ultimate end of development. Freedom of transaction, particularly in the labor market, is of crucial importance in Sen's theory. Sen (1999) illustrates how even any enslaved

African American with greater incomes and higher life expectancies as compared to urban workers in the Northern United States experienced a fundamental deprivation, since they were unfree to choose their employment, and even refers to Marx's approval of freedom of employment in capitalist societies. Sen dissociates Marx from the precapitalist, anti-market sentiments of a section of radical thinkers. Emphasizing the absence of freedom in the labor market in communist-ruled societies, Sen even partially endorsed Friedrich Hayek's ([1944] 2001) scathing criticism of socialism as "the road to serfdom."[4] In the later part of this article, I will note how the lack of freedom in socialist countries and among the communist parties even in nonsocialist countries extended to the spheres of art and literature as well.

Sen remains relatively silent on the issue of alienation of labor in capitalism. Noting that Sen does not situate his analysis in the context of institutions of actually existing capitalism, where human freedom can be compromised even in presence of markets, Bagchi (2000: 4418) argues that this weakens the power of Sen's normative analysis. He therefore translates Marx's idea of alienation to Sen's vocabulary as "a systematic failure to attain the functionings a human being requires to be fully human" and concludes "the only way to resolve the tension" between the ideas of "Sen the moral philosopher" (who moves beyond the Marxian notion of bourgeois right, to broad human rights) and "Sen the economist" (who restricts most of his analysis to the area of exchange entitlements)[5] "would be to envisage a human society that has seen the end of alienation."[6]

Nonetheless, human connection has been a central part of Sen's theorizing on well-being and justice. Sen has consistently pointed out the limitation of equating rational choice by human beings to "smart maximization of self-interest" (2009: 179). "Sympathy" is not sufficient for transcending self-interest, since it implies only that the position of others influences a person's self-assessed welfare and is consistent with one's pursuing only that self-assessed interest and self-love (Sen 1977, 2009). Furthermore, the ethical status of the negative variant of sympathy, schadenfreude or "antipathy," is negative. In contrast, in Sen's theorizing "commitment" detaches one's "choice of action" from one's own self-assessed welfare. A person acting with commitment acts in a way that reduces the sufferings of others or serves other ends,[7] irrespective of whether their own welfare is affected by it, and not only up to the level that would recuperate their own welfare loss (for example, from the sight of someone being in pain). Sen (2009) goes further and illustrates that commitment may dissuade the actor from pursuing their own self-oriented goals, and a committed individual may even help others pursue their goals when they themself believes such goals are unworthy, as long as they "are not in any sense evil." The ethical status of such commitment depends of course on what one is committed to. Sen's position is that transcendence of reasoned self-interest is a valued moral position, itself based on reason (Subramanian 2010).

Sen (2004:77) is not in favor of introducing "one predetermined canonical list of [priority] capabilities" chosen by theorists (see also Alkire 2010). In contrast, Nussbaum (2000: 78; 2003) advocates 10 normatively central human capabilities, among

which affiliation (which is synonymous to what this article defines as human connection) is particularly highlighted. It is the capability to "live with and toward others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction; to be able to imagine the situation of another." This capability would require safeguarding the relevant institutions and ensuring the "freedom of assembly and political speech." Despite Sen's long disagreement with Nussbaum over engaging in such listing of priority capabilities, in a report coauthored with Joseph Stiglitz and Jean-Paul Fitoussi, he enlists eight key dimensions that should be considering when defining a multidimensional measure of well-being (Stiglitz et al. 2009), "social connection" being one of them. The report recognizes that while social isolation and social distress mutually reinforce each other, social connections (understood as social capital in some interpretations)[8] improve the quality of life and are reflected in better health, greater prospects of employment, and improved local living conditions. It puts forth evidence that human beings find the greatest enjoyment from activities that involve socializing, such as religious activities, playing, eating or drinking together, and meeting friends. On the other hand, it recognizes the possible negative externalities stemming from some social connections and highlights the need to measure the extent especially of "bridging social capital," which is defined as friendships across different identities such as race, religion, and class.

Antagonism is a key concept in Sen's work on identity and violence. Sen is opposed to "the illusion of unique identity" and argues it generates and sustains intergroup antagonisms and conflict. While he mostly describes the pitfalls of using religious identity as the preemptive and predominant criterion for classifying individuals, he clearly opposes ascribing overriding importance to any other single and exclusive grouping criterion. He categorically mentions that, first, any group defined in terms of a singular criterion will comprise individuals who in reality have diverse and plural identities, and second, rigid groupings that put human beings into boxes may foster a detrimental within-group solidarity, which contributes to between-group conflicts. We could perhaps interpret in Sen's terms Marx's idea of antagonism as the driving force for social change, by understanding class as a "bellicose" or "belligerent" identity in an advanced capitalist society, where laborers have become class-conscious. For Sen, individual freedom to choose "the cogency and relevance of particular identities" among the multiple different identities that one has is what a society should aspire for (2006: 4).

Sen specifies class thus as one but only one of the many identities of an individual (including also citizenship, residence, geographic origin, gender, politics, profession, employment, food habits, sports interests, taste in music, social commitments, etc.). The idea of freedom in choosing one's affiliations (i.e. which of these identities to stress and to what degree) comes close to Marx's aforementioned idea of freedom, to "do one thing today and another thing tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, . . . without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, herdsman or critic." However, while Marx restricts such a

possibility exclusively to a classless communist society, Sen's frame of reference is the actually existing contemporary society. Sen (2008) further notes that, given this plurality within identity, poverty and inequality need not inevitably lead to violence and strife.[9] Intersectionality scholars, who are critical of class reductionism in Marxism, also highlight that all other forms of oppression do not automatically end when class oppression ends (Bohrer 2018; Smith and Smith 1981).

However, newer readings of Marx may accommodate Sen's notion of the choice of identities. Stephen Resnick and Richard Wolff's (1987, 2006) nondeterminist Marxist theory has conceptualized class as one of many distinct processes that constitute life. Class is understood as that process which involves production, distribution, and appropriation of surplus value. Other nonclass processes may be natural ("such as breathing, photosynthesis, eating and rainfall") or social ("such as thinking, speaking, voting and working" or "two people going fishing") (2006: 93). While the fundamental class process involves performance and extraction of surplus labor, a subsumed class process refers to distribution of surplus labor. A nonclass process occurs within a relationship that may or may not involve a fundamental or a subsumed class process. Resnick and Wolff note Marx's repeated mentions of the multiple and different class positions (both fundamental and subsumed) occupied by individuals in a social formation (95). Class struggle, then, defined as "a struggle over the class process" is "always a possibility, but never an inevitability" (115).

Reading Kafka's *Metamorphosis* and Bandyopadhyay's *Ekannoborti* to Understand Human Connection

Building on the arguments by Nussbaum and others concerning the deeper insights possible through narrative literature than from abstracted philosophy alone, I will now explore two famous texts, Kafka's *Metamorphosis* and Bandyopadhyay's *Ekannoborti*, to understand human connection further, using the Marxian notions of alienation and antagonism and their interpretation using Sen's vocabulary. I will show how the texts illustrate connection as a vital human capability and choice of affiliation as a crucial freedom. While *Metamorphosis* was written in the context of an advanced capitalist economy in early twentieth-century Central Europe, the context of *Ekannoborti* is a low-income colonized economy where the mode of production differs from both feudalism and capitalism (Alavi 1975): Bengal in the mid-twentieth century. I argue that while the fatalist narrative of *Metamorphosis* can be seen as an intense illustration of the concept of alienation, *Ekannoborti* traces a path of salvation from similar alienation, with the fulcrum being class affiliation. I will then attempt, in the next section, to relate the difference in these story lines and the approaches of the authors to the differences in their respective backgrounds and motivations while also developing further reflections on the perspectives of Marx and Sen.

Metamorphosis

The novella *Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka (1883–1924), published in 1915, shows how lack of human connection in a modern society leads to complete obliteration of the human self ("species-being"). The story begins with Gregor Samsa, a commercial traveler, a typical modern man in a capitalist society, suddenly finding himself transformed into a hideous dung beetle. The text details how Gregor is Othered and reduced in the eyes of others to a single nonhuman identity. Gregor's alienation is shown in two phases of his life. Estrangement in the first, pre-transformation phase is notable in, but not restricted to, his work-life. He has almost no friends and seems to have limited relationship to his parents. The text provides clear hints at the loss of human connection in Gregor's workplace, and refers to "temporary and constantly changing human relationships which never come from the heart" (Kafka [1915] 2020: 1). The irrelevance of the unpacked collection of sample cloth goods on his bedroom table, the ruthlessness of the boss toward whom the subordinates had to lean close since he was hard of hearing, the nonchalance of the errand boy who was the boss's minion, the envy of the colleagues who only gossiped and complained—all seem to resonate with Marx's description of the alienation that workers without class-consciousness face in a capitalist society.

Gregor's plight fits into Marx's depiction of a man's worth being reduced to the salability of his skill to perform a single specialized task. Soon after Gregor's transformation, he desperately pleads to his manager (who has come to his house, seeking to know the reason for his absence from work) from inside his room, in incomprehensible speech, that "travelling is exhausting, but I couldn't live without it" (10). It seems he feels deeply connected exclusively to his family, with the rare exceptions of "two or three friends from other businesses, a chambermaid from a hotel in the provinces, a loving fleeting memory, a female cashier from a hat shop, whom he had seriously, but too slowly courted" (30). Even while travelling on duty, he used to spend his spare time thinking lovingly of his family. His father tells the manager, "I'm almost angry that he never goes out at night. Right now he's been in the city eight days, but he's been at home every evening. He sits there with us at the table and reads the newspaper quietly or studies his travel schedules" (6).

The second phase of alienation that Gregor faces is as an insect and within his own family that he loves so much, often without reciprocation, particularly from the father. The father, who is hostile to the insect right from the beginning; the mother, who is still sympathetic to her "unlucky son" (21) but fails to understand Gregor still has emotions and can comprehend every word they utter; and the 17-year-old frivolous sister, Grete, who gradually loses all her compassion for the insect, seem to work in unison to isolate Gregor within the family. Kafkaesque fatalism builds up tragically, with dispassionate details of Gregor's acceptance of and adaptation to the transformation that obliterates his "species-being."

For the major part of the story, Gregor's selfless love for his family is depicted as pure and guileless, to the extent of being utopian. One is tempted to draw a similarity between Gregor Samsa and Fyodor Dostoyevsky's ([1868–1869] 2010) Prince Myshkin, who is the quintessential positively good and beautiful man, frequently mistaken for an "idiot" by self-loving and self-interested human beings. Gregor seems to agree with Grete on his moral responsibility to now leave the family. Grete says with conviction that the insect is not Gregor, since if it had been Gregor, it would have "long ago realized that a communal life among human beings is not possible with such an animal and would have gone away voluntarily" (Kafka [1915] 2020: 37). Even while intentionally starving to death, Gregor remembers his family "with deep feelings and love" (38). The text is, however, not unilinear, and there are some infrequent expressions of antagonism and protest on Gregor's part in the post-transformation phase. For instance, when Gregor does not want Grete and their mother to remove the furniture from his room—since that would lead to a "quick and complete forgetting of his human past" (23)—he clings to a picture hanging on the wall of his room, and when Grete wants to chase him down the wall, he becomes defiant: "Well, let her just attempt that! He squatted on his picture and did not hand it over. He would sooner spring into Grete's face" (25).

Metamorphosis can be viewed as a depiction not only of Marx's notion of alienation but also of Bagchi's (2000) translation of the concept into Sen's vocabulary. The metaphor of the dung beetle losing its mobility with increasing "lack of all immediate human contact" and regaining some of it as it connects with the music played by the sister illustrates how human connection ends alienation and fosters real freedoms. The story ends though with the death of Gregor and the hope of a new life for his family members. Being apologetic for the distress he causes his family, Gregor decides to eliminate himself. While this may be interpreted as commitment to his family, there is the absence of any self-liberating reidentification stimulated through wider contact. Gregor remains a family member and an alienated commercial traveler, incapable of surviving misfortune, able to succumb to it only in a passive and/or self-sacrificing way. Apart from Gregor, not one character in the novel tries to transcend self-interest. The family members show an increasing antipathy toward him, and believing his death would bring them relief, they soon wish to get rid of him completely instead of trying to alleviate his sufferings.

Ekannoborti

Ekannoborti, the title of a short story penned by the Marxist Bengali author Manik Bandyopadhyay (1908–1956), literally means "those who share the same food." The word is exclusively used as an adjective for the joint family, which was the normative model of the family in patriarchal middle and upper class Indian society. This story was published in the Bengali magazine *Jugantar* in 1946. Hiren, the protagonist, is a menial worker living in a family of four brothers. The two elder brothers, Biren and

Dhiren, are economically well off, engaged in prestigious professions, and married to women who hail from rich natal families. The conceited wives of the two elder brothers are envious of each other but look down on Lakshmi, Hiren's wife, and refuse to share their resources with her. The joint family splits into three units residing in the same ancestral house. Hiren, Lakshmi, their four children, Niren (the youngest and still unemployed brother), and the old mother comprise a unit. The author draws an analogy between the ongoing world war and the tension in the family, which leads to Niren (who then has a well-paying job) leaving Hiren's unit to join the wealthier brothers' unit. There is a complete loss of connection and cooperation among the units, alienated from each other. *Ekannoborti*, like *Metamorphosis*, details the alienation faced within the institution of the family, in this case the joint family, with the brothers' wives showing a strong antipathy for each other. Fleeting references are made to the alienation faced by Hiren in his workplace, from which one can imagine the drudgery of Hiren's work is similar to that of Gregor's. Hiren tells his mother:

> If you die, my elder brothers will stop paying the allowances that you share with us. My children will no longer have milk. We will no longer have fish. We will still live, though such a life has no meaning . . . Die peacefully, mother. I will not end my life jumping in front of my boss's car. I will rather bite him on his neck and die.

Similar expressions of antagonism, based on one's class affiliation, are found in many other stories written by Bandyopadhyay, such as "Haraner Natjamai" and "Chhiniye Khayni Keno."

The mother's death leads to absolute penury and a deprivation of basic capabilities for Hiren and Lakshmi. Lakshmi reaches a state of ultimate despair and decides to end her life. Hiren stops her, and a brilliant idea strikes him. He teams up with three of his neighbors, who are engaged in similar menial jobs and constructs a new model of *ekannoborti*, starting a shared kitchen. Hiren's class-consciousness leads him to choose his affiliation with neighbors belonging to his own class, rather than with the brothers, who are related to him by birth but belong to a different class. Human connection and collective action, based on class affiliation, are thus shown to end alienation, nurturing capabilities and positive freedoms. "There is fire in one stove instead of four stoves in four houses. One domestic help is needed instead of four. Each woman cooks for a day and is free for the next three days. A much better platter can be arranged with the saved resources." The story ends with Lakshmi addressing the neighbors' wives, "Latika, Madhabi, Alaka, you have saved me." This is her capability of "affiliation," spelled out by Nussbaum (2000, 2003) as "being able to live with and toward others." The author concludes, "Like a listless doe, she had wished to end her life by jumping off the roof. Today, she is like a tigress, not merely conceding to live; to live is her zeal."[10]

The text thus shows that human connection is of instrumental importance in "replacing the domination of circumstances and chance over individuals by the domination of individuals over chance and circumstances"—a recurrent formulation by

Marx that Sen (1999) too notes. It enables one to decide on the priority of different affiliations and thus avoid "the illusion of destiny" (Sen 2006), the belief that one has only one given and unchangeable identity. However, while showing that human connection can end alienation and bolster capabilities, Bandyopadhyay, being true to his Marxist self-identification, restricts the possibility of fruitful affiliation to within one's own class. In the works of other powerful writers contemporary with Manik, such as Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay (author of the famous *Pather Panchali* novels), sympathy is often shown to transcend class.

Contextualizing and Reflecting on the Two Texts

While one cannot deny the literary superiority of *Metamorphosis*, there is, compared to its fatalism, a liberating optimism (albeit perhaps contrived) in *Ekannoborti*. In what follows, I will describe the backgrounds of the two authors and the political interpretations of their work, to contextualize and engage in a comparison between the two texts. Born in 1883 in Prague (now in the Czech Republic, then part of the Austrian Empire), Franz Kafka, one of the most prominent figures of world literature, was the only surviving son in a Jewish family that also contained three younger daughters, all of whom outlived him and died in Nazi concentration camps. Kafka had a domineering father, and the repression and humiliation he faced within his family seem to have found their expression in his writings. His works have also been understood as depictions of political tyranny, by readers at different times and in various parts of the world (Löwy 1997). In 1919, Kafka wrote in his *Letter to the Father*, "In my eyes, you assumed an enigmatic character like a tyrant for whom the law is not based upon reflection but his own person" (cited in Löwy 1997). He suffered from low self-esteem and during his lifetime earned little repute as an author. Though Kafka wanted his unpublished works to be destroyed after his death, the friend entrusted with the duty published most of Kafka's important works posthumously.

Although Kafka was exposed to and motivated by the idea of socialism very early in his life, many writers have argued his writings did not have any political motivation. However, the political interpretation of his writings has been fiercely debated across the world. While Kafka's writings were highly acclaimed and widely read in the United States and Western Europe after World War II, they were condemned and banned in the communist-ruled countries, which subscribed to the view that all forms of literature and art should follow the structure of socialist realism, a Bolshevik doctrine primarily drawing on Lenin's article "Party Organisation and Party Literature." Lenin (1905: 44) wrote: "Literature must become Party. As a counter-poise to bourgeois morals, to the bourgeois commercial press, to bourgeois literary careerism and individualism, to manorial anarchism and the pursuit of gain, the socialist proletariat must promote and develop the principle of party literature and bring this principle to life in the most complete and integral form possible." Nonetheless, the Marxist scholar

George Lukács (1962) disclosed that Lenin's widow, Krupskaya, had clarified that this proverbial quote was in the context of party literature and not literature in general. Lukács even indicated this statement by Krupskaya was intentionally excluded from the published version of her work during Stalin's rule. But after Lenin's death in 1924, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union officially adopted the position that literature "cannot have interests other than the interests of the people, the interests of the state." Andrei Zhdanov, the chief ideologist of the party, said in his famous speech of 1946 that a person who has "written well, artistically, beautifully," should not be "given a start" if "his work contains putrid passages which confuse and poison our views" (Demaitre 1966:265).

In the early 1960s, there was an attempt among Marxists to rehabilitate Kafka, primarily initiated by the Czechoslovakian Writers' Guild. Communist intellectuals questioned if socialist realism should be the omnipotent criterion for the acceptability of a creative work, and if all nonsocialist realist works should be indiscriminately condemned as expressions of "bourgeois decadence." Ernst Fischer of the Communist Party of Austria, Roger Garaudy of the French Communist Party, and Soviet Academician of the Russian Academy of Sciences B. Suchkov were some of the prominent figures in this debate. While Garaudy in his earlier writings was a strong advocate of socialist realism, he changed his views radically later in life. In 1963, he denounced his earlier views and wrote that great works in literature might be written without the exclusive commitment to a certain ideology. Kafka's writing was one of the three examples used by Garaudy (1963, cited in Demaitre 1966).

According to Eduard Goldstücker, organizer of the Kafka symposium in 1963 at the Liblice Chateau, Kafka was "often presented as a prophet, who anticipated the bureaucratic chicanes of the Stalinist regime, by western propagandists." Fischer said in the symposium:

> Kafka is a poet who concerns all of us. The alienation of man that he depicted with maximum intensity, assumes horrifying proportions in the capitalistic world. However, it is by no means surmounted in the socialist world . . . Instead of discounting or fearing Kafka, one should print his books and thus evoke a high-level discussion . . . I am appealing to the socialist world: Bring Kafka's work back from its involuntary exile. Grant him a permanent visa!

Heinrich Böll witnessed the troops of the Eastern Bloc pointing a barrel at Kafka's bust in front of Kafka's birth house in the summer of 1968. Karolina Swasey (2013) referred to this and poetically wrote, echoing the opening sentence of Kafka's *Trial*, "Someone must have traduced Franz K., for without having done anything wrong, he was arrested one somber night, [more than] 40 years after his demise."

While Kafka did not face any of these accusations in course of his otherwise perturbed life, Manik Bandyopadhyay, one of the most powerful writers in Bengali literature, was required as an active member of the Communist Party of India to fiercely defend socialist realism in his creative works, particularly after joining the party. He

scathingly criticized his predecessors, including the famous Bengali authors Rabindranath Tagore, Sharatchandra Chattopadhyay, Shailajananda Mukhopadhyay, and Premendra Mitra, because they did not subscribe to the ideology of realism. Critics have demarcated two phases of his work (comprising 40 novels and about 300 short stories), namely, before and after his party membership in 1944, and have agreed almost unanimously on the literary superiority of the works of the first phase. However, the demarcation is not watertight, and the lives of the underprivileged attracted his attention from the very beginning (Sikdar 2013).

Bandyopadhyay was born in 1908 in Bihar, a part of the Bengal Presidency within British-ruled India, and had a carefree and boisterous childhood. He gained a lot of exposure into the lives of people in different parts of undivided Bengal, since his father had a transferable government job. He lost his mother at 16, following which the ties with his natal family became thin. Bandyopadhyay was a brilliant student, and he joined Presidency College (also Sen's alma mater), the premier college in Bengal, as a student of mathematics in 1930 but left the course halfway to become a full-time writer. His elder brother stopped sending him allowances, and he experienced abject poverty. He wrote vigorously, trying to publish his works, and neglected his health. He started having epileptic seizures when he was 28 and resorted to alcohol to get rid of the pain. The severity of the poverty he faced can be gauged from his personal notes: "Dolly [his wife] has given birth to a still-born but is not unhappy about it. It has saved her a lot of hassles. She said, 'Thank God! After returning home I will take rest for a month and then get rid of the cook. That will save a lot of money'" (Ghoshal 2016). World War II, the immense, related Bengal famine of 1942–1944, the communal riots of 1946–1947, and the country's partition in 1947 left deep impressions on him, and many of his stories were written against these backgrounds.

Bandyopadhyay, then a member of the leftist, anti-fascist writers and artists' association, had actively worked on the streets of Kolkata to prevent the atrocities during the Hindu-Muslim riots, the same communal tensions that Sen (2006) recollects as childhood memories in his writings on identity and violence. One can easily interpret Bandyopadhyay's stories like "Chhelemanushi" (included in the 1948 collection *Chhoto Bawro*), written against the backdrop of the riots, using Sen's framework of identity and violence. The communal identities of two families, one Hindu and the other Muslim, become so strong that they now mistrust each other and no longer identify as sociable neighbors.

Ironically, one can also suggest Bandyopadhyay himself had fallen into the trap of ascribing overriding importance to a single identity, that of a communist writer. Bandyopadhyay declared that before he knew Marxism, his writings were full of "errors, untruths and incompleteness" (Sikdar 2013: 106). He wrote, "Who is an author? One who like a father wishes to teach the ideals of life to the people of the country" (Saiyad 1998). After 1948, he was increasingly perturbed though by the repeated attacks on his writings by noncreative party bureaucrats (Sikdar 2013). He even had to publicly criticize his earlier (and arguably greater) writings, such as *Sahartali*

and *Putul Nacher Itikatha*, as being opposed to the interests of laborers and as fatalist, following the criticisms of his works within the cultural front of the Communist Party in Bengal, particularly by Zhdanovist extremists. When the contemporary poet Bishnu De published in 1947 a Bengali translation of an article by Roger Garaudy, written in French, criticizing the Zhdanovist position, Bandyopadhyay himself wrote an article criticizing De's "unclear Marxist vision" (Das 2003: 539). While his writings of this second phase were mostly unilinear and direct, often depicting the emancipation of the underprivileged classes, he failed to reject his earlier writings completely and came up with new and far-fetched interpretations of them (Sikdar 2013).

This article suggests the conclusion of *Ekannoborti*, which clearly belongs to the second phase of his work, was written with the motivation of depicting the strength of class-based affiliation, whereas his 1944 novel *Pratibimba* had mocked the rigidities of life within a party commune. He noted in his personal diary, "It is clear how opportunist intellectuals are combining with each other" (Sikdar 2013: 102). His diaries tragically show how poverty, poor health, and lack of appreciation alienated him and convoluted his thoughts. He secretly started believing in the supernatural powers of the Hindu goddess Kali. His friend, the renowned Bengali poet Subhash Mukhopadhyay, later wrote, impersonating the dead body of Bandyopadhyay and protesting against his belated veneration after his death in poverty, "Remove the flowers. They hurt. The wreaths have frozen to a mountain and the flowers to stone. Remove the stone. It hurts" (Ghoshal 2016). One can assume Mukhopadhyay, who had himself faced persistent castigations from party members and had even left the Communist Party, was referring to the inappropriateness of the love and respect that Bandyopadhyay received from his comrades only after his untimely and tragic death in 1956.

Sen (1998) recollected in his Nobel Prize biography that as a student in Presidency College from 1951 to 1953, though "the quality of sympathy and egalitarian commitment of the 'left'" appealed to him greatly, he could not "develop enough enthusiasm to join any political party." This was because "there was something rather disturbing about standard leftwing politics of that time: in particular, its scepticism of process-oriented political thinking, including democratic procedures that permit pluralism . . . There was also a tendency to see political tolerance as a kind of 'weakness of will' that may deflect well-meaning leaders from promoting 'the social good,' without let or hindrance."

Concluding Thoughts: Alienation—*Metamorphosis* as a Description and *Ekannoborti* as a Proposed Solution

This article has reflected on the theme of human connection, drawing on the ideas of Karl Marx and Amartya Sen. While important economists have addressed the question of transcending self-interest, presented here as the central aspect of human connection, Marx's approach to the question has been distinct, and his notions of alienation and

antagonism add further dimensions to help understand human connection. So too does Sen's critique of interpretations of rational choice as an exclusive maximization of self-interest.

The article has interpreted and restated the ideas of alienation and antagonism into Sen's vocabulary and has discussed his conceptions of sympathy, antipathy, and commitment. Marx restricted the scope of effective human connection and especially the choice of plural identities to a future communist society and depicted class antagonism as the main driver of social change. In contrast, Sen denounces the belligerence of particularized narrow identities that often lead to violence in actually existing, contemporary societies, and stresses free reasoned choice of complex plural identities. Similarly, though Sen's idea of human development as an expansion of real freedoms draws partly on the writings of Marx, he emphasizes the absence of freedom in labor markets in the former socialist countries. In the classical Marxist framework, the freedom to choose the nature and relative importance of one's identities is viewed as severely restricted in a capitalist system. However, newer readings of Marx may be used to accommodate Sen's ideas of plural identities and the free choice of human affiliations as a crucial human capability.

The role of literature has been revisited and debated in late twentieth-century moral philosophy. Various moral philosophers have indicated persuasively that the form and style of literary texts can help explain certain concepts with a depth that argumentative prose fails to attain. This article used two literary texts as vantage points for better understanding the concepts of alienation, antagonism, sympathy, antipathy, commitment, and choice of identities. While *Metamorphosis* deeply complements and at some points even transcends Marx's theorization of alienation, as a crippling fate within capitalist society, *Ekannoborti* is an account of choice of affiliation becoming an important human capability that can end alienation.

Marx defined alienation as the "loss of self" for the worker. He explained, "What is animal becomes human and what is human becomes animal" ([1844] 2010: 30). This seems to summarize the entire narrative of *Metamorphosis.* Gregor's initial physical discomfort due to the transformation disappeared the moment "he fell down onto his numerous little legs . . . The small limbs had firm floor under them; they obeyed perfectly, as he noticed to his joy, and strove to carry him forward in the direction he wanted" (Kafka [1915] 2020: 12). As the story progressed, Gregor's "species being" gradually eroded, and he felt completely estranged in his human surroundings. With Gregor finally choosing death over life, Kafka did not offer a solution for this alienation.

Alienation also led Lakshmi in *Ekannoborti* to choose death over life. When she was about to jump off the roof, Hiren stopped her with tears in his eyes and said, "You are thinking only about yourself." Surprised, Lakshmi said, "Won't it be good for you if I die?" She probably meant Hiren would no longer need to provide for her if she died. Hiren said, "How shall I live if you die?" They came back to their room. Lakshmi rested her head on Hiren's chest. Hiren told her, "Long back I could have done what I was supposed to do. I am a petty clerk, I lack the courage to break stereotypes." The

next day, when he told her the neighbors' wives would come to visit her, she was disappointed. She said, "Oh! I know, they will come and explain to me how wrong it is to jump off the roof." Hiren corrected her, "They will come and discuss with you, so that they do not have to jump off the roofs themselves." Hiren spoke, in other words, of the women's capability of affiliation "to live with and toward others" (Nussbaum 2000, 2003), which would end their alienation.

The article discussed the contexts and political interpretations of the works of the two authors in order to understand their motivations. While *Metamorphosis* has been translated, read, and critiqued worldwide, *Ekannoborti* is famous only in Bengal, so it has been given some fuller attention here.[11] Left politics has had a rich history in Bengal, especially from the movements following the Bengal famine in 1943. The movements continued in the new state of West Bengal that was created with the partition of India, which took place as part of the agreement for independence of India from colonial rule in 1947. West Bengal later had arguably the longest-serving elected leftist government in the world (1977–2011; Bhattacharyya 2010). Leftist politics has had a synergistic relationship with literature, music, and theater in Bengal. The spiritually motivated theme of humanism in the writings of Rabindranath Tagore, probably the most influential Bengali author in the first third of the twentieth century, was challenged by literary movements initiated in the early 1920s by modern writers who were deeply influenced by the ideas of Freud and Marx (Ghosh 1990). However, these writers too were criticized by later authors like Manik Bandyopadhyay. In his words, "They approached the slum-dwellers' life from a middle-class point of view. What these writers practiced as realism was a rather superficial thing; it was in essence bourgeois sentimentalism expressed in a different style" (paraphrased in Bhattacharjee 2008: 9).

So, while Kafka did not have any compulsion to end the narrative of *Metamorphosis* on a non-fatalist note, Bandyopadhyay, who was criticized for the fatalist conclusions of his earlier writings, did have such a compulsion. *Ekannoborti* belonged to the second phase of his literary career, when he believed the author had to be a visionary and that his writings had to show a blueprint of social change. Further, the dogma of class reductionism that was dominant within communist parties (both in socialist and nonsocialist countries) implied a suppression of the plural identities of creative authors who were also party-members. If they failed to agree to this, they faced repression and alienation. The article has forayed into an area that is relatively unchartered and uses a methodology that is also somewhat less common. It does not claim to be a final word. It rather intends to help open up this field, which bears the promise of generating new insights and inspiration.

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Notes

1. Marx ([1844] 2010: 276) defines the distinctive "species-character" of human beings as "free, conscious activity," which is distinct from animal functions such as eating, drinking, and procreating.
2. Labor, which is the species-characteristic of a worker, is objectified, or transformed to a salable commodity. This is a loss of realization for the worker, since they no longer have any control over the "object" or the product of their labor.
3. In sharp contrast with the more strictly polarized bourgeois society, earlier stages of history were characterized as containing multiple classes in the society. Even so, Marx and Engels ([1847–1848] 2008) noted, "Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another."
4. Gasper (2000: 994) questioned if Sen fully grasped Hayek's argument, for Hayek's book *The Road to Serfdom* went far further and argued democratic socialism was "the great utopia of the last few generations" ([1944] 2001: 32) and that social democratic state activism in a mixed economy would in fact lead to serfdom.
5. "Exchange entitlements" are the benefits a person can obtain by use of all the resources and rights they have access to (Sen 1981).
6. In his extended review essay on Sen's book *Development as Freedom*, Bagchi (2000) acts as a communicator across the bridge between Marxism and Sen's liberalism. Bagchi, a leading Marxist economist and economic historian, has been Sen's lifelong friend and critic. Also an alumnus of Presidency College and the University of Cambridge, Bagchi (1999, 2000, 2008) has discussed Marx's influence on Sen in several of his writings. He has shown how the methods of Sen's capability approach and critical political economy may together aid the scrutiny of the role of human institutions in enhancing or retarding human freedoms.
7. The concept of commitment may extend to any non-self-centered goal, not only benefit to other people.
8. This understanding of social capital as (productive) social interconnections must be distinguished from the main meaning of "social connection" used in this article, namely, as a feeling of positive sympathy and/or commitment to others.
9. Davis (2009) has built up Sen's ambitious and optimistic perspective into a fuller theory by conceptualizing identity within the capability framework, using Sen's notions of reasoned self-scrutiny and commitment.
10. All excerpts from *Ekannoborti* in this article have been translated from the original text (Bandyopadhyay [1946] 1998) in Bengali.
11. Other works of Manik Bandyopadhyay have been translated to various Indian and foreign languages, including English, Czech, Hungarian, Swedish, Slovak, Dutch, German, Norwegian, Russian, Lithuanian, Bulgarian, and Mandarin Chinese (Bhattacharjee 2008).

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